

Provincial Priory of London

*K*nighly *T*opics



Issue 18

Autumn 2009

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Editorial

Bro Knights,
Thank you for your input this time and please keep the ideas, articles and news from your Preceptory coming.
I am happy to receive your contribution by disk, email or typed.

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Changeover at the Top

A farewell from our Provincial Vice Chancellor, E Kt Clive Thompson, who retires at Provincial Priory in September

In the summer of 2006 when Eddie Goodwin invited me to become Prov Vice-Chancellor I knew it was going to be a challenging position. What I did not realise was how much enjoyment and fun was in store for me! It has been a wonderful experience in my Masonic journey.



Having taken a sabbatical from my business for the last 5 years it is now time for me to return to orchestrate my exit in

*E Kt Clive Thompson,
P Dep Gt Swd B*

2 years time. My enormous appreciation goes to Eddie for giving me the freedom to feel fulfilled in the role, to Mike Fox for his unstinting guidance and support and to the Registrars who have made my life easy for the most part and interesting for the rest.

And particular thanks to my fellow Knights for all the happy exchanges that we have enjoyed; may they long continue in this special Order.

To my successor E Kt Vic Parnis I wish equal enjoyment!

Clive Thompson



Vic Parnis

E Kt Victor Parnis, PGtA-de-C, PPA-de-C is the Registrar of King Edward VII Preceptory No 173 and Empress Preceptory No 178. Taking over from Clive in September I wonder if he ever read the article I persuaded our Provincial Prior to write when he was Provincial Vice Chancellor. The article *The Vice Chancellor - A Lament?* appeared in the Autumn 2001 issue of *Knighly Topics* and begins "Come into my parlour said the spider to the fly". Or more precisely "How would you like to be my Vice Chancellor" said the Provincial Prior to the unsuspecting knight!

Good Luck Vic

Editor

Baluchistan Preceptory celebrates it's Centenary

Bernard Foad, Assistant Registrar of Baluchistan, describes the centenary celebrations and the history of the Preceptory

On 29th May 2009, Baluchistan Preceptory celebrated it's Centenary with a special meeting in Mark Mason's Hall, graced with the presence of the Most Eminent and Supreme Grand Master, Leslie Felgate Dring GCT, the Very High and Right Eminent Great Seneschal, Malcolm Ernest Slater GCT, the Provincial Prior, Rt E. Kt Edwin Goodwin and other officers from Great Priory and Provincial Priory.

The Centenary meeting was presided over by E Kt Dai Davies CBE, with the kind permission of the Installed Eminent Preceptor E Kt John Foad; during the meeting the Centenary Warrant was presented by the Most Eminent and Supreme Grand Master and all Knights were presented with a Centenary Jewel to be worn on their regalia.

The Preceptory also donated £1000 and the alms collected at the meeting to The Hospital of St John at Jerusalem.

Baluchistan Preceptory was founded in Quetta, (in the Northwest frontier region of what is today Pakistan) in 1908 by a mixture of senior British Army officers and civilians most of whom were employed by the Indian Civil Service.

The initiative to form a Preceptory came from Sir Arthur Henry McMahon, a member of Studholme Preceptory in

London, who was the most senior Political Officer in the North West frontier. Sir Henry reported directly to the Viceroy of India. It was Sir Henry who was responsible for the Initiation into freemasonry of His Highness Abibullah Khan, the Emir of Afghanistan. The

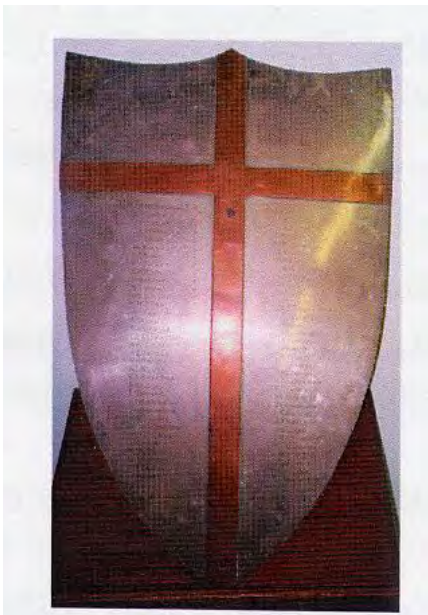


ceremony took place in Calcutta on the 2nd February 1907 conducted by Lord Kitchener.

On the 18th August 1908 a petition was submitted by 10 Knights to form a Preceptory in Quetta, Baluchistan. The resulting warrant was received at the end of October and the first meeting was held in Quetta on the 7th November 1908. Between the 7th November and the 31st December 1908 the roll of members rose to 26. Sir Henry was installed as the first Eminent Preceptor.

Quetta was a major military garrison with both the army and air force having a presence. Quetta also had a Staff College, equivalent to Camberley, for members of the armed forces and many a famous soldier went through its portals. Field Marshal Slim was one and Field Marshal Montgomery was another.

Quetta is also remembered for the dreadful earthquake on the 31st May 1935 when in the space of 30 seconds some 20,000 people were killed in Quetta and a further 5000 were killed outside Quetta including many air force personnel. One of our members, Sir Henry Holland, a missionary in



A Crusader shield engraved with members' names

the Quetta eye hospital was saved by his son and went on to take charge of the rescue.

After the Second World War the number of military personnel stationed in Quetta started to diminish with a resulting loss of active members in the Preceptory. This, together with a move towards the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, reduced the active membership to the bare minimum to enable meetings to take place. Consequently in 1949 it was decided by active members in Karachi to move the Preceptory there where there was a very active Masonic community.

Baluchistan Preceptory settled down in its new home but in the 1960's many expatriates were being replaced by locally employed staff and, once more, active membership dwindled. By 1969 it became obvious that some action must be taken if the Preceptory was to be saved. At this time there were only 5 resident members and 27 absent members, mainly in residence in the UK. Having established support for the Preceptory in London, if it were moved there, it was decided to seek permission to change the meeting place to London. The last meeting of the Preceptory was held in Karachi on the 29th February 1970 and the first meeting in London was held on 8th May 1970 at Mark Masons Hall, Upper Brook Street, London.

On the 18th July 1973 there was a compulsory takeover of Freemason's Hall in Karachi by the Sind Government and

freemasonry was banned in the Province of Sind. Not all the Preceptory's furniture had been returned to England because of the severe import and export restrictions at the time. E Kt Don Williams, our oldest surviving member, took it on himself to go to Freemason's Hall Karachi the evening before closure and managed to save some important items of furniture including all the shields. It became the custom for all members of the Preceptory to have their names inscribed on a Crusader's shield. This custom continues to this day with the latest shield being made and engraved this year; the shields are on display at all meetings of the Preceptory.

After a favourable start in London, membership started to drop as all the Karachi members, some of whom were living up country, found travelling and old age not very conducive to attending meetings in London. Baluchistan, with the help of the Provincial Prior of London, R E Kt. Jack L C Dribbell KCT, a member of Studholme Preceptory, started once more to grow so that today we have a strong and loyal active membership.

Members of Studholme Preceptory have twice played a major part in the history of Baluchistan Preceptory; the first time at its founding and the second on its return to London. So, our thanks go to those Knights, both at home and in Karachi, who worked so diligently to save Baluchistan Preceptory, thus enabling us all to celebrate our Centenary.



The Centenary Meeting

Seventeen Questions

E Kt Graham Illingworth posed these questions in his address as Preceptor to Londinium Preceptory in December 2008

Brother Knights, we're told that Christ was sometimes exegetic, e.g. that Christ sometimes asked searching questions of Pharisees. Being God and therefore omniscient Christ presumably knew the answers to those questions, and Christ's motive was perhaps merely to prick their air of authority.

This evening I aim to be exegetic and to ask you a few questions (17 to be precise), but I assure you that I don't know the answers to them. So I'll indeed be grateful to each and every one of you, if you can provide answers.

My questions come under five headings: (1) the shape of the Cross, (2) the Ascension, (3) the Resurrection, (4) Christ's death and (5) whether a son can be omnipotent.

We get our word "cross" from the Latin word "crux", but in Latin a crux doesn't necessarily have to have a bar dividing it. It can be a "crux simplex" i.e. a simple stake without a bar, or it can be a "crux commissa" i.e. a stake with a bar on top i.e. in the shape of a capital letter T, or it can be a "crux immissa" i.e. with a bar dividing the stake into two parts i.e. a cross in our modern English sense of the word.

Furthermore, if we study the original Greek text of the four Gospels, the word, which we translate as "cross", has the primary meaning of stake or upright pole, something which stands.

What then is our authority for saying that the stake, to which Christ was nailed, had a bar?

I turn now to the Ascension. The KT ritual-book doesn't mention it, but the Malta ritual-book mentions it quite often. The Malta ritual-book does not though say how or whither Christ ascended.

Neither St Matthew's gospel nor St John's mentions the Ascension at all.

St Mark's (Ch XVI v 19) says merely that "after the Lord had spoken unto them" (i.e. to the disciples at their final meal with Christ), Christ "was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God".

That's clearly not very convincing, for unless Mark too was in heaven then, how could he have seen that with his own eyes?

St Luke's version (Ch XXIV v 51) is perhaps a bit more

credible, though it mentions no meal. It says simply that in Bethany, while Christ blessed them, Christ was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

Here it should be noted that, though the authorised English translation says "heaven", the original Greek word can also mean simply "sky".

So this raises the two questions of: "How far did Christ ascend?" and "How could an incarnate person ascend thus physically?"

Did Christ have a secondary respiratory system enabling Christ selectively to inhale some gas lighter than air e.g. hydrogen, methane or helium?

If so, whence did Christ get any such gas?

Was it having such a system that enabled Christ to walk on water?

How far could an incarnate person have ascended and stayed whole?

Where is heaven?

Is heaven within the bounds of space?

What forms any such bounds?

What is beyond such bounds?

I drew some comfort, when I was assured by Rev. Bill Warren who was my Anglican vicar in Richmond that I was not required to believe that Christ "went up like a rocket".

I turn now to the Resurrection. Here again the KT ritual-book doesn't mention it, but again the Malta ritual-book mentions it quite often. It does not though, say that Christ resurged from a state of death, and neither St Mark's gospel nor St Luke's says whence Christ resurged. St John's (Ch XX v 9) merely says that the disciples at the sepulchre knew not the scripture that Christ must rise again "out of corpses", and St Matthew's goes no further than to say that Christ is risen "away from the corpses".

Brother Knights, I myself could rise "out of corpses" or "away from the corpses" by simply lying down in the local graveyard and then getting up again.

So was Christ dead in the sepulchre? Did he actually die on the Cross, or through his crucifixion?

St Mark's gospel (Ch XV v 37) and St Luke's (Ch XXIII v 46) each say in the Greek original that Christ "breathed out" but which is translated rather dubiously in the authorised

English text as "gave up the ghost".

St Matthew's gospel (Ch XXVII v 50) says in the Greek original that Christ "sent away the breath" but which is translated again rather dubiously in the authorised English text as "yielded up the ghost".

St John's gospel (Ch XIX v 30) says in the Greek original that Christ "gave the breath aside" but which is again translated rather dubiously into the authorised English text as "gave up the ghost".

The ancient Greek tongue has a commendable reputation for speaking simply and directly rather than obliquely. So, if it meant "died" or "dead", it would have used a simple and direct equivalent, but only twice in any of the four Gospels does it do so.

In St Mark's gospel (Ch XV vv 43-45), when Joseph of Arimathaea went in boldly unto Pontius Pilate and craved the body of Christ, Pilate marvelled if Christ were already dead. Pilate therefore called unto him a centurion and asked him whether Christ had been any while dead, and when Pilate "knew it of the centurion, Pilate gave the body to Joseph".

In St John's gospel (Ch XIX vv 32 & 33) the soldiers, having broken the legs of the other two crucified with Christ, refrained from breaking Christ's legs, as they saw that Christ "was dead already".

So we have two reports of Roman military persons thinking that Christ was dead, albeit no evidence that any of them were in the Roman Army Medical Corps.

So, brother knights, do any of you have any further evidence that Christ died on the Cross or as a result of that Crucifixion? Neither the KT ritual-book nor the Malta says that Christ did so.

Finally, brother knights, I ask whether a son can be omnipotent.

You may perhaps have observed that hitherto in this talk I've always described Christ as "Christ", and never by the masculine pronouns "he" or "him", nor have I used the pronominal adjective "his" instead of saying "Christ's".

On page 49 of the KT ritual-book we say that God exalted his only son Jesus Christ. In v.4 of the Templars' hymn we sing Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and on p.17 of the KT ritual-book the chaplain invokes the blessing "Dei Omnipotentis, Patris, Filii et Spiritus Sancti" i.e. in English translation "of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit".

On page 12 of the KT ritual-book the Eminent Preceptor calls upon the Chaplain to beseech Almighty God to send

His Holy Grace among us. So we say that God is "almighty" or "omnipotent", that Christ was omnipotent and that Christ was the Son of God.

Surely though, if God incarnate was omnipotent, God incarnate would have had to be able not only to sire a child but also to bear and give birth to a child i.e. God incarnate would have had to be hermaphrodite.

The Gospels tell us nothing of Christ's physique or appearance e.g. they don't tell us whether Christ was short or tall, slim or fat or what the colour of Christ's skin was.

Who apart from Mary and Joseph would have seen Christ naked?

In his revelation (Ch I v 13) St John the Divine writes that he saw one like Christ "girt about the paps with a golden girdle". In the Greek original the word for "paps" tends (though not exclusively) to mean female breasts, and in the vulgate Latin that word is translated as "mamillas", which tends to mean teats through which milk is sucked.

Biologists tell me that all earthworms are hermaphrodites, and that each and every earthworm is capable of breeding by and within itself by using its male facility with its female facility, though in practice (and to avoid inbreeding) it tends almost always to breed with another earthworm, either by using its male facility with the other's female, or vice versa. Are we saying that God incarnate was inferior to and less potent than a humble earthworm?

Child of God. Yes. Issue of God. Yes. Scion of God. Yes. Offspring of God. Yes. I do though have difficulty with the concept of "Son".

One final food for thought. Were God to come again incarnate on this earth, be hermaphrodite and apply for initiation into a Craft-lodge, the constitution would not let any lodge initiate such an applicant, even though as God the Holy Spirit such applicant would already have attended every meeting of the lodge, God being "omnipresent". Let us too remember (as we're asked to do when we close a lodge in the second degree) that, wherever we are and whatever we do, God is with us and God's all-seeing eye observes us. So let us not fail to discharge our duty to God with fervency and zeal.

Thank you, brother knights, for your attention. I sincerely hope that I haven't spoilt your dinner. Copies of this talk are available on request.

A response by Ian Savage to this paper will be published in the next issue. *Editor*

Knights Templar - An Entertainment!

Stuart Henderson, Registrar of Mount Calvary and a member of Sydenham and the London Bodguard Preceptories first gave this paper as a lecture to his Preceptory. The final part - The Disappearance of the Templars will appear in the Spring 2010 issue.

This brief piece is meant to entertain my brother Knights. It is not intended to persuade anyone to any particular view, as in the intervening period of just around one thousand years, what was fact and what is myth have become inextricably intertwined. Indeed it appears that most myths are based to some extent upon fact, and are in the modern parlance “spun” by the agenda of the author or authors.

The usual story is of the founding of the Order as the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon in 1118 to protect the pilgrims in the Holy Land. Until 1128 there appear to have been only nine knights, but from 1128, after the monastic Rule was given to the Templars by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the Order expanded at an extraordinary rate. The end started on Friday 13 October 1307 when the Order was raided on the orders of the King of France. The Order was officially dissolved in 1312 by Papal decree and in March 1314 Jacques de Molay, the Grand Master, was roasted to death over a slow fire.

In 1306 the French King had carried out a similar operation against all Jews in France, expelling them, but seizing their property.

It is said that the dissolution of the Templars on Friday 13th October was the beginning of the notion of Friday 13th being unlucky. In the Languedoc, where about one third of the Templars European property was located, it is still said that when the 13th of October falls on a Friday, strange shadowy figures can be seen at night.

The Rule of the Templars

It was Bernard of Clairvaux who wrote the Rule of the Templars, based upon the Rule of the Cistercian Order, of

which he was head. Bernard was a hard-nosed character and a devious politician. Having written the Rule, it was one of his protégés who, as Pope, declared in 1139 that the Templars would in future be answerable only to the Papacy.

But was Bernard all he appeared to be?

This political manipulator and quite unscrupulous monk was apparently devoted to the Virgin Mary. He wrote many sermons on the subject, but it appears that he was particularly fond of Black Madonnas, that are associated with another Mary.

He wrote nearly ninety sermons about the Song of Songs linking the Bride with Mary of Bethany – who in those days was unquestionably Mary Magdalene. Bernard was born at the Black Madonna centre of Fontaines near Dijon, and claims to have received three drops of miraculous milk from the breast of the Black Madonna at Chatillon. It is thought this may have been a coded reference to his initiation into her cult.

Mary Magdalene is said to have been a head sister of the Nazarite Order – the equivalent of a Bishop - and was entitled to wear black. She is described in early Christian texts as “the woman who knew the all”.

St. Bernard preached the sermon that triggered the First Crusade from the Magdalene centre of Vezelay.

In drafting the Rule, he specifically mentioned a requirement for the obedience of Bethany, the castle of Mary and Martha. Thus it appears that the great Notre Dame cathedrals in France inspired by the Templars and Cistercians were dedicated not to Jesus’ mother, Mary, but to Mary Magdalene.

The Magdalene played an important part in Templar life. The Templar Absolution runs “I pray God that he will

“Mary Magdalene is said to have been a head sister of the Nazarite Order – the equivalent of a Bishop.....”

pardon you your sins as he pardoned them to St. Mary Magdalene and the thief who was put on the Cross.”

The rule is curiously silent upon the initial stated purpose of the Order - to protect pilgrims.

Some items from St. Bernard's rule.

Remember that the Templar were warrior monks.

“None should fear to go into battle if wearing the tonsure”.

“No brother shall have a lockable purse or bag.”

“Let no brother have a cover on his shield or lance.”

And the rules of engagement in battle were also set out plus the licence to kill from the Church.

“...this armed company of knights may kill the enemies of the cross without sinning.”

As St Bernard wrote, “Rejoice, brave warrior, if you live and conquer in the name of Lord, but rejoice still more and give thanks if you die and go to join the Lord.”

“I will take the cup of salvation. For just as Jesus gave his body for me, I am prepared in the same way to give my soul for my brothers. This is a suitable offering; a living sacrifice and very pleasing to God.”

On the other hand there were some other rules varying from the purely practical to what now appears a little odd.

Templars were allowed to have linen shirts because of the heat that exists in the East.

Pointed shoes and shoelaces were strictly prohibited “for it is manifest and well known that these abominable things belong to pagans”; nor should they wear their hair or their habits too long.

Not everyone welcomed the new Order.

A Cistercian abbot writing during St. Bernard's lifetime wrote “...that this dreadful new military Order that someone has pleasantly called the Order of the Fifth Gospel was founded for the purpose of forcing infidels to accept the faith at the point of a sword. Its members consider they have every right to attack everyone not confessing Christ's name. We do not maintain that what they are doing is wrong, but we do insist that what they are doing can be an occasion of many future ills.”

Warrior Monks

“Because of the shortage of bowls, the brothers will eat in pairs. But each knight may have three horses”. Perhaps this

was a practical encouragement of the “buddy” system practised in modern uniformed organisations. The aim of eating together was that one was to study the other. Getting to know your buddy might well involve helping him in battle when things go wrong – might involve having to share a horse. This situation is of course shown on the seal of the Poor Soldiers of Christ. Does it depict poverty – a shortage of horses or was it the symbol of each Templar's sworn duty to live and die for his brother knights?

For the first few years until Papal recognition, the Templars had no distinctive habit. They wore secular clothing. The new Rule required them to wear white mantles and cloaks to show that they had abandoned the life of darkness and passed to the light of purity and chastity. It is reported in the 1140s that they began to sew crosses – an eight pointed red cross in red cloth on their mantles.

Each Templar knight wore a coat of mail with a white surcoat, a padded leather jerkin underneath, chain mail covering the legs, iron shoes and a conical helmet. He was armed with a shield, a lance and a Turkish mace. He carried three knives - a dagger, a bread knife and a pocket knife.

The Templar banner - the *Beauceant* as we call it, or the *Beusant* as indicated in manuscripts at Cambridge - was a pennant divided into two horizontally with the black above and the white below. It was sometimes emblazoned with the red cross gules of the order.

What does *beauceant* mean? One French encyclopaedia suggests *baussant* – meaning of two colours. Horses are *baussant* when they have black legs and white feet.

There is debate about the interpretation of the banner. Does it represent the triumph of good over evil or the two classes within the Order? Knights wore white and the sergeants black. Whatever the explanation of its origins, it was the colours to which the Knights rallied and it was so important that a second was carried into battle furled on a lance in case the first fell in battle.

“no brother must leave the battle field to join the garrison as long as it had an upright baussant gonfanon”

To be continued in the next issue - Editor

A new Knight responds to a Toast

This year Kt Pietro Bini who resides in Pergia, Italy, was exalted into British of Madeira Preceptory, one of a small number of Italian Knights in this Preceptory. This is his thoughtful response to the toast at the Festive Board.

I am honoured and overwhelmed by the joy of being accepted by this sacred and prestigious Preceptory.

Along our spiritual and formative path, we start from the first degrees, apprentice, fellow and master to get to the Royal Arch where we learn to pronounce the Holy name of God. By getting to this degree, which is also an engagement of life, we learn to defend the values of our traditions.

Holding the Knight's sword, thanks to you, I can start to accomplish the quest. In these days, between relativism and false myths, we can be those who keep alive the seed of the traditions. Finally, I wish to tell you that my Mother Lodge, Michelangelo, held in Sansepolcro is located a few hundred metres from the remains of the ancient road which took the crusaders from the north of Europe to Brindisi and to Jerusalem, via the sea. The same road which led King Richard the Lionheart to fight in the Holy Land. I'm proud to cover it on my way to reach you.

Thank you Bro Knights Templar in the Bonds of the Order.

Diary Dates 2009

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|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Provincial Priory (Temple) | Tuesday 29 September |
| Great Priory (Malta) | Tuesday 17 November |
| Provincial Carol Service | To be announced |
| Londinium Preceptory | Wednesday 16 December |

2010

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|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Provincial Priory (Malta) | Friday 29 January |
| Great Priory (Temple) | Wednesday 20 May |

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