

VIEWING ROSSLYN CHAPEL FROM A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Review of *The Rosslyn Hoax* by Robert L. D. Cooper

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How many times over the past twenty years have we purchased new books that attempt to rewrite the history of Freemasonry and Scotland? The myth of Freemasonry's Templar origins is as old as the high degrees themselves. But prior to the early 1980s a relative few had even heard of the Templars or Rosslyn Chapel. The virtual explosion in popular books on these subjects can be traced back to the 1982 publication of the book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, by British authors Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln.

It was followed by a confusing array of literally hundreds of other publications by an almost equal number of authors all wishing to add their own "discoveries" to the mix, and each one eager to cash in on the public's increasing thirst for answers to the questions and mysteries unearthed in the previous books.

Today, one can hardly visit the local mega-bookstore, browse the inventory of online booksellers, or turn to a cable television channel, without being confronted with the latest twist on the increasingly entangled and convoluted histories of Freemasonry, the Knights Templar, the Holy Grail, the Shroud of Turin, the mysterious (if non-existent) Priory of Sion, the Da Vinci code, the "Eye in the Pyramid," etc. And they all seem to lead back to the common ground of Rosslyn Chapel, just south of Edinburgh, and the St. Clair family. The authors of these books have written volumes about Freemasonry, and especially Scottish Freemasonry, but too often they simply get it wrong.

It's safe to say that no one would rejoice at the discovery of real solid evidence supporting a Templar/Masonic connection in Scotland as much as Scottish Rite Masons. The Scottish Rite Supreme Council itself is, in effect, or-

ganized as a neo-Templar organization. And a number of our Scottish Rite degrees celebrate the deeds of the medieval Knights Templar. But too often Masonic readers, like the general public, are tempted to eagerly embrace this new genre of pseudo-history without dispassionate consideration and critical analysis.

Robert L. D. Cooper, Curator of the Grand Lodge of Scotland Museum and Library, has spent over twelve years researching this book. According to Cooper, during this time he has researched and answered "thousands of enquiries from all over the world on subjects as diverse as the Kirkwall Scroll, Scottish Freemasonry, the Knights Templar, famous Freemasons, so-called secret societies, the St. Clair family and of course Rosslyn Chapel." A comparison of the results of his research with the work of popular writers has exposed major differences between Scottish Freemasons view of their history and heritage and that described by those who are not Freemasons.

"I thought it was time for a Scottish Freemason to contribute to the discussion on Rosslyn Chapel and Freemasonry—with the hope of adding some clarity," says Cooper.

In the conclusion of the book, Cooper answers the question in its title. He writes, "Yes, everyone has been hoaxed; not only the public but Freemasons themselves have been victims of a sustained attempt to make them out to be something they are not."

The book, beautifully illustrated, includes 73 illustrations (21 in color), 9 appendices, a 16 page bibliography, and is fully indexed. For more information:

www.rosslynhoax.com.

Published 2006 by Lewis Masonic, Ian Allen Publ. Ltd. (www.lewisasonic.co.uk); Hershams, Surrey KT12 4RG, England; 316 pgs, illustrations; hardcover; £19.99. ☺

