



The Lesson of the Beauseant

by Dr. Gary D. Lemmons, PC, KTCH

Delivered on Saturday, February 4, 2006 at the Inspection of Pilgrim Commandery No. 15, Gainesville, Georgia.

Masonic and Templar writers and historians tell us that the beauseant was the banner adopted by those medieval period, warrior monks known as the Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon and used by them as a guidon in battle. Witnesses to the combat of these valiant and magnanimous knights describe their embarking into the fray dressed in white mantles decorated with a red cross. It is said that they were always first into the fight and the last to retire from the field.¹

In battles of this time period, it is recorded that the first attack was always the most terrible. An attribute peculiar to the Templars is said to have been that they advanced upon their enemies in silence. This is singularly unusual as it is widely the custom of all fighting forces from whatever culture to attack with a whoop, yell, or screech designed to strike fear into the hearts of the enemy. Perhaps their well known degree of ferocity and the eerie silence that they emanated as they advanced under their beauseant was striking and more frightening to their opponents than would have been a noise.²

The beauseant was then, as it is today, a banner of two colors, black over white. It was carried into battle by a Marshal and protected by a detail of ten Templar Knights, specifically selected for that purpose. If the Marshal was killed in battle, the Commander of the Templar Knights detail became the acting Marshal and continued in the struggle. The beauseant was not allowed to flow as a flag. Rather, it was borne between two pikes and carried unfurled so that the enemy as well as the Templars could see it advancing. The beauseant was the rallying point for all the Templar warriors during battle, and it did not leave the field as long as the Templars were involved in fighting, and the Templars did not cease combat until the beauseant left the field. Consequently, the struggle did not cease until the enemy was destroyed or the Templars were all killed.³ It is reported that when the Templars prevailed in battle they would kneel upon the necks of their defeated foe and raise their voices in singing Psalm 115: 1: "Not unto us, Oh Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." History indicates that once defeated, Templar enemies were treated humanely by the

knights. Indeed, it was expected that prisoners be fed and clothed, even at the point of a sword. Templar conduct toward defeated enemies was so unusual that the great Muslim chieftain, Saladin, is said to have held the knights in highest esteem.⁴ The design of the beauseant is quite interesting as well a square of cloth of two colors, black over white. Among the symbolists, it is generally accepted that the banner reflects the duality of the world. There is a dark, evil, and bitterly frightening side; yet, there is a beautiful, pleasant, and glorious side as well. The black is on top because in this world of sin and transgressions, evil seems to hold sway. However, underneath, the good is ever present and will, in the fullness of time, correct every form of error and bring to justice those who have committed vile and impious acts toward God and toward man. The banner, thus interpreted, was bright and beautiful to friends of Christ, but dark and dreadful to His enemies.

Finally, we come to the meaning of the word "beauseant." It is a French word that is a combination of two, beau and seant. The modern-day meaning of beau is "beautiful." However, if we research the meaning of the word as it was used during the medieval period, we discover that it was more akin to the idea of "glorious" or "magnificent." The word seant signifies the state of becoming. Hence, the word "beauseant" as used by our Templar knights is best interpreted as the admonition: "Be glorious"-alluding, no doubt, to the expectation that they conduct themselves bravely and fiercely in battle and be merciful and magnanimous in victory.⁵

Sir Knights, I have a question. It is a question as much for me as for any one of you.

For 30 years I have been attending Commandery asylums and looking at the beauseant. Many of you have been coming for a lot longer time. For three decades I have been a Templar and participated in the activities of the order including numerous inspections. Many of you have participated much longer. The question is: How often during that time have we "been glorious"?

I submit to you that, if we are brutally honest, we have not "been glorious" as often as we should have been, and I am the chief sinner in that department. I submit to you that we are not "being glorious" when we attend our regular conclaves, our inspections, or even our beloved Christmas observances. We are not "being glorious" when we confer the Orders, valiant and necessary as they are. We are not being glorious when we participate in Grand Commandery Conclaves or attend the Easter Sunrise Service in Washington with our Grand Encampment. We are not "being glorious," even when we contribute monies to the Knights Templar Eye Foundation or to our own Molly S. Moseley Eye Foundation of Georgia, Inc. All of these things are good, but they are things that we ought to do. They are responsibilities that we assume when we become Sir Knights, and, in and of themselves, they do not make us "be glorious."

We are "being glorious" when we, first and foremost, give our hearts and souls to the care and mastership of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Following that act, we are "being glorious" only when we truly give of ourselves to our neighbors, whether it be a kind word and an arm of support to a fellow Sir Knight or Brother

Freemason or whether it be a word of cheer or an act of kindness to some member of the profane world. "Being glorious" rarely involves money, for the giving of money, while necessary and commendable, is often the way we ease our consciences of our failure to give of ourselves.

We are "being glorious" when we realize that we have been wrong and when we ask for forgiveness. When we have done anyone wrong or when we have failed to do that which we should have done, we can "be glorious" in repentance and supplication for pardon. It is a difficult act in which to participate, especially when the person we have wronged is our wife, who knew she was right all along.

As hard as it is to admit our errors and to ask for forgiveness for our mistakes, that is not the most difficult task that we face. Our opportunity of being most glorious comes when we do the most difficult task known to man ...that of forgiving others even when they have not asked for our forgiveness. To forgive one who has offended us, who has been unfair and has hurt us deeply, is the most Christ-like act that we can perform. Such an act has a wonderful effect upon our own psyche. It frees us from the bondage of the grudge. It places the weight of the errant act upon the offender, and he or she is mystified by our demeanor. Most important, it pleases our Lord and expresses in the most powerful way that we can our appreciation for "His" forgiveness of "our" transgressions and shortcomings.

Sir Knights and ladies, let us leave this place today resolved to go forth under the banner of our Beauseant and endeavor every day of our remaining lives in every challenge and opportunity to "be glorious."

Stephen Defoe. "The Templar Beauseant", Templar History Magazine.
www.templarhistory.com/beauseant.html 2John J. Robinson. Born in Blood New York:
M. Evans and Company, 1989, xix + 376 pp. 3Ibid.
4Ibid. 5Ibid.

Sir Knight Gary D. Lemmons is a P.C., KTCH, and Past Grand Master of his Lodge. For correspondence: P.O. Box 262, Fairmount, GA 30139-0262.

Published 080514 Updated: August 5, 2014
