TRANSCRIPT OF

“THE ROSSLYN HOAX”

A LECTURE BY BRO. ROBERT COOPER

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Well good evening everyone! I am delighted to be here in Greece; I have never been to your country before, so I look forward to having a look at some of your famous monuments before I go home; they are much older than the ones we have in Scotland and that is why I want to see them.

This evening I want to talk about Rosslyn Chapel but for one reason, that is because so much has been written about Rosslyn Chapel and Freemasonry. I want to approach that subject.

I suppose most of you know that Freemasons cannot get involved in politics or religion as Freemasons. That is why our history and culture are very important, and I am delighted that so many non-Freemasons learn a little bit about the history and culture of Freemasonry.

For Freemasons who are here I am going to perhaps ask, pose some questions, and for those who have read a lot about this particular subject are I am also going to perhaps ask them.

The first question then, the first question I think we have to ask ourselves, not just Freemasons but everyone – “Where do we learn about Freemasonry; where do we get our information about what Freemasons are, what they do, what they stand for ?” Well, there are a variety of different and possible places; fortunately I think most of them are interesting if not always accurate.

How many people here have read “The DaVinci Code” by Dan Brown ? How many have seen the movie ? (Yes, the movie is not so good !) So here Freemasons have a big problem because Dan Brown has written and sold 50 million copies of his book about Rosslyn Chapel and Masonry, and most of those 50 million people are not Freemasons. “The DaVinci Code” is simply the last in the long line of books that have been written about Freemasonry by people who are not Freemasons and people who are not Scottish, and we have a big problem when it comes to this.

But the one which really started the ball rolling was “The Temple and the Lodge” which was the book by Michael Baigent which tells the story of the Knights Templar and their alleged connection to it published in 1989.

So let us tell you very quickly the story. Most of you will know it very much, but very quickly the story is that the Knights Templar discovered something
in Jerusalem and they came to Scotland in 1307 with treasure which they hid in Scotland, and helped Robert the Bruce at the battle of Bannockburn. Robert the Bruce then invented Masonry so he could say to the Pope there are no more Knight Templars in Scotland.

According to this theory therefore, all Freemasons in the world today are actually Knights Templar!

Many of these things you can no longer examine. The battle has gone many hundreds of years ago – there is very little to see; that is why Rosslyn Chapel has become very important; it has become central to the story because you can go and see the building.

This [referring to a photograph] is what Rosslyn Chapel looks like today. I don’t know if any of you have been there – it is a very special place, so if you ever come to Scotland you should go and see it anyway.

Hopefully when you go there this contraption, [referring to a photograph of the chapel under restoration] the cover to the chapel will have gone; it is there to allow the water to seep through the stone to let it dry out before it can be renovated.

Some of the problems I now want to discuss with you, most of you having read the “The DaVinci Code” or whatever, here are some problems that I would like you to bear in mind when again other books or movies appear, and Freemasons should prepare for Dan Brown’s latest book. The first problem is the Knights Templar came to Scotland in 1307; but Rosslyn Chapel was not built until 1446.

Rosslyn Chapel was built as what we call a Collegiate Church. Now, in the Roman Catholic Church a collegiate church is built in order to say prayers and masses for the souls of a particular family and also for burying their human remains, and this is why it was built for the Sinclair family.

Only very rich families could build their own church which meant that it was not the property of the Church. It was the property of the Sinclair family who were very rich in that area, so they had their own church and it is why it survived was because the Roman Catholic Church or the Protestant Church could not touch that church and that is why it still survives.

We can go through this very quickly, but the church was dedicated to one saint, St Matthew, which is very important in that we shall see as we go along. It was Matthew who was Rosslyn Chapel’s patron saint.

Many other families did exactly the same thing, had money to fund their own church and decide on how it was built. There are about 42 other churches in Scotland built and used for he same purpose.
We can see that the people who built this church built it for themselves, and only for themselves; other families could not go there, I could not go there, only if you were a member of the family could you go there.

This [referring to an illustration] is a famous picture of St Matthew who is always shown a a winged man and this is important for what comes later.

OK, so why then does Rosslyn Chapel become different? Everything I have just told you is accurate, and are recorded in documents; we know the family built it, we know why they built it. But what has happened is that popular authors have changed it from being a Roman Catholic church to something else – they have made into a copy of Herod’s Temple.

Here we come to one of the major problems we have with dealing with the history of Scotland, of my country, where all the information we know about Rosslyn Chapel is put to one side, and a new history has been invented and replaces the known facts.

I can [referring to a diagram] illustrate this no better than showing you the ground plan here. This is the ground plan of the church as it is today, and it is used in the book by Knight and Lomas “The Hiram Key” saying that it is a copy of the ruins of Herod’s Temple in Jerusalem.

The plan [referring to a diagram] is the same of most Roman Catholic churches in the west of Europe and is based on the crucifix, the passion cross of the crucified Christ. The top of the cross is known as the choir, the arms are the transcepts, and the long tail is the nave. This is the basic design of all Roman Catholic churches.

What most of the authors will not tell you is that the foundations for the rest of the church are actually in place. They were just never built upon and that [referring to an illustration] area shaded grey, are the remainder of the church and the foundations (which were never used) still lie underground today.

This is the design for most churches throughout Western Europe – sometimes they were not quite accurate, but they were all essentially based on the cross that Christ was crucified on, so in that sense Rosslyn Chapel is not special in term of its basic design.

Just to show that there is nothing special about Rosslyn Chapel, here [referring to a photograph] is one that is very close to Rosslyn Chapel; another collegiate church whose design is very similar. It is maybe 12 miles from Rosslyn but there are about 42 other “Rosslyn Chapels” in Scotland.

Typically, how it was laid out was you would have a castle for the rich family to live in, and the chapel nearby - castle and chapel.

Just to show again how very important [referring to a photograph] even closer to Rosslyn Chapel is yet another collegiate church it also has the very same
layout as Rosslyn Chapel – another of the same this one is called Seton Collegiate Church and there is another close by called Crichton.

Right, so we have the situation where we have established that Rosslyn Chapel is not special.

What is more it has been made special by the writers of this book, [referring to the cover of “The Hiram Key”] and that is what we are going to talk about.

We have a situation that something that is not Masonic is made into something Masonic by people who are not Freemasons.

So what makes Rosslyn Chapel special, and why has it been made into a Masonic building, is the fact that the builder decided to do something very different from any other church, and that was to fill it, fill every square inch, with carvings.

The most important carving [referring to a photograph] is the carving of the “Apprentice Pillar” and this story, the legend associated with the Apprentice Pillar, is that the master mason who was in charge of building Rosslyn Chapel was asked to build a very ornate pillar from a drawing and he said “I need to see the original in order to be able to build it; it is too complex and I need to go to Rome to see it”. When he came back he found the pillar had been built whilst he had been in Rome, and it had been built by an apprentice. He was so jealous that he killed the apprentice, who had the temerity to build this beautiful pillar when he could not.

This story also exists in Freemasonry, but it is not quite the same. Non-Masons have misunderstood the story in Rosslyn Chapel and have linked the two together by error.

This [referring to another photograph] is just another example of the Apprentice Pillar and you can see that this is very ornate, a very special piece of carving.

To reinforce the legend within Rosslyn Chapel, there are carvings of the head of the murdered apprentice who made the pillar and who had exceeded his station in life. The story of the murdered apprentice is not special to Rosslyn Chapel; it exists in many other places including in many parts of Europe, in Germany, and even in an Islamic mosque in Egypt.

So we have the situation where what has happened is that many of the carvings that exist in Rosslyn Chapel have been re-interpreted as being Masonic, and the first one you can see here [referring to a set of photographs] is one of a carving of a man on a horse which if you don’t look carefully, looks like two men on a horse just like the seal of the Knights Templar. This is not Masonic, not within Freemasonry; but it is made Masonic within these popular books.

This [referring to an illustration] is a picture of a priest holding a consecration cup. Some people have said that the treasure that the Knights Templar
brought back from Jerusalem was the Holy Grail, and this is supposed to be the Holy Grail (the cup) the priest is holding.

Imagine if one of the most important artifacts for Christians all over the world was actually hidden in Rosslyn Chapel? There is no doubt it, according to these books it is in Rosslyn Chapel, and what are we Christians doing to find it? – Nothing!

If we had the Holy Grail on display in Edinburgh we would get more tourists visiting us than come to Athens!

What is important I think to remember is that many of these writers misunderstand what symbols are. There is no Masonic symbolism in Rosslyn Chapel; what there are, are carvings that have been re-interpreted as being Masonic symbols. And so this [referring to a photograph] is an image of a man wearing a blindfold with a rope around his neck, supposedly being led into a Masonic Lodge for his initiation – this is the interpretation being given to this carving – but it is a carving, not a symbol and what is more it is an image that is not used within Freemasonry – yes, Freemasons have dozens of symbols but I have never seen this one used within Freemasonry.

But I think you have to read the Gospel according to St Matthew to understand what the carving is because it talks about the blind leading the blind.

This is perhaps the most worrying aspect of what the popular writers have to say. We have many figures of men with wings in Rosslyn Chapel, and [referring to some photographs] these curious poses of where they have hand in one place and hand in another place are described in the official guidebook as being Masonic, so the guides to Rosslyn Chapel have jumped in logic – if this is an angel in a Masonic pose, therefore this is a Masonic angel!

I can think of no better way of upsetting the Church by telling them that Freemasons claim to have our own angels!

Remember this is being said by non-Masons but members of the church don’t know that as so assume that it is we Freemasons who are making these claims.

Some more examples [referring to some photographs] of so-called “Masonic Angels”.

Another very interesting story that you find by many authors is the claim that some of the carvings show that people must have gone to America before Christopher Columbus because there are carvings of corn – carvings around a window [referring to a photograph] are supposed to have corn on the cob (or maize) which at that time only grew in America.
But this is opinion only and there is no way to prove that these carvings are corn. But the other thing to mention is that if it was true it means that the Scots discovered America – and we want it back!

So I have phoned President Bush to ask him when we Scots can come and take over but he is always busy!

Symbolism is very important within Freemasonry, we love our symbols; we have so many we don’t know what to do with them all. The important thing to remember is that symbols may look the same but mean different things, so [referring to a photograph] the “Green Man” is a good example, and there are many green men in Rosslyn Chapel, according to some writers mean that it is Pagan – it does not. It used to be Pagan but the Christians took it over but changed the meaning from Pagan to Christian yet they still look the same.

So what has Christian Rosslyn Chapel been changed into? Instead of being a Christian church it has become a Pagan building, a Jewish temple, a Masonic Lodge or a Knight Templar building – but not Christian.

The title of the book that contains all this information is – [referring to a picture of the cover] – “The Rosslyn Hoax?” We do not have any here but you can order them on Amazon if you want. It covers much, much more than we have discussed here just Rosslyn Chapel. It tell the story, the true story, of the origins of Freemasonry, which began in Scotland and how it developed and more importantly it explains how and why so many popular authors have used and changed the the history of my country to sell their books.

It has been an honour for me to come all the way from Scotland to tell you a little bit, just a very little bit, about Rosslyn Chapel and Freemasonry. I think we have time to take some questions; I will answer or try to answer via our translator pointing at Mr X because my Greek is terrible!

If as you said there is nothing particular, nothing special, about this chapel, I wonder why it has attracted so much interest, why has it become so much a symbol of all these myths, why?

Rosslyn Chapel has become special because it is mentioned in practically every book about Freemasonry written over the last 25 years, beginning with “The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail” in 1982. In other words it has become embedded in the non-Masonic mythology of Freemasonry – but it has been embedded by non-Masons into our history. It is said that if you repeat something often enough, with enough conviction, people very quick believe it to be true. This is what has happened here.

It is not a question really, it is just the fact that whenever we humans built something great there is always a sacrifice; a human sacrifice. In Greek myths or history we do have this human sacrifice for the foundations of this great whatever; in Greece we still kill a rooster.
Yes, originally with all buildings in the old world were dedicated with a human sacrifice, then it became an animal (such as a rooster) today in many parts of the world no animal is used at all but the ceremony of laying a foundation stone remains.

What could we say to the one that questions about the crypt of Rosslyn Chapel? And the second question is for the ones that wonder would it be possible that the treasure, the Templars' treasure, or any other treasure to be found in the crypt of Rosslyn? What do you think about that?

When these churches were built they were built for two reasons; the one as we have already said was for the saying of prayers for the souls of the deceased members of the family, but it was also used as a burial vault for the actual human remains. And of course, the reason why the human remains were buried in the vault below the floor of the church was because that was as near to God as you could get on this earth – the church was after all God's house on earth, so if you were buried in His house you were very privileged. It was very important for these families to be buried in their church to God. We know that there are 9 generations of the Sinclairs buried under Rosslyn Chapel, so there were funerals on a regular basis; in-and-out, in-and-out, yet nobody noticed the Holy Grail lying in a corner?!

A friend of mine bought me a document about Rosslyn Chapel and among other things he saw a compass and other Masonic things – are they really there? And if so may they have been added?

I think they have been added to illustrate what Freemasons do but I would really need to see the pictures first.

The Sinclair family has all this relationship with the Brotherhood and this chapel has this relationship with the Sinclairs, so surely there is some kind of relationship?

Freemasonry and mythology, and the new mythology has been an incredibly complicated claim...let me give you an example. One of the reasons why the Sinclairs are directly linked to Freemasonry is because the first Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Scotland was William Sinclair of Rosslyn (1700 – 1778), so you can see a non-Mason thinking there must be a connection – why choose him as the first Grand Master? The reason of course was that the Freemasons of 300 years ago were trying to create a pedigree going back further than England, so the Masons themselves were partly to blame for creating this mythology in the beginning. Just to reinforce that cycle of mythology, William Sinclair was the last man to be buried under the floor of the chapel, with a Masonic ceremony as well. It is easy to see why people are saying there must be a connection. It is only by looking at the facts that we begin to see that there is no such connection. We Freemasons need to learn to study our own history for ourselves rather than reading popular books.
written by people who are not Freemasons especially those who do not know anything about Scottish history.

Do you want me to answer the question about Robert the Bruce? The people who have this theory say that the Knights Templar came onto the battlefield at Bannockburn, just when the battle could go either way, and these Knights Templar, who had come from France in 1307, came in on the side of the Scots at the last minute. And they beat the English, and therefore Scotland became an independent country, and that is the theory that these authors will give you that it was heretic French Knight Templars who saved Scotland, or who saved Robert the Bruce. But the problem is that contemporary writers from the 14th (such as the book: *The Bruce* by John Barbour written about 1355) century tell you who those people are, and they are not Knight Templars. The other problem I have with that claim is that it means the Scots didn’t win Scotland’s independence, the French did that for us!

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The rosslyn hoax? by W. Bro. Robert L. D. Cooper. The author has chosen an interesting and provocative title for his latest book - The Rosslyn Hoax? So what is it all about I asked? Bruno V. Gazzo, Editor of PS Review of Freemasonry interviewed the author to find out more