



## THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR: TRUTH, MYTHOLOGY, HISTORY OR FANTASY ?

Much has been written about the Knights Templar, mostly fiction and fantasy made to sound like historical truth, but short on concrete and verifiable facts.

The Knights Templar were a monastic military order formed at the end of the First Crusade (1095 to 1099) with the mandate of protecting Christian pilgrims on their journey to the Holy Land. Their beginnings were humble enough: they relied on alms from traveling pilgrims for survival. Housed in the basement of the New Temple in Jerusalem (built on top of the ruins of the previous one) where horses were usually kept, it is believed they excavated and toiled in secrecy for years while living on hand-me-downs from the King.

As time went by, these fierce warriors became highly respected by all Christian forces, and equally feared by Muslims. Their reputation on the battlefield was unparalleled. Clad in chain-mail covered by a white mantle sporting a large red cross, these professional and well trained warriors threw themselves at the enemy some on horse back, others on foot, causing mayhem, destruction and certain death. Today's equivalent to a special forces assault unit.

Yet within two centuries they had also become rich and powerful enough to defy all but the Pope in Rome. Innocent II ruled the Catholics between 1130 and 1143 and officially released the Templars from any and all obligations to obey any secular power, this at times when the Church ruled and controlled most mercantile transactions while owning sometimes as much as 75% of the land in kingdoms like England and France.

The money-lending to Kings and governments, plus the creation of novel banking practices (letters of credit precursor to today's credit cards) never before seen, were great contributors to their rapid and massive wealth. As the organization grew in power it expanded and diversified their operations: agriculture operations, wine and olive oil production, manufacturing and distribution added to their bloated coffers and greatly contributed to the envy and greed of their enemies who were about to bring their demise.

In 1307, having secured the support of pope Clement V, King Phillip IV of France ordered the arrest of all known Templars (on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>.) on charges of heresy, their rituals and secret meetings offering the perfect excuse to rid himself from the bankers he owed so much money to, and taking over their holdings and possessions in one easy sweep. (the first well-known hostile banking take-over of major proportions and consequences). Seven years later, by which time the order had been dissolved, Jacques de Molay its last Grand Master, was burned at the stake. The survivors scattered, their power seemingly broken forever.

What followed, notably the claim that Templar survivors were the power behind the foundation of Freemasonry, is nothing but unverifiable speculation. The possible connection between Templars and Masons at Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland, built by the St. Clair's in 1440 (supposedly to house artifacts brought to Scotland by Knights Templar in 1126) seems to suggest exactly that: a possible connection.-

That the Chapel was built, they say, as a replica of Herod's Temple in Jerusalem; that the elaborate foundation

took over three years to build (more than double the regular time); that statuary carvings on the walls imply undeniable Templar ownership and that holy artifacts are stored in vaults under the altar, are some of the many arguments favoring a Templar connection (giving the Dan Browns of this world the wonderful opportunity to speculate and weave fantastic stories). Unfortunately what is lacking is indisputable historical proof.

The Templar motto "In Hoc Signo Vincas" means: "In this Sign (the Cross) you shall Conquer"



Many scholars maintain that it is entirely possible that fugitive Templars found sanctuary in Scottish Lodges of Freemasons, and that their tradition of secrecy and use of special recognition signs could prove to be of great value to a group of fugitives that only spoke French and were deeply tanned from their extended forays in the Middle East who were making great efforts to blend with the local English-only speaking and fair skinned town folk. A most credible, logic and feasible theory (but also unverifiable).

The XXI st. Century Knights Templar are a much tamer bunch: as Freemasons belonging to the York Rights discipline, they perform specific and unique rituals (even though they may carry swords, they are strictly for ceremonial use) while contributing generously as all good Masons do, to many charities and philanthropic organizations: from their own ranks to mankind's most needy.

#### OCTOBER NOTABLES

- 1307 King Phillip of France arrests 15,000 Knights Templar (and has undisclosed number killed).
- 1792 Freemasons lay the cornerstone of the White House in Washington DC
- 1854 Born. Bro. Oscar Wilde, poet and playwright.
- 1898 Born. Bro. Bud Abbott, well known actor (Abbott and Costello).
- 1926 Died. Bro. Harry Houdini (peritonitis).
- 1938 Bro. Orson Wells and Bro. H.G. Wells, scare the wits out of US radio audience with their "War of the Worlds".
- 1944 Two Freemasons battle for the US Presidency: Bro. Thomas Dewey and Bro. Franklin .D. Roosevelt.
- 1953 Bro. George C. Marshall (US Army General) wins Nobel Prize for his "Marshall Plan" created to provide relief for battle-torn Europe after WWII.
- 1968 Astronauts Bro. Walter Schirra and Bro. Don Eisle carry Masonic items aboard NASA's Apollo 7 to be placed of the surface of the moon.

MASONIC FACT: Paul Revere was "raised" at St. Andrew's Lodge in Boston in January 1761, served several years as the Worshipful Master and held the office of Grand Master of Massachusetts from 1794 to 1797.-

*The Inside Sentinel - Editor*

