

Acknowledgements

S*words at Sunset* ends a trilogy of books about the Holy Grail in North America that began with the 1981-1983 investigation of a ruined castle in mid-peninsular Nova Scotia. This book naturally follows *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic* (1988) and *Grail Knights of North America* (1998), both published by Hounslow Press of Toronto which later joined the Dundurn Group of publishers (which I usually call just “Dundurn Press”).

In some ways, *Swords at Sunset* is also a follow-up on yet another book, *The Columbus Conspiracy* (Hounslow Press, Toronto, 1991) which presented some of the same evidence and argument. As the final sequel of a trilogy, *Swords at Sunset* offers an explanation for the destruction of two settlements of Grail-believing religious refugees that were eventually established in the Great Lakes Basin.

One settlement was located in the foothills of the Green Mountains on the borderlands of Vermont and Quebec along the shores of Lake Memphremagog. In its medieval European heyday, this settlement was apparently called “Alma” and it was an agricultural centre and metal-mining emporium.

The other major Grail Refugee colony in the Great Lakes Basin was located on the Niagara Escarpment above Niagara Falls in order to promote navigation into the far west by the Upper Great Lakes. It was seemingly called “Zarahemla” during the fifteenth century. The communities of Alma and Zarahemla apparently flourished as recognizable “European” settlements in the North American wilderness from about AD 1425 until about AD 1571.

But there was, doubtless, much native mixture in both settlements from their beginning and this influence must have increased as time passed. If we have interpreted the slim clues that remain at all correctly, Alma was massacred by, and assimilated within, the Mohawk Iroquois between the years AD 1571 and about AD 1607. Zarahemla fell to the Seneca and Cayuga Iroquois in AD 1571 and its last European survivor perished as a hunted fugitive in the upper New York State wilderness in the year AD 1587.

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But, inevitably, over the twenty years of writing and researching the trilogy itself with *The Columbus Conspiracy* as a kind of book-length sidebar, much more was learned about the “Holy Grail” than I ever suspected back in 1981. What was it exactly? Why had it inspired so much desperate conflict in the Western world?

I have offered my answers, primarily in Chapters 3 and 7 of *Swords at Sunset*, although they were hinted as early as 1988 in *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic* (page 14). These answers will not please everyone, and they will inevitably infuriate some people.

My understanding of the Holy Grail gradually came to be that it was a legend of Neolithic-megalithic times that persisted into the medieval period, particularly in southern France but also throughout the Mediterranean’s islands and coasts. This “Great Legend” incorporated memories of an ancient “Old European Civilisation” and of a kind of European and Ancient Egyptian “Christianity before Christianity”. And this Great Legend sometimes also conveyed whispers of the way things had been on Atlantis, including the apparent existence of alphabetic writing at least 9000 years old.

This oldest expression of reverence for the Great Goddess and Her world-saving Messiah husband and son had nothing whatever to do with the New Testament and the Judeo-Christian tradition. In fact, this oldest form of Christianity was older than Judaism by, literally, thousands of years.

It also had nothing to do with monotheism because, by its very definition, it incorporated reverence for the Great Fertility Goddess (our “Mary”) and Her continually resurrected husband-as-son (our “Jesus”) who grew up to permit the ongoing regeneration of both the biological and spiritual worlds through Her. Before the Judeo-Christian creation of the New Testament, *that* was our continual and *only* “Salvation”. Perhaps it still is.

Literally hundreds of people have helped me over the past twenty-two years of investigating the Holy Grail. I have thanked many of them in the previous books, *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic* and *Grail Knights of North America*.

But I have also thanked many people by name in the pages of *Swords at Sunset* as their contributions occurred in unravelling what amounts to a historical detective story. Some who are not mentioned in the book, and to whom I am grateful, include:

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Rae Thurston, Vice-President of Production Services film equipment rental company has been a constant source of encouragement from the beginning. Dundurn Press has remained steadfast since 1988 in a project which, I am certain, they never expected to be so extensive and time consuming. Dundurn faltered only in 2004 by refusing to publish *Swords at Sunset* because it was deemed too controversial. The well-known Canadian writer and researcher, John Robert Colombo, never lost his empathy with my work, although I know that he has sometimes lost his patience.

Very special thanks are due to Marty Myers, owner of “Catfish Calhoun Sportswear” in St. Catharines, Ontario. Myers’s involvement began when Don Fraser of *The Standard* newspaper of St. Catharines published a full page article on April 28, 2001 about my quest for medieval artifacts in the Niagara Region. The article frankly quoted me asking residents and the newspaper’s readers for any information about “strange” artifacts that anyone might know about.

Marty Myers saw the article and was fascinated with the idea of Grail Refugees having settled the St. Catharines area before the known and accepted colonials. He immediately called me in Toronto and offered any and every assistance to assess and photograph any artifacts that might be reported for the book the article said that I was researching.

I’m not sure that I was prepared for Marty Myers’s level of enthusiasm and energy, the same commitment and drive that has made “Catfish Calhoun’s” such a local success. Marty tracked down several artifacts that were reported because of the newspaper article and sent high-quality digital scans of them almost faster than we could handle them. Of these images contributed to this book by Marty Myers, the late medieval religious medallion owned by Dennis Farkas of Wainfleet, Ontario is illustrated and discussed in the text.

More recently, as sheer age combined with financial expenses associated with Grail-related research culminated in health problems that endangered my ability to complete this work, I encountered new friends who helped me to carry on with it. Richard Guest of Toronto and David Hughes of Hantsport, Nova Scotia are both well aware of their invaluable assistance.

I am also indebted to Dave Hughes for working with my wife Joëlle Lauriol to produce the military style maps that I thought

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were appropriate to chronicle graphically the heyday of Zarahemla about AD 1537 and the Fall of Zarahemla in AD 1571.

The defeat of the Grail Refugees' Zarahemla on the Niagara Escarpment led to the final battle of Hill Cumorah where the eleventh generation (if our chronology is correct) of Henry Sinclair's Nova Scotia colonists of AD 1398 were massacred. At any rate, that is how I interpret the existing artifacts and documents, and the maps prepared by David Hughes and Joëlle Lauriol show the progressive acts in the final drama.

Phil Davies of Yorkshire, England has shown unflagging interest over three years. Ted Thomas of Campbellton, New Brunswick proved assiduous in archiving the various versions and "re-versions" of *Swords at Sunset* as it came off the computer. This was in case our own old Toshiba gave up its tired ghost at a critical moment.

Hamdi Beqa, an Albanian immigrant into Canada, and owner of Beqa Variety on Queen Street West, shared his surprising research that the Albanian language may be the closest living survivor to the pre-Greek "Pelasgian" language of Old Europe.

This research, though presently "unpublished" (except in Albanian!) gave further support, in addition to the one hundred archaeological sites mentioned in the text of *Swords at Sunset*, that there had been an "Old Civilisation" in Europe which was primarily maritime in nature. In this, although he did not know it, Hamdi Beqa is in good company with Dr. Marija Gimbutas. Hamdi Beqa also helped us with our research in much more mundane ways.

When it became clear that I needed to be near the St. Joseph's Health Centre at extremely short notice on occasion, The Queens Hotel at 1521 Queen Street West offered accommodation that was just three blocks from the hospital. The antics of some of Parkdale's more colourful denizens was also more than compensated by the hotel's convenient access to major TTC routes and to the Lakeshore Blvd. leading to Niagara.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Joëlle Lauriol, who answered an advertisement for a "Companion of the Grail" on April 19, 1997. She has seldom faltered, although our trail of the Grail proved more arduous than she could have ever imagined at the time. Her constancy through many hardships helped me keep a fifty-year-old promise.

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The Ku Klux Klan burned our home in Jackson, Mississippi in August 1954, scattering our family into the night in terror and confusion. Klansmen caught and bullwhipped me. Somehow, after this agony was over, I managed to drag myself in the flickering darkness up into the boughs of an apple tree. I hid from the Klan until morning in its late summer foliage. I remember it was August. I sat among apple boughs throughout that terrible night in pain, and also in frantic fear for what had happened to my mother, father and sister. I vowed to explain to the world why there was such a high level of aggression or “hatred” in the Western world and why this hatred had so often been justified by religion.

Keeping that promise made in an apple tree long ago became a driving, dedicated lifelong obligation. It resulted in most of my books. But the unremitting pressure of that self-imposed task gradually undermined my health, especially during the years I shared with Joëlle.

In recent years, when things became critical on more than one occasion in more than one Emergency Room, Joëlle would hold my hand and remind me that I had *almost* kept the 1954 promise that I had made in a Jackson, Mississippi apple tree. “Just a little longer, Michael”, she would whisper above the hiss of oxygen. And so *Swords at Sunset* was done.