

Answer to the Masonic Monday Question for the week of March 16, 2009

Dear Masonic Student,

We had quite a good question from our Brother Glenn this week; I know it sent many of you to the books and to the Internet searching for the answer to the question. I thought I knew the answer, but as the answers began to come in I also hit the books to be sure the answer I thought I knew was in fact the correct one.

It seems we are always interested in finding out things such as who began this or that, and, what is the name of the first person to receive a certain degree etc. Some of these answers can be real brain teasers, because records have been lost over the centuries, or possibly records weren't kept back then of what we today think would be nice to know.

However, records on the modern day Knights Templar have been kept and reported on by Masons over the centuries since it was founded as a Masonic order associated with the York Rite of Freemasonry.

Here was Brother Glenn's question:

Who started the Modern day Knights Templar?

Before we get to the answer to the question here are the Brethren who sent in the correct answer:

Brother Elliott Saxton, of North Star Lodge #23, In St. Cloud, MN

W. Brother Dave Hansen, of Montgomery Lodge #258, in St. Paul, MN

Congratulations Brethren, you deserve a well earned Brotherly pat of the back for finding the answer. This answer was not as easy to come up with as it 1st appeared it might be. And there were false leads to be found on the Internet to another group called Knights Templar, which is not affiliated with Freemasonry. For those who came across that site they did the research, and came up with a correct answer for the person who was the founder of that order, but it wasn't the order of Knights Templar we were looking for.

That's an interesting thing about doing research on things Masonic; others use a similar name for groups that are not Masonic, and while they don't say they are connected with Freemasonry they don't say they aren't either: It would be nice if they made it clear that they are not connected with Freemasonry, so the researcher knows whether it is the group he wanted to find or not.

Well enough about that, here is the answer to the question. Following that there is some other information on the Masonic Knights Templar you might like to read.

Good luck with next week's question, and remember **Masonic Research is Fun and Interesting!**

The answer we have for this week comes from Brother Albert Mackey in his Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, here it is:

TEMPLAR ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY

The theory that Freemasonry originated in the Holy Land during the Crusades, and was instituted by the Knights Templar, was advanced by the Chevalier Ramsay, for the purpose, it is supposed, of giving an aristocratic character to the association. It was subsequently adopted by the College of Clermont, and was accepted by the Baron von Hund as the basis upon which he erected his Rite of Strict Observance. The legend of the Clermont College is thus detailed by M. Berage in his work entitled *Les Plus Secrets Mysteres des Hauts Grades, Most Secret Mysteries of the High Degrees* (iii, page 194).

The Order of Freemasonry was instituted by Godfrey de bouillon, in Palestine in 1330, after the defeat of the Christian armies, and was communicated only to a few of the French Freemasons, some time afterwards, as a reward for the services which they had rendered to the English and Scottish Knights. From these latter true Freemasonry is derived. Their Mother Lodge is situated on the mountain of Heredom where the first Lodge in Europe was held, which still exists in all its splendor. The Council General is always held there, and it is the seat of the Sovereign Grand Master for the time being. This mountain is situated between the west and the north of Scotland, sixty miles from Edinburgh.

There are other secrets in Freemasonry which were never known among the French, and which have no relation to the Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Degrees which were constructed for the general class of Freemasons. The high Degrees, which developed the true design of Freemasonry and its true secrets, have never been known to them. The Saracens having obtained possession of the holy places in Palestine, where all the mysteries of the Order were practiced, made use of them for most profane purposes.

The Christians then leagued together to conquer this beautiful country, and to drive all these barbarians from the land. They succeeded in obtaining a footing on these shores under the protection of numerous armies of Crusaders which had been sent out there by the Christian princes. The losses which they subsequently experienced put an end to the Christian power, and the crusaders who remained were subjected to the persecutions of the Saracens, who massacred all who publicly proclaimed the Christian faiths. This induced Godfrey de Bouillon, towards the end of the third century, to conceal the mysteries of religion under the veil of figures, emblems and allegories.

Hence the Christians selected the temple of Solomon because it has so close a relation to the Christian Church of which its holiness and its magnificence make it the true symbol. So the Christians concealed the mystery of the building up of the Church under that of the construction of the Temple, and gave themselves the title of Masons Architects or Builders, because they were occupied in building the faith. They assembled under the pretext of making plans of architecture to practice the rites of their religion, with all the emblems and allegories that Freemasonry could furnish, and thus protect themselves from the cruelty of the Saracens.

As the mysteries of Freemasonry were in their principles, and still are only those of the Christian religion they were extremely scrupulous to confide this important secret only to those whose discretion had been tried and who had been found worthy. For this purpose they fabricated Degrees as a test of those to whom they wished to confide it, and they gave them at first only the symbolic secret of Hiram, on which all the mystery of blue

Masonry is founded, and which is, in fact, the only secret of that Order which has no relation to true Freemasonry.

They explained nothing else to them as they were afraid of being betrayed, and they conferred these Degrees as a proper means of recognizing each other, surrounded as they were by barbarians. To succeed more effectually in this they made use of different Signs and words for each Degree so as not only to distinguish themselves from the profane Saracens, but to designate the different Degrees. These they fixed at the number of seven, in imitation of the Grand Architect, who built the Universe in six days and rested on the seventh, and also because Solomon was seven years in constructing the Temple, which they had selected as the figurative basis of Freemasonry. Under the name of Hiram they gave a false application to the Masters, and developed the true secret of Freemasonry only to the higher Degrees.

Such is the theory of the Templar origin of Freemasonry, which, mythical as it is, and wholly unsupported by the authority of history, has exercised a vast influence in the fabrication of advanced Degrees and the invention of Continental Rites. Indeed, of all the systems propounded during the eighteenth century, so fertile in the construction of extravagant systems, none has played so important a part as this in the history of Freemasonry. Although the theory is no longer maintained, its effects are everywhere seen and felt.

The following article comes from "Freemasonry Today" a good Magazine to subscribe to for Masonic Education. You can find their web site at www.freemasonrytoday.com - Ed

FREEMASONRY TODAY The Knights Templar
Issue 19, January 2002

Matthew Christmas looks at The Religious, Military and Masonic Order of The Temple

Passers-by who look in regalia shop windows and see a tailor's dummy rigged out as a Knight Templar, or even those brethren on a ladies' night sharing a masonic centre with a Preceptory meeting, must wonder what the Knights Templar is really about. Many outside the Order may be of the impression that it is simply about dressing-up. This clearly puts many off joining: "just what is my wife going to think when I come home with all that kit? A white cloak and a sword!"

For others, the cost is a key factor: mantle, tunic, cap and badge, sash, belt, sword and three jewels do not come cheap. That is just the start. Other orders, by contrast, have much more reasonably-priced regalia because there is much less of it. And then there are all the books and theories that Freemasons are a direct survival of the medieval, crusading Order of the Temple suppressed in 1312, that order dissolved on charges of devilish heresy with many stories of their hidden wealth and arcane secrets. So what is it really all about?

Despite what the many, money-spinning books on airport and station bookstalls around the world try to claim, there is no evidence for any direct, underground, link between the medieval and the masonic Knights Templar, or for any ancient secrets passed down from generation to generation from the 14th Century under the cover of the Craft. The Order of the "Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon", symbolized by an early seal depicting two knights sharing a horse, was founded in 1118-19. These monastic knights had an instrumental role in the crusades and defense of the Holy Land and did indeed acquire enormous power, status and virtual autonomy. They were a legend even in

their own time. After the end of the Crusades, they returned to their extensive possessions and influence in Christian Europe. They became even more powerful, not least as the bankers of Christendom. For a variety of complicated reasons, they fell particularly foul of the ruthless King Philip IV of France and, following the standard medieval trumped-up charges of denying Christ, practicing homosexuality and worshipping idols, were dissolved by Pope Clement V on 22nd March 1312. The last medieval Grand Master of the Temple, Jacques de Molay, was burnt at the stake in Paris on 18th March 1314; the Templars were finished.

The Order of the Hospitallers received many of the Templar possessions throughout Christendom and, in many cases, Templars simply became Hospitallers. This latter Order still remains today as the Roman Catholic, Sovereign Order of Malta and, in England, as the Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, the parent body of the ubiquitous and much valued St John Ambulance Brigade. Now the legends would have a secret band of fugitive Knights Templar riding to aid Robert the Bruce at Bannockburn; not impossible, but where is the data? Or that their alleged descendants - the Freemasons - organising the French Revolution; or that the crowd watching the guillotining of Louis XVI cried that Jacques de Molay was avenged; or even, that the lost Templar treasure and secrets are buried in and around Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland!

These stories may or may not be true. As an historian, I don't consider that there is sufficient evidence to support any of them. So if the legends prove to be myths, why do we have a masonic Order of the Temple with over six hundred preceptories under the Great Priory of England and Wales and its Provinces Overseas? What attracts many to the "Religious, Military and Masonic Order of the Temple"?

The Desire for Knighthood

After the de-Christianisation of the Craft following the 1723 Constitutions, there is no doubt that many masons wanted to maintain, or create, masonic systems which championed the Christian Faith. There is also no doubt that many desired not only more elaborate degrees and social advancement, but also were determined to give their Freemasonry a link with that most romantic of times, the Crusades, and what more beguiling than the Knights Templar? After all a legendary knightly order was rather more aristocratic and thrilling in origin than descent from operative stone masonry! Certainly, at some time from the 1740s, a number of philosophical and Chivalric degrees with a Christian background appeared in France, in the hands of the Scottish, Irish and English Jacobite exiles. These degrees gradually spread all over Europe before crossing the Channel to the British Isles. Here they were often adopted by Royal Arch Chapters and worked under their existing warrants and we have the qualification today that one must be in Chapter before one can join the KT. From 1791, Preceptories (until 1873 known as Encampments) began to be formally established and regularised under a English national sovereign body, the Grand Conclave. Between 1872-1895, the Order nearly foundered before the establishment of Great Priory in 1895. Great Priory remains in control of the Order today, administered from Mark Masons' Hall, under the current Grand Mastership (since 1997) of Most Eminent and Supreme Knight, Leslie Felgate Dring GCT.

A Pilgrimage in Search of the Lost Word

In Craft masonry and those other degrees which we might term 'solomonic degrees' (see the article in Issue 7, Winter 1998/9), such as the four in the Cryptic Rite (properly known as the Order of Royal and Select Masters), one or two of the Allied Degrees - such as the Red Cross of Babylon - and, par excellence, the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch, candidates are engaged in an allegorical and symbolic journey, as expressed in a

search for masonic light in the quest for the Lost Word. So also, in the masonic Templar Order, masons become pilgrims and, ultimately, knights seeking to re-interpret the search for that Word in a Christian sense.

Whilst all masons would acknowledge the universality of Freemasonry and accept that the three degrees of the Craft and the Royal Arch contain all the essential secrets of masonry, those Christian orders such as the Knights Templar, reflect the desire which many Christians feel also to interpret those secrets in a Trinitarian sense.

A candidate desiring to be admitted as a Knight Templar has a long arduous journey ahead of him in ritual terms. The ceremony of installation as a knight of the Order is a most impressive and inspirational one. The ceremony is necessarily quite involved. First, the candidate symbolically embarks on a seven years journey as a poor pilgrim to prove the sincerity of his faith. Should he pass that test of fidelity, he is admitted to the noviciate and is ceremonially clothed as a novice before being entrusted with a sword to enable him to wage spiritual warfare, as instructed by St Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians. After a further seven years of this warfare as a test of his fortitude, he is forced to undergo the penance for his earthly sins. Following this supreme test of his conviction, he submits to a period of reflection and prayer that he be found worthy of being admitted as a Knight of the Temple.

After re-admittance to the Preceptory, he is further severely tested according to ancient custom, before being admitted to the honour of knighthood and to full membership of the Order of Knights Templar. He is then finally rewarded with the ritual clothing of the order, each item of which has a specific meaning – rather than being mere kit! As a Knight Templar, the regalia genuinely has lessons to teach and is not mere adornment. The new knight is then proclaimed, before being instructed as to the teachings and traditional history of the Order.

In seeking admission as a Soldier of the Cross, he has to journey from ignorance against spiritual wickedness to the knowledge of the Word. On his way, the candidate becomes aware that the knowledge which he seeks is both guarded and perilous to discover. He will genuinely need penance, humility and meditation in order to prepare himself, if he is to become a knight and understand the masonic journey which he has already completed and will be required to undertake henceforth. Thus the “Knight Templar” is truly an initiatory rite, from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge. The candidate is finally brought, not merely before a pedestal in the East, but before the altar of God and it is here that the esoteric Lost Word is revealed. This reward is far more important than being dubbed with a sword, being given new, elaborate regalia and declared a knight, despite the significance of all of these. The candidate will have taken an important step on his spiritual journey and it is this which is the true link with those illustrious crusading knights whose name, clothing and aspirations we have appropriated.

Here is some more information from Brother Glenn Kiecker:

The Order of the Temple is a Christian religious tradition stemming from the York Rite philosophy of Freemasonry. Its actual inception is a matter of conjecture but by far it is the oldest modern day "templar" order having organized meetings recorded well into the early 17th century.

The earliest American account of the order being given is in Boston in the early 18th century where a Past Master (past President of the lodge) received the Order of "Night Templar". Spelling was poor by 21st century standards even for some of the educated of the time.

Today the order still thrives and is known as the summit of York Rite Freemasonry in the United States. However the Order in other countries is typically by invitation but both bodies require that you must be a professing Christian, a Craft Lodge Mason, and a member of the York Rite Chapter of Royal Arch Masons.

In the US the Knights are governed by a Grand Commandery of each state. Which are directed by the US Grand Encampment of Knights Templar. This makes it easier for the knights to engage in their efforts for charitable purposes. US Knights fund allot of scholarship programs, eye and blindness charities, and holy land trips for clergy. The US order is not invitational but does maintain the perquisite Masonic, York rite, and Christian requirements for membership.

The Order in other places known as the United Religious, Military, and Masonic Order of the Temple and of St John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes, and Malta is by invitation. requiring not only the prerequisite Masonic memberships and Christianity. But also a pledge of continued service to Masonic related charities, community involvement, Masonic office holders or masons involved in church activites and fundraisers.

This is indeed the oldest "modern day" organization. The knights however will be the first to tell you that its circumstantial at best if there is any link to the Masonic Templar's and the former crusading order.

The history behind the order has been linked to everyone from Scottish Jacobites (Sir Andrew Michael Ramsey) and the young pretender Prince Charles Edward Stewart. To the now fashionable Sinclair clan and the infamous Rosslyn Chapel (Thanks to Dan Brown).

Sir Andrew was a well documented Freemason having created the system of degrees that would later be codified to become the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Prince Stewart granted several Masonic lodge charters. Grand Mastership of the Craft in Scotland at the time was hereditary and exclusive only to the members of the royal house.

Sinclairs and the Sinclair Clan also were ardent Freemasons. The first Grand Master of Scotland not of the Royal House was a Sinclair but this not substantiate any claim that what I call the "Rosslyn Complex" was in any way the labor of fugitive templars. That is more the product of Dan Browns imagination than actual history.

The next oldest was not chartered until allegedly 1804 around the time of Bonaparte. This order is smaller and non-masonic and has secured observer status with the UN.

Both of these are very honorable organizations each contributing to the betterment of humanity. Membership in either is not for the faint of heart. It requires much on the part of the individual member to be an asset to their respective communities.

Source(s):

<http://www.knightstemplar.org/> (Masonic)

<http://www.knightstemplar.ca/> (Masonic)

<http://greatprioryofscotland.com/> (Masonic)

http://www.smotj.org/about_us/index.html (non-Masonic)

I am also an active Freemason and a member of my local Templar Commandery

With all respect to the Gentleman who anonymously wrote this answer to a question found in Yahoo on the net.; I greatly appreciate this. This is the kind of information that all Knights Templar's need to be instilled with. This question was not a challenge to the Templar's but a plea for this kind of information.

And, to make it perfectly clear: Freemasonry IS NOT A SECRET SOCIETY. We meet in plainly labeled buildings, list our meeting times, proudly wear rings or pins with the Square and Compasses, and we will gladly tell you about ourselves. I understand that there are some countries with repressive governments that curtail Masonic activity, so those Lodges are very secretive to survive.