



TEMPLAR INFLUENCES OF THE 18th CENTURY

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With the Medieval Templars officially dissolved in the year 1314, there are many references to them in the formative years of organised Freemasonry. Indeed, as distant as the US there is an early known written record of a Scottish Templar degree being conferred in St Andrew's Royal Arch Chapter in Boston, Massachusetts. It reads as follows.

“On the 28th August 1769, William Davis, Past Master of Lodge 58 (Antient) in the 14th Regiment of Foot, (formed in 1759 but no longer working after the union of 1813), begging to have and receive the parts belonging to a Royal Arch Mason... was accordingly made by receiving the Four Steps, that of an Excellent, Super, Royal Arch and Knight Templar”.

Now, we should consider the many and varied so called Masonic institutions which were in existence at that time and to the various Masonic influences of the 18th century. Certain Templar origins can in fact be traced back further than 1769, with the introduction of several Chivalric Orders within Freemasonry, making their appearance some 25 years previous. One such widely supported theory is that the Scottish Jacobites, in exile at that particular time, were involved in some way with the formation and amalgamation of Templar degrees and Freemasonry.

Jacobite Masonry, or Stuart Masonry as it was sometimes known, was the system or orders of Freemasonry which were supposedly invented or adapted by the Scottish Jacobites who were living in exile in France and Italy during the 1700's. Most of the early Masonic historians have concluded that the Jacobites may have been the originators or the instigators of what is commonly now known in some constitutions as the higher degrees of Freemasonry. The most common being the Knights Templars and the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Although there seems to be extraordinarily little evidence to confirm the fact, historians are still of the opinion that there was a connection between the Stuarts and Freemasonry. Although the word Scottish was used, this was probably meant in the context of the Scottish brethren involved and not of our beloved Scotland itself.

The first mention of the Stuart involvement was by the German Masonic writer Lenning. He stated that whilst in exile.

"James II, who was residing at the Jesuit College of Clermont in France, allowed his closest associates to create certain degrees in order to extend their political views"

Of course. he was hoping to regain the crown of Britain for the House of Stuart. Although the words Freemasonry or Masonry were not used in his statement, it is almost certain that this is what Lenning is referring to.

Lenning goes on to say that these degrees were introduced into French Freemasonry under the name of the Clermont System in reference, of course, to the place of origin. A Chapter of Clermont was set up in Paris in the year 1754 by a Chevalier de Bonneville. Its members being from the Royal Court and the City of Paris who were

apparently upset with the behaviour of the Parisian Lodges.

They worked a type of Templar system, which had been created in Lyon in 1743. Their Order consisted of at first 6 degrees, namely, (1) (2) and (3) St John's Masonry, (4) Knight of the Eagle, (5) Illustrious Knight or Templar, (6) Sublime Illustrious Knight. They later extended the number of degrees much further.

When James II died at St Germain in 1701 his son James III, (the Old Pretender), who had been officially accepted by Louis XIV of France, succeeded him. James III was also believed to have tried to use the so-called higher degrees of the time to his political advantage. Probably the most influential Stuart to be connected with this form of masonry was "Bonnie Prince Charlie", Charles Edward Stuart.

During his stay in Scotland in the 1745/46 uprising it has been said that he was initiated into the order of the Knights Templars and was subsequently the Grand Master, an office which he supposedly held until his death. It is not known if this Order in which he was initiated into was in fact Masonic. Once he had returned to France after his failure to obtain the Scottish crown, Charles Edward apparently became involved in the forming of a Rose Croix Chapter. This is believed to have taken place in the City of ARRAS on April 15th, 1747 and took the title of the "Scottish Jacobite Chapter".

Written into the patent of this Chapter is the following paragraph where the prince styled himself as "King of England, France, Scotland and Ireland and, as such substitute Grand Master of the Chapter of Heredom known under the title of Knight of the Eagle and Pelican

and since our misfortunes and disasters under that of Rose Croix.”

Another Order called the Rite of VEILLE BRU; otherwise known as the Faithful Scottish Masons, which was created in 1748 at Toulouse. It was created by Sir Samuel Lockhart, (who also happened to be Bonnie Prince Charlie's Aide-de comp), as a way of assisting the Jacobite petition in France. The Rite consisted of nine degrees, having been divided into three Chapters. The first Chapter incorporating the three symbolic degrees, plus a fourth called Secret Master. The second Chapter included four "ELU" degrees based on the Templar system with the third Chapter working a so-called Scientific degree. In 1804 the Rite was still unrecognised by the Grand Orient of France due to the fact that it's ruling body, the Council of Menatzchim continuously claimed to be chartered from Charles Edward Stewart, (a claim which by the way, has still to be authenticated). It finally became extinct around 1812, after surviving quite strongly in the South of France.

There is a French Masonic scholar J. M. Ragon, who writes in his book ORTHODOXIE MACONNIQUES (written in 1853), he states

"Favourites, who accompanied this prince into France, were in the habit of selling to spectators, charters for Masonic lodges etc. These titles were their property, and they did not fail to make use of them as a means of livelihood. No doubt the money earned also helped what was left of the prince's cause or as some believed his entertaining".

Ragon goes on to say in his TUILEUR GENERAL de la FRANC - MACONNERIE au MANUEL de L'INITIE, that the:

"Degrees of Irish Master, Perfect Irish Master and Puissant Irish Master were invented in France in 1747 by the favourites of Charles Edward Stuart and sold to partisans of the prince".

One degree was that of "Scots Master of the Sacred Vault of James VI" as if to show the Stuart influence. The actual degree is still in use today as the thirteenth degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in the US. Due to its political title it appears to have been changed at sometime through the years, to what is now known as Knight of the Ninth Arch or Royal Arch of Solomon. It seems noticeably clear that at that specific time during the mid 1700's many Chivalric Degrees with Templar influences were being invented, with some still in existence today.

The most commonly accepted source of the Templar idea was believed to be initiated by Chevalier Andrew Ramsay. Originally from Ayr, Ramsay was brought into Freemasonry in England in the year 1730. Shortly afterwards he travelled to France where in 1737 he delivered a speech to a group of freemasons in Paris, with the main content being the symbolic ceremonies of the crusading knights in the Holy Land. Part of his speech is as follows,

"The knights, having discovered the existence of these spies, became more careful in the future, and instituted certain signs and words for the purpose of guarding against them; and, as many of their workmen were new converts to Christianity, they adopted certain symbolic ceremonies, in order more readily to instruct their proselytes in the new religion."

The basic idea behind Ramsay's Oration (as it became known) was that these knights on return to their countries established groups in order to teach, study and preserve

the esoteric teachings that they had learned during their stay in the Holy Land particularly the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem, which some believed to be the Templar's original goal.

Having tried to give the Masonic Order a aristocratic character, rightly or wrongly the "Oration" given that day by Ramsay lead to what could be only described as a kick-start for Masonic/Templar degrees to be formed throughout the next few years. Though during his speech he never once mentioned the Templars by name, it was obvious that their order was most prominent in the minds of his listeners. Ramsay himself was believed to have instigated a system of 3 Chivalric Degrees, namely, (1) ECOSSAIS, (2) NOVICE, (3) KNIGHT TEMPLAR.

One other such Order to rise from this idea was the Rite of the Strict Observance. Instituted in Germany around the 1750's by Baron Karl Gotthelf Von Hund (1722 -1776). This order laid claim to the original property and privileges of the medieval order of Knights Templars. It also claimed possession of their preceptories, and various buildings throughout Scotland, which were confiscated and handed over to the Crown during the persecution of the original Order in 1314.

Baron Von Hund claimed he was made a Freemason and brought into the Order of the Temple around the year 1742. It is said that during his stay in Paris he received the higher degrees of the Chapter of Clermont which gave him the idea of forming the Observance Rite.

At his reception were supposedly Charles Edward Stuart, (and by the way, Hund was in actual fact the Bonnie Prince's tutor), and William, 4th Earl of Kilmarnock, who was also Grand Master Mason of Scotland (1742-43), he, as you remember, was subsequently executed in 1746 for his support of Charles Edward Stuart. Therefore, the initiation ceremony of Von Hund into this Order of the Temple must have taken place in and around 1744-45. We also have to take into account that the so-called Knights Templars present at that meeting were made members prior to 1744.

The Rite, which Hund helped to instigate, was a complex system of degrees that held its allegiance to "Unknown Superiors". His "Unknown Superiors" having supposedly contacted him and instructed him to organise several meetings of the Order. Although he claims that they never contacted him again Hund went on to establish the Rite complete with ritual. The basis of the ritual being that on the death of Jacques de Molay, (the last Grand Master of the Medieval order), control of the order was handed over to Pierre d'Aumont, Templar Prior of Auvergne, who took the Order to Scotland. Pierre d'Aumont was to be succeeded by an unbroken succession of Grand Masters whose identities were to be kept secret or unknown. Hence the so-called "Unknown Superiors".

Renowned scholar and Masonic author, Robert Freke Gould states in his book "Military Lodges 1732-1890" that the degrees of the Rite of the Strict Observance completely took off in the British Regiments and the already established Masonic lodges worked side by side with those of the Strict Observance.

Also, a Lodge in London in the year 1736 was conferring "Higher Degrees" in French, and if this was the case then it would obviously pre-date Von Hund's Rite but it is

unlikely to be of Masonic origin. Most of Hund's ideas were to be picked up by the Rite of the Philalethes at Lyon and by the Provincial Grand Priory of Auvergne in France and were adapted into a Rite still practised today by the Grand Priory of Helvetia in Switzerland.

In fact the Grand Priory of England is in fraternal communications with the Grand Priory of the Rectified Scottish Rite (Switzerland), better known as the Knights Beneficent of the Holy City, whose Swiss members are entitled to sit and attend the 33rd degree meetings of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish rite in Switzerland.

Various other orders and degrees that were instituted and based on a Templar system included, the Order of the Orient, formed at Paris in the year 1806. The Order of the Blazing Star, formed by Baron Tschoudy in 1766, was a system of Chivalric degrees ascending from the crusades based on the Templar system of Andrew Ramsay. The degree of Knight of the Ape and Lion began to appear in and around the year 1780. This order adopted the idea that they held the original secrets of the medieval order with the belief that the medieval Templars had been persecuted by the modern Templars. This order unfortunately only came to be known because of its demise. The degree Knight of the Lilies of the Valley was conferred by the Grand Orient of France as an appendage to the Templar degree that it already had been conferring.

Also, in 1763 a gentleman by the name of Johnson residing in Germany declared himself a representative of the Order of the Temple, authorised by the Sovereign Chapter of Scotland to introduce itself into Europe. He was eventually imprisoned and died in 1775.

As you can see there were a great number of degrees and orders that were formed along the Templar idea. So much so that on the 16th of July 1782 a Masonic Congress was held at Wilhelmsbad, near the city of Hanau in Hesse-Cassel. The meeting was chaired by Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick, who was at that time the Grand Master of the Order of the Strict Observance. The meeting lasted for thirty sessions where its agenda was to reform the existing Masonic system and try to disentangle the many rites and higher degrees formed along Templar lines. Topics that were discussed were the true origins of Speculative Masonry as whether it was in actual fact a modern thought or indeed a more ancient tradition. When the congress was finally closed it was agreed that:

“Freemasonry was not essentially connected with Templarism, and that, contrary to the doctrine of the Rite of the Strict Observance, the Freemasons were not the successors of the Knights Templars”.

The result of its finding was in fact the nail in the coffin for the Strict Observance which very soon died out along with many of the other Templars degrees and orders.

I would say Brethren, if only to perpetuate the theory that Freemasonry was the successor to the Knights Templar, that the statement made by those who had attended the Masonic Congress that was held at Wilhelmsbad; that statement was merely an attempt to deflect attention from the truth, which with some more research from around the globe, may well show that they *were* the true descendants of the KTs!

Thank you!