

CHIVALRY, TEMPLARY AND MASONRY

by
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True chivalry has its source and spring of being at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. A study of the lessons of the Galilean - the tracing of the footprints of Him, the Son of God, who in loving lowliness went about doing good when He was incarnate upon earth - shows that Jesus was the first Templar.

Mindful of the fact that chivalry is self-sacrifice; that true knighthood is consecration of a willing service to God and man, we may reverently see in Jesus the pattern of a true knightly, valiant and magnanimous life. Indeed, Jesus is the mirror of chivalry.

From the coming of Christ into the world we date anew the history of humanity. Because of His life of loving service, because of His cross bearing, because of His willing self-sacrifice, because of His bringing immortality to light by His rising from the dead, because of His triumphing over all that was low and base, mean and sinful, and hateful to God or harmful to man, because of all this men found new strength for purity, for perfection, and for self-sacrifice, because of all this men found new motives for vaunting not one's self but for living for another's good, new incentives to elevate and to improve others as well as themselves, because of all this men found new strength in their efforts to attain and realize the highest good. It is thus that chivalry is truly Christian and that knighthood was never known until faith in Christ and His church were paramount on this earth.

Before the Christian Knight was admitted as a pilgrim-warrior he pledged and promised to share the toils, the trials, the tribulations, and the triumphs of those who fought for God. The defense of the right and the punishment of the wrong were his duties as a true knight. With an unfaltering trust in God, with humility and lowliness of heart, the applicant was to wield his sword in defense of the unprotected and fight valiantly in the holy cause of the Christian religion.

Each candidate heard sounding in his ears. "You who desire to become a knight must pursue a new course of life. Devoutly you must watch in prayer, avoid the sins of pride and idleness. You must defend the Church, the widows and the orphans, and with noble boldness you must protect the people.

It was thus that the full acceptance of the Christian religion became the very soul and inspiration of chivalry; and chivalry, true Christian knighthood became faith, fidelity, mercy, love of God, gentleness to man and valor before all the world --everything that was pure, righteous and good. It was the consecration of the whole man to the discharge of Christian duty, the practice of Christian virtue, the crucifying of every evil thought, or word or deed.

The Order of the Temple was established to protect pilgrims journeying to the sacred places of the Holy Land. It differed from the Hospitalers and the Teutonic Knights in being, from its very beginning, a military order - poor - soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon were they from the start. Their original purpose of affording protection to the pilgrims, who sought after the first crusade to visit the sacred sites of Palestine, was kept in view for many years. Through the happenings and the circumstances of the times and from the nature and needs of the society of that age that small force of knights became one of the most powerful organizations the world

has ever known.

In the year 1118, a knight of Burgundy, Hugo de Payens, bound himself and eight companions to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, to guard the approaches to the Holy City, so that pilgrims to the sacred places might travel in safety. They were to live as regular canons of the Church under the Benedictine rule. They were to fight for The King of Heaven and the Bride of Christ in chastity, obedience and self-denial. Their arms were their only finery and they used them with courage and without dreading either the number or the strength of the barbarians.

There being nine of these knights is significantly a triple Trinity, banded together for the service of the Triune - God. The quarters assigned to them were in the palace of the Latin Kings of Jerusalem, which before Christian occupation of the Holy City, had been the Mosque of Mount Moriah. This place was also known as Solomon's Temple. The Abbots and Canons of the Temple gave the Knights, as a place to store their arms, the street between the palace and the Temple and it was thus that the Templars took their name.

It was not long before the fame of those new allies of the cross of the Church of Christ had spread over all of Europe. Their recruits were from the noblest families of Europe. Because of their valiant and devoted labors, Pope Honorius II prescribed the white mantle as the garb of the Order, and in 1146 Pope Eugenius added to this distinctive garment a red cross, to be worn on the breast as a symbol of martyrdom.

The accession of Clement V to the Papal chair was the result of a bargain and a sale. It was not only the headship of the Church that was thus traded to one unworthy of any spiritual preferment whatsoever, but there was also included in this shameless trafficking of ecclesiastical supremacy, the fate of the Knight Templars, whose possessions had aroused the greed of Philip the Fair of France.

In securing the Popedom for Bertrand de Both, the Archbishop of Bourdeaux, after a prolonged and stormy session of the Conclave of Cardinals at Perouse, the King demanded in return the Pope's promise to accede to six requests. "The 6th, which is important and secret, I keep for myself," said the King to his creation, Clement V. "It shall be made known to you in due time and place." It is the conviction of many that the secret demand was for the overthrow and the liquidation of the Order of the Knights Templars.

The wily and unscrupulous Clement well knew how to persecute and destroy those whom he chose to regard as enemies. The ruthless and pitiless King Philip allowed neither innocence nor excellence to stand between him and the vengeance he was purposing to wreak. There was not even a pretense that he had a just cause or complaint against the Order of the Temple. He had, in fact, from time to time courted the favor of its members; he had borrowed from their treasury; he had even applied to be affiliated with their organization and during an uprising of the people of Paris he had sought and found a refuge in the palace of the Templars where the treasures of the Order were kept. It is believed that the monarch's greed and thirst for gold was stimulated by the sight of his protectors' wealth and that their overthrow was born then and there.

In the year 1306 the King and Pope simultaneously summoned to France from the Isle of Cyprus the last Grand Master of the Knights Templars, Jacques de Molay, who arrived in 1307.

The sinister designs of the King and Pope were at first studiously concealed. Philip, with characteristic hypocrisy, professed that he desired the Grand Master's presence at Court to discuss with him the plans for a new crusade. After his arrival many marked favors were shown him but on the day after he had served as a pall-bearer at the burial of the King's sister-in-law, he was arrested by the King's order and thrown into prison.

All sorts of accusations were made against the Templars including that they were betraying Christendom for the advantage of the Infidels, that they spit upon the Cross at their initiation, that they were abandoning themselves to idolatrous practices and that they were living the most licentious lives.

With the arrest of de Molay on October 13, 1307, 140 of his Knights were also seized. Sixty members of the Order met the same fate at Beaucaire. Many others were imprisoned all over France and many were afterwards burned at the stake. Their great possessions were placed in the King's keeping and held at his disposal, ostensibly for the service of the Christians in the Holy Land.

On March 11, 1314 Grand Master de Molay and his three principal officers were publicly burned. They died faithfully asserting their innocence of all the crimes charged to them. The Order, however, was now suppressed throughout Europe.

The theory that the Order of Knights Templars, on their dispersion and suppression by the united power of Church and State, took refuge in the Masonic body is claimed by the greatest Masonic scholars as without "the slightest historic foundation." No one can question this statement as it stands for history fails to record much that actually happens; much that later ages would gladly know.

There is absolutely no reason however for the assertion by some; that any connection between a chivalric order, such as Knights Templars, and the fraternity of Operative Masons is out of the range of possibility. Such a connection certainly did exist in medieval times. No one doubts that there were associations or guilds that practiced masonry and that those bodies were actually employed by the Templars.

The erection of the Templars' strongholds in the Holy Land; the building of their preceptories, priories and round churches all over Europe and the evident importance of skilled mechanics in all of the operations of the Order, whether offensive or defensive, give us evident proofs of the interdependence between the one and the other. What could be more natural then, for the Knights Templars, persecuted and despoiled of all things, that they should seek to perpetuate their order among the affiliated bodies with which they had already a certain connection, and of whose universality and antiquity they had abundant evidence?

Aside from all this, the thirst for vengeance on their unjust and cruel oppressors could only be appeased by an effort to perpetuate their falsely accused and proscribed Order, to which they were bound by the most solemn oaths and the closest ties. All this, and more, is surely possible. We must claim that even if a direct descent from the Templars Order after its suppression cannot be proved by historic documents, still there is reason to admit the existence of a continuous connection, a practical succession, making modern Templary the representative of the old chivalric Order modified only as to the changes in belief, practice and social life which the

requirements of the age demand.

To establish an historic connection between medieval and modern Templarism, it is necessary to bridge over the period between the year 1307 and the year 1745 when modern Templary came to light. The tracing of the traditional existence of the old Knights Templars during this term of 438 years is historically impossible.

It may or may not be true that the expelled Templars of Scotland, few in number and having very little wealth, united in entering the service of Robert the Bruce. The war between King Edward of England and the Bruce was raging at the time when the Templars were dispossessed, and it is not impossible -- in fact, it is very probably -- that the army of the Bruce contained Knights Templars.

The estates of the Templars which had passed into the hands of Hospitalers at the time of the Reformation and the Hospitalers own estates were declared forfeited to the Crown on the grounds that the services by the Preceptor or Prior of defending and maintaining the faith of the Church of Rome was no longer required or desired.

Tradition has it that after the dispersion of the Templars who made up the Priory of Torpichen, a number of them united with a Masonic Lodge or guild at Stirling, and thus incorporated the medieval knighthood with the Masonic body. This tradition may be and probably is true, but its truth has not been proved by documentary evidence.

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There are four sources from which the Masonic Templars are said to have derived their existence, although some claim there is no historic connection and that any document that may exist is a forgery. Those who claim John Mark Larmenius as the successor of De Molay became the French Templars. Those who recognize Peter d' Aumont as the successor of De Molay became the German Templars of Strict Observance. Those who claim that their Templarism came from the Count Beaujeu, the nephew of De Molay, are the Swedish Templars of the Rite of Zennendorf. There are those who claim an independent origin and repudiate alike the authority of Larmenius, of Aumont and of Beaujeu. From this class came the Scotch and English Templars. The Protestant Templars of Scotland who are said to have united with the Freemasons and established the Ancient Lodge at Sterling, are now the Scotch Templars. From the Baldwin Encampment and its co-ordinates, come the old English and the American Templars.

Templary in our day is a revival of the old Order, the old organization, the old time chivalry. It seeks today, as nothing else does or even claims to do, to reproduce the knightly charity, the chivalrous spirit, the valiant and virtuous life, and the holy teachings of the Templars' pristine practice.

The modern Templar's warfare is, indeed, spiritual, but the Templar will recognize his duty to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Today's Templary strives to reproduce, represent and perpetuate in an avowedly Christian society, the usage's and the ceremonies of that great Christian and knightly organization of medieval days. It is by doing this that we best exhibit true Templarism. We establish most fully our connection with that heroic Christian Order by personal charity, Christian profession, and the exercise of every grace and virtue of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The religion of chivalry was not merely a blind and superstitious acceptance of priestly teachings and ecclesiastical rites. There was, then, as now, dogmatic teachings breathed into the strained, listening ear, by prelate or priest, amidst the solemn ceremonies of initiation and adoption into the brotherhood of Christian knights. This symbolism, then as now, centered in the cross of

Christ; these teachings, then as now, brought out in startling clearness the great historic truths relating to the life and the life-work of the Son of God when He was here on earth.

“I swear to consecrate my discourse, my arms, my faculties, and my life to the defense of the sacred mysteries of the Christian faith, and to that of the unity of God.”

So mote it be!

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