

KNIGHT TEMPLAR ORDER AND THE MALTA ORDER

The most obvious question to arise is whether there is any connection between those two religious and military orders and the two modern masonic orders and how the present day masonic orders complement the main masonic orders of the Craft and the Royal Arch.

The Knight Templar Order and the Malta Order is the formal title of two Masonic orders. The former derives its inspiration from the original military order known as The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon founded in 1118 (some sources say 1119), for the express purpose of protecting pilgrims on their journey from the coast to Jerusalem to worship at the Holy Sepulchre (and which became known as the Knights of the Temple or, simply, the Knights Templar). The latter derives its inspiration from the order known as the Hospitallers of St. John given ecclesiastical sanction by Pope Paschall II in 1113 and dedicated to providing succour and aid, particularly medical aid, to pilgrims and later assuming a military role as well, almost rivaling that of the Templars. In fact, the Hospitallers claimed descent (at least spiritually and possibly actually) from a Latin hospice founded in Jerusalem by Pope Gregory I in about AD 603.

The origins of both Masonic orders are shrouded in the mists of time and any historical link between the original orders and the present day must be regarded as not proven. With each passing year, more historic fact is uncovered and there can now be no doubt at all that when the military order of Knights Templar was suppressed in 1307 by the activities in France of King Philip IV (known as Philip Le Bel or The Fair) and Pope Clement V, some knights escaped to and settled on the west coast of Scotland. Indeed there is a fascinating and persistent but unproven legend that a force of ex-Templars made a pivotal (but seemingly incognito) intervention in the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 and in so doing swung the battle in favour of Robert Bruce. The knights who settled in Scotland no doubt became absorbed by marriage into the fabric of local Scottish society and their blood lines and moral influence may well have continued into later generations, even if they themselves no longer formed any identifiable group or body as such.

The first reliable evidence of a Knight Templar Masonic ritual being practised is in France in 1740 and shortly afterwards it was 'exported' to England via the then main trade routes. By 1772 a Knight Templar Rite was being worked in Bristol (south west England) and by 1780 in York (north east England). In 1791 a national organisation was formed called the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar for England and Wales. 'Encampment' was the name then used by Masonic Knights Templar rather than 'lodge'.

The reason behind the foundation of these Masonic orders was that until 1723 all freemasons had to be Christian Trinitarians (believing in the Father, Son and Holy Ghost). In 1723 freemasonry was declared open to all 'good men and true who were not atheists or irreligious libertines' so it remained necessary to believe in a Supreme Being but not necessary to be a Christian Trinitarian. Pope Clement XII found this unacceptable and in 1738 published a Papal Bull known as In Eminenti Apostolatus Specular, which excommunicated all those who were either freemasons or assisted them unless they renounced their freemasonry. This was particularly painful in France where both freemasonry and the influence of the Pope were widespread and naturally freemasons looked for a way of pursuing their Masonic interests

but avoiding the dire consequences. It was in this atmosphere that it is thought the Knight Templar Order (and most probably the Malta Order) was established.

It is easy to see why the model of the original Templars and Hospitallers was adopted. They were themselves Christian orders and of high standing with the Papal authorities (until the Templars allegedly 'lost their way' and duly suffered the consequences). The new Masonic orders were Christian Trinitarian and taught the well known and widely accepted virtues of faith, humility, courage both mental and physical, constancy and loyalty, honour and the like. Consequently, they achieved the desired result of proving acceptable to the Papal authorities and began to flourish. They still do today well over 250 years later, which is testimony to the enduring qualities of those ethics and values.

In order to become a Knight Templar freemason, a candidate must be a member of both the Craft and Royal Arch and must also be a Christian Trinitarian. A candidate for the first Order is in the position of a pilgrim traveling symbolically through hardship and dangers until he is received as a Knight. It teaches humility and urges the candidate to live his life as a Christian Knight. The second Order deals with the period when the Knights traveled from Palestine to reach their final home in Malta, emphasizing their Christian virtue.

WHENCE CAME AMERICAN TEMPLARY?

On October 1, 1768, several regiments of British soldiers arrived in Boston, Massachusetts. Among them were the 14th Regiment (Irish), in which Army Lodge No. 581 was held, and the 29th Regiment (Irish) in which Army Lodge No. 322 was held. In the second week of November 1768 the 64th Regiment (Irish) in which was held an Army Lodge also arrived. These Army Lodges Brought to Boston a Knowledge of the Order of the Temple.

At a meeting in Boston of St. Andrew's Royal Arch Lodge (working under a warrant from the Grand Lodge of Scotland as a Chapter), on August 12, 1769, four members of Army Lodge No. 322 were present, and in all probability assisted in conferring the Order of Knighthood on August 28, 1769, when Bro. William Davis, Past Master, (a captain in the Massachusetts militia) was Accepted and Accordingly made by receiving the four steps - That of Excellent, Super Excellent, Royal Arch, and Knight Templar. In 1769 there were already Knights Templar in America, but William Davis has the honor and distinction of being the first Knight Templar to be created in what is now the U.S.A. St. Andrew's Royal Arch Lodge continued to confer the Templar Degree until November 12, 1794, when it was taken over by a Council of Red Cross Knights.

The second Knight Templar in America was created on December 11, 1769, and his name was Bro. Paul Revere, immortalized in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem on his famous midnight ride. The third Knight Templar in America was created on May 14, 1770, and his name was Bro. Joseph Warren. He was the first hero of the Revolution (he lost his life in the Battle of Bunker Hill), and his 'Job description' at that time might have consisted of physician, patriot, politician, spy, writer, military General, and, most importantly for our purposes, freemason.

Following in the footsteps of these pioneers individual Knights Templar appear in Pennsylvania (1779), and South Carolina (1780). On March 3, 1782, Charleston, South Carolina: Lodge No. 190 issues a certificate to Bro. Donald McPherson, stating that he had been dubbed a Knight Templar. This is the oldest K.T. certificate known to be in existence.

On May 13, 1805 at a convention of Knights Templar held in Providence, Rhode Island, the convention adopted a constitution and declared the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar in the United States duly formed. This is the national governing body of the Knights Templar, a Christian-oriented fraternal organization and an integral part of the Masonic Fraternity.

IN HOC SIGNO VINCES