



Knight Templar



VOLUME LXVII

February 2022

NUMBER 2



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Michael Burke Johnson
Grand Master

James C. McGee
Grand Captain General and Publisher
307 South Dr.
Fairhope, AL 36532

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Lawrence E. Tucker
Grand Recorder

Grand Encampment Office
 5909 West Loop South, Suite 495
 Bellaire, TX 77401-2402
 Phone: (713) 349-8700
 Fax: (713) 349-8710
 E-mail: larry@gektusa.org

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John L. Palmer
Managing Editor

Post Office Box 566
 Nolensville, TN 37135-0566
 Phone: (615) 283-8477
 Fax: (615) 283-8476
 E-mail: ktmagazine@comcast.net

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Cover photo of an ancient
crusader cemetery at Athlit
in Israel taken by Sir Knight
Michael S. Franck.

Grand Encampment web site: www.knightstemplar.org

Grand Master's Message

As we begin the second month of this new year, our country is being tried and our *Constitution* ignored. Crime in all forms, including breaking into businesses and stealing the contents and the murder of innocent citizens seems to be the new normal our politicians want. We have the “Canceled Culture” crowd who seem to want to destroy businesses and people they do not agree with. The “Woke” crowd seems to believe that socialism should be the way of the future so we can all be government puppets. The government will provide for all your needs, just as long as you agree with them. The sad truth to this matter is that we stand to lose our freedom and all the principles for which this great country stands.



We are living in times of no respect for laws or our police. Corruption and immorality seem to be the rule and guide for some of our politicians. Moral principles are being laughed at and thrown to the ground to be trampled on. Our politicians pick and choose what parts of the *Constitution* they will follow and what parts they will ignore. This sets a bad precedent for the future. If a civil society is to survive, we must all obey the civil laws and our *Constitution*. Breaking laws, tearing down national monuments, and trying to erase history must be stopped at every level, or this wonderful country and its people will not survive.

Some of the “Canceled Culture” is being tried in our Masonic fraternity. We have Grand Lodges that withdraw recognition from other Grand Lodges just because they don't agree with a grand master's decision or the constitution that governs that Grand Lodge. We have fifty Grand Lodges who all have separate constitutions and grand masters that are charged to uphold their constitutions. We, as Freemasons and Knights Templar, must respect all of the regulations that were voted on by the brothers of those jurisdictions. It is not our duty to judge another Grand Lodge for upholding its constitution and regulations, as long as it obeys the ancient landmarks which constitute the true governance of our Grand Lodges and our appendant bodies.

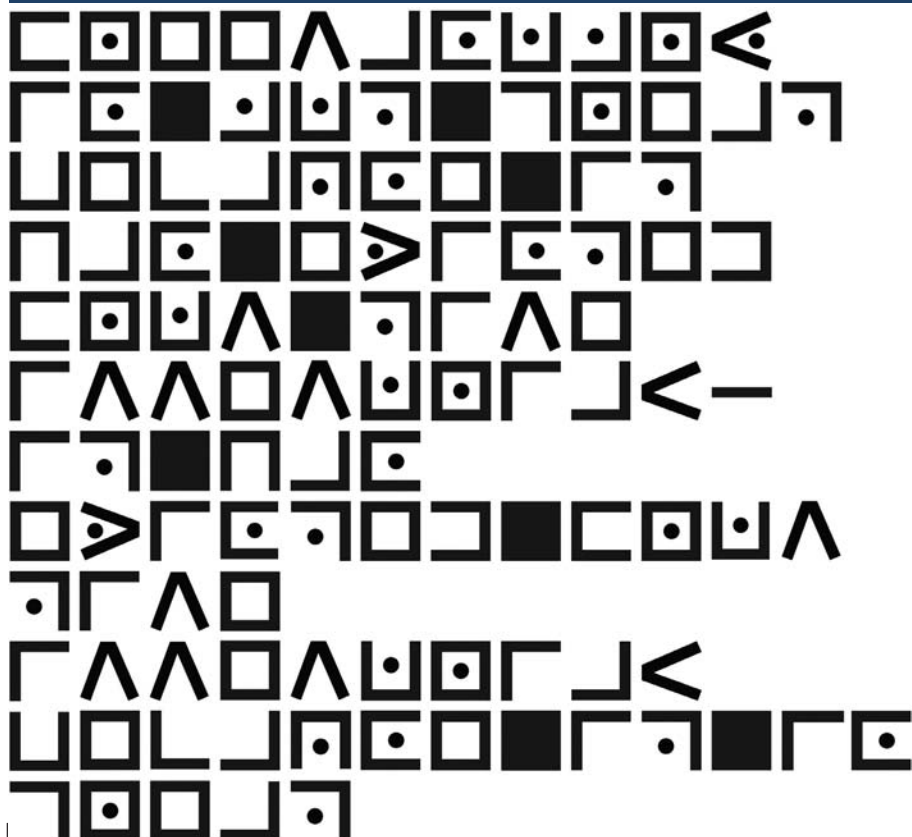
There are brothers who do not agree with the *Constitution of the Grand Encampment* or the powers of the grand master. The *Grand Encampment Constitution* is clear that only at a stated conclave can decisions be reviewed. Sections of the *Constitution* may be added or deleted by the voting delegates of the Triennial Conclave. Some of the “Canceled Culture” think they can be loud enough or disruptive enough at other Grand Encampment meetings to get their way on certain matters concerning our *Constitution* or decisions of the grand master. The Knights Templar are Christian soldiers who are bound by the obligation they took upon the *Holy Bible* to defend our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to be governed by our *Constitution*. Our *Constitution* states that you must be a Christian to become a Templar, and it is the duty of every Knight Templar to uphold our *Constitution*.

Knight Templar Magazine Available on Your Smart Phone

The *Knight Templar* magazine is now available on your smart phone including your state supplement. Just download the application from either the Apple App Store at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/knight-templar-magazine/id1422046085?ls=1&mt=8> if you have an I-Phone or the Google Play Store at <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.axiosdigital.KnightTemplar> if you have an Android based phone. Then each month, you will be automatically notified when the new issue of the magazine is available. One tap and you are reading the magazine!

If at some point in the future, you want to discontinue the delivery of your paper copy and save the Grand Encampment some printing and postage expense, the recorder of your local Commandery can have it stopped by updating the membership database.

Of course, the current issue of the magazine and all previous issues are still available on-line at <http://www.knightstemplar.org/KnightTemplar/>.



Prelate's Apartment

by
Reverend Robert J. Elsner,
associate grand prelate of the Grand Encampment

Loving our Brothers

Among men these days, love seems to be one of the most difficult topics to address. As a psychologist, I deal with the fallout of the fear of or lack of love on a daily basis. As a preacher, I see the fallout of the fear of or lack of love every day.

Sir Knights, we should trust that God loves us. We are made in God's image (Gen 1:27) with the capacity to love, and that capacity is limitless. We do not need to be afraid. There are at least seven Greek words for (and forms of) love in the *Bible*. We tend to think of Love as either *Eros* or *Agape*. *Eros* is the bodily love of sex or carnality. *Agape* is the selfless love of community. The other forms include: *Philia*, brotherly love (as in philadelphia: brotherly love from *phileo*, "to love," and *adelphos* "brother,"); *Storge*, parental love; *Ludus*, playful camaraderie; *Pragma*, the comfortable familiarity that binds people not otherwise close; and finally, *Philautia*, the love of self.

In Commanderies, I have seen all of these, *Eros* being appropriately directed toward our own wives or inappropriately directed toward gluttony. I have learned to tell brothers that I love them, and sometimes remind them of the words that best describe the loves I feel for them. *Agape* and *Philia* are most common, but with some I have *storge*, some *ludus*, some *pragma*. I am able to share with them because I have just enough *philautia* to be secure in myself, and that security comes from my love of God (See 1 John 4: 19-21 and John 3:16-17). You are made in the image of God, and God loves you. Love one another. If you cannot reach *agape* love, try for *philia* love. Put up with each other and stretch for *pragma*. Remember that you are beloved of God and must reflect enough of his love to achieve some of the *philautia* so that you can allow others to love you as well.



IT'S ALL ABOUT VALUE

By

Sir Knight John S. "Jack" Ranck, PGC

Thanks to Zoom, I was able to attend the Northwest Department Meeting for the first time in twenty-five or more years, something about moving back to Ohio, my home state, in 1999. The first three topics were about membership. We were presented charts showing gains and losses of Grand Commanderies in the Department.

In the discussion, Sir Knight Birely of Colorado brought up the concept of value. I piggybacked on his comments with the result of a Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) survey done several years ago which tried to identify why the veterans' organizations, specifically the VFW, were not being successful in getting post-Vietnam veterans to join. That survey showed that the younger veterans wanted to do something more than go to a meeting, hear the minutes of the previous meeting read, pay the bills, and go home. They wanted to do something, something ranging from golf or bowling outings to constructive activities like participating in Habitat for Humanity. They wanted to have something of value.

Veterans organizations are not the only groups that are having trouble gaining new, younger members. Other social and fraternal organizations are having the same difficulty. Freemasonry is having that difficulty, too, progressing in the York Rite from Lodge to Chapter to Council to Commandery. Like other organizations, we are seeking ways to attract

new members of quality.

For those of us in the Commandery, our field of new members is limited to membership in Chapter, Council, and Lodge. There is an overall average percentage of prior body membership all the way down to Lodge, i.e. a certain percentage of Brothers will join the Chapter and Council, and a certain percentage of Companions will join the Commandery. One way to increase our membership is to increase membership in Lodge, but how do we do that? It's all about value.

Let's look at a thirty day month. In that month there are 43,200 minutes. The average workday is eight hours, and, allowing a half-hour commute time each way that is 540 minutes a day or 12,420 minutes a month allocated to work. Using thirty minutes per meal (that's what we were allowed as Cadets at the Air Force Academy) that's ninety minutes a day or 2,700 minutes a month. Next comes sleep. Assuming eight hours a night, that's 14,400 minutes a month. Deducting those three necessities, work, dining, and sleep, that leaves 13,680 minutes for all other activities. Those minutes are divided between family; entertainment; and other duties such as housework, yard work, shopping, and homework. It's about competing for some of those 13,680 minutes.

Our first need is to give the uninitiated quality men a reason to use some

of those 14,000 minutes to join a Lodge. How do we then, once initiated, passed, and raised, convince this person to use some more of those minutes to attend a Lodge meeting and to become involved in Lodge activities. Lodge meetings usually last between an hour and a half to two hours, ninety to 120 minutes once or twice a month. What can we show as a value for donating that time to being a Mason? If we are to be successful, we must meet the individual's needs. If we are successful in that task, then we will be successful in our efforts to obtain quality and sustained membership.

The Lodge is only the first step. The next step is providing value to the engaged Mason through continuing his advancement in the York Rite, the value in becoming a Royal Arch Mason, a Capitular Mason, and finally, a Knight Templar. If we have done our job properly in finding and encouraging good quality men to join the Lodge, they will see the value we place in our memberships and activities through active involvement.

We have always attracted individuals from a huge variety of backgrounds, so we must be able and willing to tailor the relevance of value to be meaningful to each individual, seeking out what his values are and how becoming a Mason, a Companion, and a Frater matches those values. Some seek to be leaders and will pursue rising through the line of offices in the several bodies to obtain leadership opportunities. Some seek to be doers and will prefer projects and activities. The various activities with which Freemasonry is involved usually has one or two chiefs but each needs a cadre of indians to do the work. Such activities include fundraising for the many charities of Freemasonry, assistance proj-

ects for the local communities, parades, and county fairs. Some are enthusiastic learners or researchers who enjoy sharing what they have learned and discovered. Freemasonry offers many opportunities for research and study. We are, after all, an organization with volumes of history and esoterica. Then there are those who just like to feel good because they have done something good for others. We all know the hundreds of opportunities we as Masons, Companions, and Fraters have that meet this special Masonic value.

Yes, it is all about value. What are we Knights doing to help our Lodges to demonstrate value to the quality uninitiated? What are we doing to help our Lodges, Chapters, and Councils grow? This is an individual task, because each of us has certain abilities. As stated previously, our efforts must be individualized and tailored to the prospective uninitiated, then in turn to the Brothers of Lodge and to the Companions of Chapter and Council. Fortunately, some of our efforts will reach more than one individual. As a Sir Knight, one of thousands, we must communicate one with another in our Commanderies, Grand Commanderies, and Grand Encampment what we have done to help others see the value of becoming a Mason, a Companion, and a Frater; what has worked and what has not worked.

Sir Knight John S. "Jack" Ranck is a past grand commander of Knights Templar of Washington He can be contacted at jsranck@neo.rr.com.

Athlit

An Ancient Crusader Cemetery

By
Sir Knight Michael S. Franck

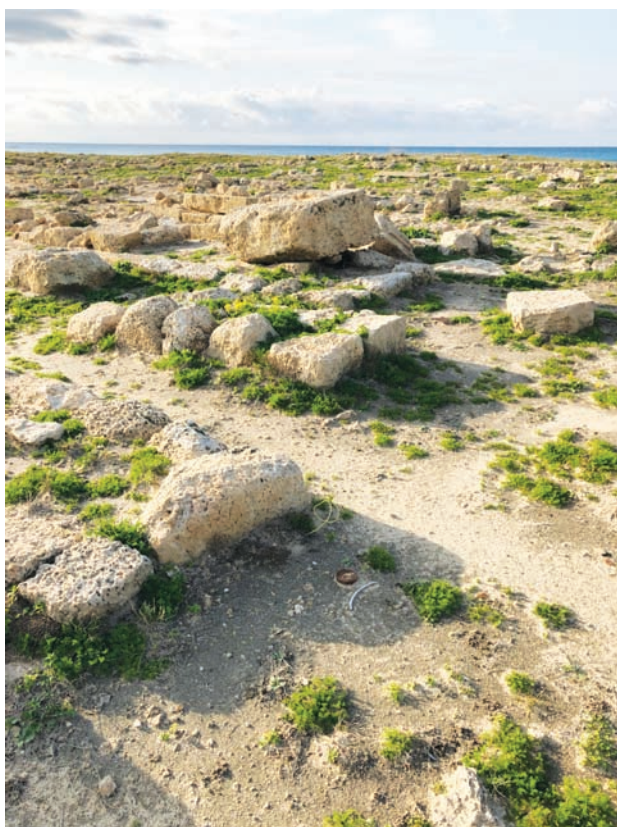
Along the Mediterranean coast of Israel, about twenty kilometers south of Haifa, are the remnants of Athlit cemetery, a Crusader and pilgrim burial ground that dates back to the 13th century.

About 1,700 tombs occupy Athlit, located along the beach and within walking distance of Chateau Pelerin, a fortress built in the spring of 1218 by the Knights Templar. The fortress was in a strategic location to consolidate Crusader strongholds and to protect convoys, dignitaries, and pilgrims traveling from Akko (Acre).

This past February, 2020, I explored Athlit's ancient cemetery while visiting my son who is a graduate archeology student at the University of Haifa. As a hobby, I have studied hundreds of cemeteries in the United States and Europe, but I had not seen a burial ground (the size of a football field) like Athlit that is so abandoned and dilapidated. The passage of time and spray from the nearby ocean

has eroded most of the monuments that lie flat on the ground. In one area of the cemetery were graves and skeleton parts in open sight. Fortunately, those skeletons were later reburied after our visit.

What's most interesting about Athlit are the gravestones decorated with stylized patterns of crosses and icons, indicating the status and profession of



knight templar



his fifties found with his arms folded over his chest and his hands placed in prayer. Metal pieces found next to his skeleton were part of a staff, a common accessory for pilgrims and the first example found in the region. Others were the victims of violence, such as a skeleton with a bashed skull and broken arm caused by a heavy sword. Archeologist Yves Gleize of the University of Bordeaux, who excavated the cemetery for several years, speculates that this type of damage is the result of a Templar victim from a Muslim siege.

A Curious Symbol

After my week-long trip to Israel, I came back to Michigan and studied the photos of my trip that included Haifa and Jerusalem. Many of the Athlit cemetery photos were sent to my Masonic Brother, Scott Wolter, who is a geologist, noted author, adventurer, member of Wayzata Lodge 205 in Minnesota, and the host of the History Channel's "America Unearthed." While thumbing through my photos, Scott brought to my attention a curious symbol in $\frac{3}{4}$ -quarter relief on an upturned stone block in the North end of the cemetery. At first glance, the image looks like the letter "L," but Scott asked the question, "Is this im-

the deceased. The image of the cross is clearly seen on several stone slabs at the North end of the cemetery. Most crusaders in other locations, like medieval Christians, were typically interred with their feet facing east, in anticipation of Christ's return from that direction. Past archeological digs record that Athlit's burials are generally oriented with their head facing the fortress and feet facing Northeast. Artifacts found in Athlit cemetery include potsherds and coins that date from 1218 to 1291. This time period coincides with the fall of Acre to the North that ended the crusades in 1291.

Athlit's dead were primarily buried in shrouds, lowered into pits, and covered with a lid anchored with stones, a common method in France during that period. Some burials included pilgrims who chose to be buried at Athlit, perhaps due to the proximity of relics in the castle's chapel, as in the case of a man in



age a square, similar to a stonemason's working tool?"

Brethren and Sir Knights, look at the



stone block even closer. Did you notice the other image inside the square? Does this smaller image represent the working tool of a small compass? Some readers may argue that these two symbols mark the grave of a stone mason, maybe something else, or just coincidence. For the time being, we may never know.

In this regard, these symbols can lead the way to further discussion and Masonic research, which is in many ways an unfinished temple of its own. One can only encourage those Masons who approach the history of our craft with the conviction that more questions are waiting to be answered.

Sir Knight Michael S. Franck is a member of Detroit Commandery 1 in Detroit, Michigan. He can be reached at Michael.s.franck.civ@mail.mil.



These washed out remains have since been reinterred.



With Eyes Forward

While the Covid-19 pandemic has caused many adjustments and some cancellations, the Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage program moves ahead **with eyes forward**.

Keep in mind this vital date: **September 20**. It is the date each year that all Pilgrim Ministers are to be registered with the registrar of the Grand Encampment Committee on the Holy Land Pilgrimage. It is the same date every year. Grand recorders and your state committee chairman need to have sent in the:

1. Registration Form
2. Nomination Form
3. And full payment by that date.

The groups of Pilgrim Ministers travel in February. There are many arrangements, reservations, bookings, and details to be put in place from September through the end of January.

All other activities can happen year-round. These would include: recruitment of ministers to be nominated (see Guidelines for Selection), fundraising, and program promotion. Ministers can be nominated by a local commandery and those nominations forwarded to your state Holy Land Pilgrimage Committee or chairman at any time. Donations and fundraising can also be an ongoing enterprise.

Always check the web site listed below for the most current information and details.

In addition:

In the Footsteps of Jesus Holy Land Pilgrimage for Sir Knights, their Ladies, Friends, And Guests is open to anyone. Each person is responsible for his own fees and expenses related to the pilgrimage. Each person is responsible for being able to manage his own luggage and follow the itinerary. This pilgrimage is an eleven-day program that covers as much ground as possible in the touring days. We average five to seven miles of walking many days, often uphill or up steps and on uneven surfaces.

Current plans are moving forward for the next **In the Footsteps Pilgrimage** for November 7 – 17, 2022. See the website listed below for more information.

Stay up to date at: kthlp.com (Remember the first letters of Knights Templar Holy Land Pilgrimage.)



A Chat with the Managing Editor

By

John L. Palmer, G.C.T.

Reading our grand master's message triggered some thoughts I have been having about the current cultural trend in these United States. At each Templar meeting, we pledge allegiance to our flag and to "the republic for which it stands." Being a republic means that we are governed by laws, not by other people. This is a rare privilege that most of us have enjoyed for all of our lives and that most people in this world never get to enjoy. I fear that we may lose that privilege before I leave this world. These laws have been established by our elected representatives throughout our history as a nation.

The trouble, as I see it, is that we are beginning to ignore these laws if we disagree with them rather than to try to change the laws in an orderly and lawful fashion. People don't even obey traffic laws much anymore, resulting in an unimaginable number of deaths and injuries. We seem to be ignoring our laws concerning immigration on a grand scale. Our election laws seem to be ignored. If we want to change these laws, we should be electing representatives and instructing them to do so rather than just ignoring the laws we have on the books. There are lawful ways to change every law we have, including the *Constitution*. Maybe the reason we don't change the laws is that most of us like them the way they are. If so, then why do we tolerate this lawlessness?

I think that the whole problem may be based on the "modern" or current attitudes about morality. In a society where it is believed that every person can define his own morality, it is not a stretch to believe that everyone can define his own individual laws. Of course, this is impractical, because we all have to live together, and our actions affect our neighbors. This idea will lead to total anarchy and chaos.

When law and order totally break down, let me assure you that there will be some would-be dictator who will offer to restore order on his terms and that most people will be perfectly willing to let him do that in order to restore some semblance of civil order, even at the sacrifice of their liberty.

Maybe this all starts with going forty miles an hour in a thirty miles an hour zone. If so, then the whole system can be influenced by us as individuals. All it takes is a little selflessness. Isn't selflessness one the hallmarks of knighthood?

Maybe we, as Templars, have more control than we think we do and should try to exercise it by at least setting an example.

We publish articles from a variety of sources and points of view. The opinions expressed in these articles do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy of the Grand Encampment, the *Knight Templar* magazine, or the Editorial Review Board.

Meet Our Department Commanders

Sir Knight David Michael Dryer Right Eminent Department Commander North Central Department

Sir Knight David Michael Dryer was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on February 20, 1948. His educational background is a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Iowa and Juris Doctorate degree from Drake University. He began his legal career as assistant attorney general for the state of Iowa, then an assistant warren county attorney, and subsequently opened the Dryer Law firm in Indianola, Iowa, specializing in real estate law. Dryer is a lecturer on the faculty of Simpson College and was elected for one term as alternate district associate judge.

He received a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) commission as a 2nd lieutenant in the United States Army and served as a platoon leader, aide de camp, company commander, numerous staff positions, and instructor of the Officer Advance Course and the Command and General Staff Officer Course. He retired as a lieutenant colonel after twenty-three years of military service, primarily in the United States Army Reserves.

Sir Knight Dryer married Cynthia L. Koester in 1970. They have two children and four grandchildren.

Brother David took his symbolic Lodge degrees in 1978 and served the Grand Lodge of Iowa as grand marshal in 2014. He joined the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite in 1999, was invested a knight commander court of honor in 2003, and was coroneted a 33rd degree inspector general honorary in 2009.

Sir Knight Dryer was exalted, greeted, and knighted in 1999. He served as grand commander of the Grand Commandery of Iowa in 2008-09 and as north central department commander in 2009-12. He is serving as chief adept of Iowa Societas Rosicruciana. He has received the Knight Templar Cross of Honor, Knight York Grand Cross of Honor, and Knight Grand Cross of the Temple and is a regent in the York Rite Sovereign College of North America.

Sir Knight David Dryer was appointed to serve as the north central department commander by Most Eminent Grand Master Michael B. Johnson, GCT and was installed at the 68th Triennial on August 18, 2021.



NEW CONTRIBUTORS TO THE KTEF CLUBS

Grand Master's Club

| | | | |
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| Lever E. Stringfellow..... | AR | Donald R. Tapia..... | AZ |
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| Lloyd Smith..... | IN | James G. Russell..... | LA |
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| Craig A. Cox..... | VA | Alan S. Truax..... | VA |
| Matthew J. Vepraskas..... | VA | Charles R. Davis..... | WA |

Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc. 54th Voluntary Campaign

We have just passed the midway point in the 54th Annual Campaign, and it becomes my duty to report on the contributions received so far.

First the good news. The individual category has had some substantial contributions from approximately six Sir Knights. The Grand Commanders' and Grand Masters' club programs have been steady and are growing.

However, contributions are down in the calendar program (which includes the calendar and labels). The calendar campaign accounts for thirty percent of total contributions. After the news of the short fall sank in, individual realization hit me; had I sent in mine? How could I ask the Sir Knights

to support the program if I hadn't done it myself? Once home, I checked my desk, and sure enough, there the envelope was, unopened. I quickly wrote a check, placed it in the return envelope, and mailed it the next day. This goes to prove that many times you need look no farther than your own back yard to find the answer.

Why do we continue our support? Those of you who have had the opportunity to attend the Department Conferences, witnessing firsthand the Knight Templar Eye Foundation presentation, have seen the wonderful work and accomplishments that have been achieved through the grant programs and research. Those success stories are possible because of you; let us not stop now. Promise me that you will find it in your heart to mail your contribution today.

I am including the link to the Knights Templar Eye Foundation .pdf presentation used during the Department Conferences for those who were unable to attend. Lots of good information is contained therein.

<https://knightstemplar.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ktef-1.pdf>

The Knights Templar Eye Foundation is our (yours and my) opportunity to make a difference in this world, making a definite change, "That Others Can See."

Thank you for your continued support.

Onward Christian soldiers.

In His service,

Lon W. Kvasager, KCT
chairman, 54th Annual Voluntary Campaign



The Effects of the Black Death on Christian Religious Thought and Practice in the 14th Century

By

Sir Knight George L. Marshall, Jr., PGC, KGT

In a previous article, published in the May 2021 issue of this magazine, titled "How Not to End a Pandemic," I presented a picture of the Flagellant movement which arose in response to the pestilence of the Black Death which struck Europe in late 1347, first in Italy and then in the next few years spreading to other countries of Europe. What were the effects of the Black Death on the Roman Catholic Church and, consequently, the other major religion then extant in Europe, namely Judaism? The Church was an extremely important part of daily life for European Christians. The terrifying fear of the torments of hell and of an eternity without God was very real. Many regarded this plague as sent from God as a righteous chastisement for the sins and immorality of mankind.

During the Black Death, or as it was known at the time, the Great Mortality or Pestilence, the Church labored mightily to cope with the epidemic's damaging consequences, and as a result, its reputation deteriorated. Thus, the Black Death contributed greatly to a decline in the confidence and faith of the Christian lay people regarding the Church and its leadership. The inability of the clergy to deal effectively with the plague may also have played a role in the continued disillusionment which resulted in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century.



During the Black Death, or as it was known at the time, the Great Mortality or Pestilence, the Church labored mightily to cope with the epidemic's damaging consequences, and as a result, its reputation deteriorated. Thus, the Black Death contributed greatly to a decline in the confidence and faith of the Christian lay people regarding the Church and its leadership. The inability of the clergy to deal effectively with the plague may also have played a role in the continued disillusionment which resulted in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. The average cycle of recurrences of plague after 1351 was six to fifteen years, continuing until the late fifteenth century. In this article, I will examine the first plague's (1348-51) effects on the clergy and its duties, briefly review the Flagellant movement, and finally, look at the extensive Jewish persecutions (pogroms) that ensued during the plague.

The Plague vs. the Clergy

As stated above, a decline in the reputation of the clergy was an incident of the plague. The clergy played a crucial role in medieval society, because they served as a direct link between the lay population and the church. During times of crisis and suffering, it was the clergy to whom people looked for guidance and consolation. The fact that the pestilence struck down God's anointed, resulting in a sizeable decline in the members of the clergy, combined with the reduction in quality

and frequency of clerical services, created an unreliable image of the church in the minds of many medieval Christians.

Due to the rise of heretical sects, such as the Cathars and Waldensians and their heterodoxy, the established church had already begun to lose its power and influence within Christendom, and the Black Death simply increased the escalating division between the church and the populace. Thus, there was a decline of faith of the Christian population in the established church because of the extreme mortality rate of the clerical populace, the failure of the church and its leaders to serve the people effectively in their time of need, and the numerous moral deficiencies among priests that were evident in many parishes throughout the Black Death.¹

Hamo Hethe, the Bishop of Rochester in 1349, wrote about the many churches he saw suffering because of the plague. He said that “parish churches have for a long time remained unserved, and the cures (of souls) there are in danger of being almost abandoned, to the grave peril of souls.” During the height of the plague in 1349, roughly forty-five percent of the priests in ten dioceses throughout England died, with some rates reaching as high as fifty percent. One of the highest rates of mortality recorded among priests during the Black Death was in the diocese of Barcelona, Spain, where it reached sixty percent. Comparing this with the mortality rates of the lay people, an analysis of existing manorial and tax records reveals mortality rates of forty to seventy percent among the English peasants. Norman Cantor states, “Its direct impact on the church was more in the way of affecting personnel. At least forty percent of the

parish clergy, equal to the mortality rate among the peasants and workers they ministered to, were, in the late 1340s, carried off, being wiped out, and many abbeys were similarly devastated, even though these were privileged precincts.”⁶

The smaller churches, often located in the remote and secluded European countryside, felt the effects of clerical decimation and were forced to survive with much reduced resources and staff. This problem can be seen in a response to the archbishop of York from Pope Clement, VI, who allowed a request from a province for extra ordinations after observing their limitations. The pontiff stated, “Because of the mortality from plague which overshadows your province at this time, not enough priests can be found for the cure and rule of souls or to administer the sacraments. We want to find an appropriate solution to the problem, because we fervently desire an increase of worship



and the health of souls and have therefore inclined favourably to your request.” The impact of the death toll among clergy members was significant, because it resulted in the loss of the church’s front-line troops, its most experienced and valuable members.

The monasteries and nunneries were also severely depleted as a result of the Black Death. As Francis Gasquet tells us,

“The religious houses were never able to regain the ground lost in that fatal year (1349). Over and above this, moreover, the sudden change in the tenure of land, brought about chiefly by the deaths of the monastic tenants, so impaired their financial position, at any rate for a long period, that they were unable to support the burden of additional subjects.”¹⁴

Ziegler writes of the altered perception toward the village priest by the laity: “With his ordination, surely he acquired too a touch of the superhuman; remained a man but became a man apart? After the plague, his vulnerability so strikingly exposed, all trace of the superhuman must have vanished.”²⁷

The *ars moriendi*, or art of dying, was an important tradition for the Christians of medieval Europe that helped them prepare for the journey after death. Confessions and the giving of last rites were an important part of this tradition, because they “encouraged the living to accept the loss of their loved ones, recruit others to continue the work of the departed, mend the rift in the social fabric that death had caused, and return to their daily labors,” as Herlihy informs us. In ordinary circumstances, after people died, their bodies were removed from their homes to the burial site, where their friends and family gathered and a priest blessed the deceased before the bodies were interred. Through this process, says Herlihy, “not only the dead but the living, too, were introduced into a new phase of existence. Rituals helped restore mental and social *equilibria*.”¹⁸ Such rituals and sacramental services were important because they allowed the Church to help calm both the fear and the acceptance of death among Christians, but during and after

the plague, priests labored to effectively perform them.²⁶ The incredible rate at which the plague killed, so vividly described by Giovanni Boccaccio in his introduction to *The Decameron*, and the “inability of the clergy (either due to their own mortality or because they had fled) to meet the sacramental demands of so many deaths, threw the comfort of the *ars moriendi* into disarray.”⁵

Giovanni Boccaccio described hasty burials that were performed by priests in the wake of the plague: “Nor were these dead honored with tears, candles, or mourners. It had come to such a pass that men who died were shown no more concern than dead goats today.”⁵ Traditionally, burials were witnessed by the family and friends of the deceased, and it was important for the living to experience the rituals as well. It is not surprising that people began to comment on the absence or lack of these sacramental services. A witness at Avignon spoke of a similar instance: “No priest came to hear the confession of the dying, or to administer the sacraments to them. People cared only for their own health [and that of their families].”⁶ Other writers told of how the church did not provide proper spiritual comfort to the people during the plague. The fear and paranoia that people experienced during the plague only worsened when they saw the local priests abandon their posts. These instances were notable because “in a world in which performance of an appointed role was very important, many clerics no longer seemed to be doing their jobs.” The clerical leaders were thus seen to be just as helpless against the plague as the ordinary lay people.²⁶ As Ziegler so aptly puts it, “Yet the slender evidence that exists shows that [the

clergy] lost in popularity as a result of the plague. They were deemed not to have risen to the level of their responsibilities, to have run away in fear or in search of gain, to have put their own skins first and the souls of their parishioners a bad second.”²⁷

In many cases, church leaders were obliged to reduce the minimum age requirements simply to fill the depleted ranks of the clergy. While the age of these new candidates was not the only factor in the decline in quality of the clerical services performed, it no doubt had an impact on the need of the church to react quickly and effectively to the existing crisis.²⁶ Norman Cantor describes this situation, asserting, “During and immediately after the Black Death, priests were ordained at twenty rather than twenty-five. Monastic vows could be administered to adolescents at age fifteen rather than twenty. Priests took over parish churches at age twenty instead of twenty-five. It was a younger, much younger church that came suddenly into being, and one now staffed heavily with undereducated and inexperienced people.”⁶

Whether these new clerical members were youthful or not, the lack of

experience that most of them possessed was harmful to the church’s objective to restore stability and comfort to the Christian world in this time of fear and uncertainty. Many of them were also uneducated, which was an obvious problem when this newly minted clergy was unable effectively to read and understand the *Bible* and texts by the church fathers about which they were supposed to preach to their congregations. The confidence and belief in the leadership of the church was significantly weakening, and the incompetence of its new clergymen only exacerbated its tarnished reputation among Christians.

As might be expected, as the supply of qualified and experienced clergy dwindled, the demand for their services did not, and yet another reason for popular distrust was the fact that the cupidity of certain of the priesthood who were quick to take advantage of the situation by demanding higher fees and salaries. Ziegler tells us, “In this plague, many chaplains and hired parish priests would not serve without excessive pay.”²⁷ One archbishop of Canterbury grumbled about such priests, “[they] gorge their bellies and afterwards work themselves up into a lather of lechery over various fleshly delights, until at last they are dragged down into the very vortex of the whirlpool of evil – a detestable scandal to the clergy and the worst possible example to the laity.”

In areas where the lay population had been decimated by the plague, parish priests found it safer and financially more rewarding to become spiritual advisors and chaplains to the great lords in their castles or manor houses. An additional source of revenue was the increase in sales of indulgences to a



frightened people who now became even more concerned with their fate after death and how their past sins would affect their judgment by God.

Because of the increased disenchantment with the priesthood, people found other ways to practice their faith, without the intervention of the clergy. One was by an increase in charitable giving, particularly to hospitals; another was through the increase in pilgrimages to shrines which, as Gottfried tells us, "the faithful were performing a religious act directly, using a saint rather than a priest to intercede in their behalf."¹⁵ Another outlet was through mysticism and communal living, where the members lived a simple life of austerity and prayer, without feeling the need of an ecclesiastical hierarchy to guide them.²⁶ Yet another was directed appeals to saints known for their mercy or power against disease, such as the Virgin Mary, St. Sebastian, St. Anthony, and St. Roch.

Happily, not all clerics were guilty of the lapses and faults mentioned above, for there are instances of noble self-sacrifice and devotion to duty, but the relationship between the shepherds and the flock had obviously been strained, and it caused the people to find other ways to replace the stability and structure that

had vanished from their lives. The Black Death played a big role in this because "it gave birth, in many cases, to a smouldering feeling of discontent, an inarticulate desire for change"²⁷ as Ziegler informs us. The local priests and bishops were a vital part of the Catholic Church that allowed them to have good relations with the Christian communities they served. The Black Death significantly changed the clerical image in the minds of European Christians and guaranteed the continuing decline of their reputation for many years thereafter.²⁶ This poor image of the church and its clergy may well have proved the spark for the protests of John Wyclif and other advocates of reform in the coming decades.

To be continued in the next issue.

Sir Knight Marshall, PGC, KGT, is a member of the Editorial Review Board as well as chairman of the Grand Encampment Knights Templar History committee. He is a frequent contributor to this magazine as well as to *The Royal Arch Mason* magazine. He can be reached at geomarsh@yahoo.com.

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Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc

How to join the Grand Commander's or the Grand Master's Clubs

Any individual may send a check in the amount of \$100 or more specified for the purpose of beginning a Grand Commander's Club membership and made payable to the Knights Templar Eye Foundation. This initial contribution will begin your Grand Commander's Club membership. In addition, members of the Grand Commander's Club pledge to make annual contributions of \$100 or more. Once contributions total \$1,000, the individual is enrolled in the Grand Master's Club. Membership is open to individuals only, and Commandery Credit is given for participation.

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Congress has now made the qualified charitable distribution (QCD) option permanent for those who wish to make direct contributions from their IRA to charity. The tax law allows individuals required to make minimum distributions due to age to transfer up to \$100,000 a year from their IRA to a qualified charity. This distribution counts toward their required minimum distribution but isn't added to their adjusted gross income the way a normal IRA distribution is. This can provide a tax savings of up to 40% depending upon an individual's tax situation. Please discuss with your tax professional whether this option could benefit you in your charitable and retirement planning.

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Your Foundation now has a full web site dedicated to Planned Giving which you can access from our web site, shown at the bottom of this page. So if you're thinking of ways to make a lasting legacy for yourself please check out the tab on the home page that says "Planned Giving". Leaving your mark on the future is so simple with a gift in your will. To leave a gift in your Will or Trust it is as easy as asking your attorney to include a sentence that says:

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Leadership Notes

Leadership begins with the Entered Apprentice

Most Companions and Sir Knights that I have spoken with remember that first night of Masonry, their initiation. Some focus on a relationship, some ritual, and others the entirety of the experience. What is always the same is that it was memorable. This was the night that you committed to trusting the men of your Lodge to help you with the path you chose to become a “better” you and were introduced to how to do this both consciously and subconsciously by a system of learning designed to accomplish just that.

The first step was to get your attention and breakthrough the barriers and filters that you had developed throughout your life. This not only had to be your decision, it had to be further supported by changing how you interacted with your environment, even to the point of making it so that you had to rely on others. With no distractions, you were asked to specifically declare that you were intentionally present, a conscious commitment. You were deprived of the sense of sight, thus stimulating your other senses. Three dedicated Brethren then guided you to the point where you declared your faith in God.

Now that you were prepared to be “in the moment,” the initial lessons of Freemasonry – that you can actually be in control of yourself and decide your responsibility – could be given to you. This was broken into three parts: the experiential example, your stage or work area, and the in-depth background of every part of your experience.

Freemasonry is taught in such a way as to be usable by any man, regardless of background. The choreographed exposure to ritual, symbols, and activities provides a common baseline that is experienced before it is explained, allowing you to remember and associate the lessons more readily. The circumambulation about the Lodge took you past symbols that denote inculcation (ashlars), past obstacles that require further declarations, and to specific stations to find the next steps which expose that there are convergent and overlapping processes to success, that our decisions should be reviewed and intentional, and that others’ perspectives might facilitate completion. As all have had the same experience, a fertile ground for effective communication and trust had been established.

In preparation for the many deeper points conveyed to you, a framework designed to focus your intention and direction was shown. The twenty-four-inch gage and the common gavel are tools that recommended that you manage your time and direct your efforts while learning and applying the principles presented in the lecture. By dividing your time in a purposeful manner and allowing for all aspects of a balanced life to be considered, you will be more able to accomplish your goals and prioritize your work. Using the gavel as prescribed, to adapt your habits and activities to be aligned with the tenets presented, helps to remove the obstacles to

creating the future that you want.

The lecture for this degree imparts the many ideas and ideals that help us to steer every thought, word, and action to be the best “us” in every moment. The review of every symbol, the environment as a whole and parts, and the virtues that underlie every action to which you were previously exposed, provided you with a cause – effect – result – consequence reference that could then be applied throughout your life. This was given to you in lecture form, and as with all ritual in Masonry, it is understood that this could or would be committed to memory, whereby even the most obscure information would be a ready reference for you.

An Entered Apprentice learns that he is serving his best self by serving others and investing his energy, effort, and time into aligning his thoughts, words, and actions. The start of each of our journeys was a choreographed experience – “veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols” and was the springboard for the development of habits and the adoption of new expectations for ourselves. Continuing the journey by performing or attending (which is still performing – you are there for them) others’ Entered Apprentice degrees, practicing time management, and understanding yourself in order to make better decisions in the moment and by reviewing the lessons of Masonry is our recipe for becoming a more personally effective and contributive member of the fraternity and society at large.

Personal effectiveness is a quintessential part of being a leader. As such, it is the title of the first course in the York Rite Leadership Program. This series of executive training courses brings together concepts and practices from well-known leadership authors, coaches, and education theorists with a slant toward volunteer organization environments. They are also designed to continue the learning from our degrees and orders.

If you want to learn more about leadership principles, join the York Rite Leadership Training Program. Visit the website at YorkRiteLeadership.org for more information and to register for the program.

Sir Knight Steve Balke
York Rite Leadership Faculty

IN MEMORIAM



Tony Ernest Telken
North Dakota
Grand Commander 2011
Born: November 24, 1965
Died: December 4, 2021



Beauceant News

Faith, Loyalty and Love

Thank you to Past Supreme Worthy President (Mrs. David A) Sonja Alcon for embracing the mission and for making individual donations of \$25, \$50, and \$100 through Elizabethtown Assembly 265. She will receive each certificate and recognition in her Assembly.

Please remember to make your contributions payable to: "Supreme Assembly" and in the memo line: "for the Knights Templar Eye Foundation" and process it through your recorder so your Assembly receives credit for your gift!



Our order has two kinds of emeriti officers which are honored after serving ten consecutive years as either supreme recorder or supreme treasurer. Our most recent supreme treasurer emeritus is (Mrs. Daryl L.) Michele Burt of Melrose Assembly 204 in Texas, who was elected as supreme recorder in 2010 and served until 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. She joins two living emeriti officers; (Mrs. Richard D.) Carlene Brown, supreme recorder emeritus from Wichita Assembly 8 in Kansas and (Mrs. Jack C.) Eunice Gravatt, supreme treasurer emeritus and member of Topeka Assembly 24 also in Kansas.

Like most emeriti officers, she continues to serve in her Assembly. Currently, Mrs. Burt serves as recorder, an office she has held since 2016. Prior to this office, she served as assistant marshal, marshal, standard bearer, color bearer, mistress of the wardrobe, preceptress, second vice president, first vice president, worthy president, and oracle. Her dedication to the success of our order is greatly appreciated.

Thank you, Mrs. Burt, for making life sweeter and better for others through your service. Pictured here are Mrs. Burt with her mother, (Mrs. John A) Velma Kleinfelder, past supreme worthy president 2008-2009.

A group of members from San Antonio Assembly 159 surprised (Mrs. Harry) Bobbie Davis with a birthday party on Nov. 11, 2021. She was 101 years old on November 25. Mrs. Davis was initiated by Athens Assembly 172 on April 22, 1952, demitting in 1966. She has been an active member of San Antonio Assembly since February 21, 1977, and received her fifty-year pin in 2013. She was worthy president in 1983 and supreme assistant marshal in 2011-2012.



Pictured above: (bottom-left to right):

(Mrs. Thomas) Diane Beckley, past president; (Mrs. Harry) Bobbie Davis, past president; and (Mrs. Robert) Mary Sue Cox, past president.

(top-left to right):

(Mrs. Gene) Gay Carnes, past president; (Mrs. Terry) Monette Littlepage, past president; and (Mrs. John) Mary Brogan, past supreme worthy president and current worthy president.

A Templar Origin of the Jolly Roger?



By
Sir Knight Stephen F. Miller



There are many interesting stories about the origin of the “Jolly Roger” flag, the white skull and crossbones on a black background. Some are pretty straight forward and some very convoluted. Most of them, however, agree that the skull and crossbones symbol originated with the Knights Templar. This article discusses how one of our symbols may have unintentionally become the international symbol of piracy.

The use of flags for signaling, battle control, and national identity has a long and varied history, going back many hundreds if not thousands of years. Use of cloth, silk, or other banners has been found in such widely scattered areas as ancient China, Egypt, and Europe. However, the widespread use of flags, banners, and streamers did not come into common use, especially on ships in the Western world until the 12th Century, close to the time the Knights Templar appeared on the world stage.

Flags and banners had two basic uses, identification and signaling. The use of flags for signaling and command and control on the battlefield is pretty straightforward: This is our flag, that is the enemy flag. Green flags mean go forward, red flags mean stop.

The study of flags for identification is a fascinating and complex study in its own right. The use of colors and crosses on flags and uniforms during the Crusades was a matter of such importance that there is reference to the fact that the pope himself had to get involved in

deciding who got to use what colors. Add in the rise of symbols such as lions, eagles, shields, and crowns that began the traditions of heraldry which were starting during this time, and the possibilities for flag design approaches infinity.

Flags quickly assumed specific meanings. One flag may represent a king or other nobleman granted that privilege, another may identify its carriers with a specific military order, such as the Knight Templar Beauceant. Likewise, flags carried on ships could signify the ship’s owner, the allegiance to a particular king or city-state, or the health of the crew (whether or not they were under quarantine) and also indicate such commercial matters as the cargo it was carrying.

Although much has been written about the “lost fleet of the Templars,” usually in connection with lost treasures, voyages to the New World, Oak Island, and Scotland, there is not much evidence in literature of the Templars being a maritime or naval power. They were predominately a heavy cavalry organization who fought well as infantry or foot soldiers. Although they may have had a small number of fighting ships of various types, their use of ships would have been mainly as troop carriers or supply ships. They more than likely augmented their own ships with merchant ships hired to carry a specific cargo.

We are all familiar with the history of our order, how it was founded in 1118 for the primary purpose of protecting Christian pilgrims going to Jerusalem. Howev-

er, it was not until the Council of Troyes in 1129 that the order was officially recognized and confirmed by Pope Honorius, II, who ordered Bernard of Clairvaux (later venerated as Saint Bernard) to draw up the formal rules for the order.

There then followed a series of papal bulls by various popes that granted the Templars rights and privileges which no other organizations or orders enjoyed. These bulls were the *Omne datum optimum* (1129), *Milites Templi* (1144) and *Militia Dei* (1145). These bulls gave the order tremendous freedom of action in its affairs, making it answerable to no one but the pope. Included in these rights were exemptions from various shipping expenses such as tariffs, port or harbor charges, customs, and duties. Templar ships could come and go as they pleased without regard to local authority. To non-Templar captains of other ships, they could have been viewed as thinking that they were “above the law,” “outside of the law,” or even arrogantly, as “outlaws.” So how does the Jolly Roger come into play?

For that, we must turn to the gruesome part of the story, the disposal of the remains of fallen knights. Other than mummification, embalming or other means of preserving a body were not commonly available in those days, yet some means of transporting the bodies of fallen kings and knights to their homeland was needed. The terrific heat in the Holy Lands quickly decomposed bodies. Burial in a non-Christian land however, far from the family vaults and lands, simply was not allowed.

One solution was the practice of “defleshing” or “excarnation” in which the body was boiled in water, wine or vinegar until all the flesh and organs fell

off leaving just the bones, which could then be wrapped in cloth or skins to survive the long voyage home for “proper” burial. (Note: In 1299, the Pope banned this practice, along with “evisceration” in which certain organs such as the heart were removed from the body for burial elsewhere.)

The skull and crossbones is an ancient symbol of many things but is mainly associated with death. The skull is the seat of the brain and dwelling place of the soul, while the crossbones are made up of the femur or thighbones, the largest bone in the human body. As an emblem on a flag, its first appearance is lost in the mists of time, but there is mention of it being used on Templar ships. I propose that it was originally flown not as a symbol of terror or piracy but merely to indicate that the ship carried remains, the excarnated bones of fallen knights and nobles on their final journey home and was not to be delayed or subjected to local regulation.

The early 1300’s saw a convergence of events that contribute to this proposed theory. Flags were beginning to be used widely on ships to identify fealty and cargo, the de-fleshing of bodies and transporting the bones on the sea was a common practice, political and economic instability encouraged piracy, and we have a powerful organization in place that was exempt from the laws that governed most maritime fees and activities.

When the Templars were shut down in 1307, it is not hard to imagine a ship’s crew that no longer had employment and was used to living outside the regular laws of shipping, commerce, and nationality, turning mercenary or pirate. To fly a flag that identified them as part of a religious order that was not

restricted by the normal rules and laws of navigation would no doubt give them some tactical advantages through the element of surprise.

I once took a final exam in a college geology course in which we were given a geologic rock column and told to use it as a basis to write a natural history of the area it was taken from. The professor told us that as long as our answer explained all the observable facts in the information we were given and it did not violate any scientific principle or law, our answer was acceptable, as the question was one of interpretation.

Under these same parameters, I submit that the traditional “Jolly Roger” flag of white skull and crossbones on a black background had its origins in identifying a ship that carried the remains of a Knight Templar on his homeward voyage for burial, but that this identification was taken up by less upstanding folks as the symbol we associate today with death, piracy, and terror.

Sir Knight Stephen F. Miller is a member of Columbus Commandry 69 in Columbus, Ohio. He can be contacted at MillersGang@copper.net.

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