



CHARTING THE COURSE

The following articles are excerpts from a pamphlet entitled *Charting The Course* written by Sir Knight Wilber M. Brucher, Most Eminent Past Grand Master, Knights Templar, U.S.A., and published February 15, 1965. The content is still extremely relevant to our Commanderies today. I hope you will take a moment to read and think about it. The pamphlets are still available from the Grand Encampment office.

John L. Palmer, References: *Knight Templar Magazine*, 2015, February, March, April, May and June.

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THE PURPOSE OF TEMPLARY

Templary is founded upon the Christian religion and the practice of the Christian virtues. It is a fraternal light that has illumined the world since the Crusades of 1099 to 1187 A.D. when stouthearted Knights of the Temple rescued and held Jerusalem and the holy places from the infidel and protected poor unarmed pilgrims who came all the way from Europe to worship at the Holy Shrine. The world has never witnessed any more unselfish service for God and humanity than that which was exemplified by those intrepid Crusaders. Nine centuries have rolled along, and modern Knights Templar are the symbolic offspring of those fearless Crusaders. Today's Templars are likewise committed to tasks of exalted usefulness, just as were their illustrious forebears many centuries ago.

The principles upon which the orders of Knighthood are founded are expressed in ritual and symbolism and are founded upon the teachings of the Christian religion. Templary is based upon the Holy Bible and extols the doctrine of human brotherhood and benevolence toward all mankind. It commends the reign of peace and glorifies the search for Divine Truth. It vows to draw its sword in defense of innocent maidens, destitute widows, helpless orphans, and the Christian religion. It despises communism and magnifies freedom under law and constitutional government. It stands unswervingly for good morals and right living by each Knight Templar as an example of good citizenship in every community. Each Knight Templar has voluntarily professed the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and love of country. The Grand Standard of Templary

contains a blood-red passion cross as the emblem which inspires every Templar to the highest ideals of the Christian faith.

The Grand Encampment of Knights Templar is just embarking upon another three year tour of duty at a time when precious old landmarks are being demolished by the onrush of worldly change and when moral and spiritual values are at low ebb. Templary is Masonry's answer to the call for Christian virtues in a world that needs a moral and religious renaissance. Templary is the resurrection of the spirit of the Crusaders.

Templary is America's hope of stimulating the community conscience to stand up for God at a time when righteousness is desperately needed.

Let no Knight Templar underestimate the task that lies ahead nor shrink from playing his part manfully. Let each of us recognize that it will be an uphill battle with worldly strife along the way. This should only add zest to acceptance of the challenge by red-blooded warriors.

However, in order to win, we must get back to first principles! We must reconsecrate our cause to Christ and the Christian religion with all the sincerity we possess! There is no problem of our order that cannot be solved by practicing our Christian profession more vigorously every day, all over the Templar world. Horizons must be raised, and perspectives must be lifted. When we do so, we shall put God back where He belongs in Templary, and we shall put Templary back where it belongs in the life of our day. In this spirit, we summon every officer and Sir Knight to put on the whole armor of God as we march forth into this new triennium.

Templary is not solely a fraternal brotherhood. It is vastly more than that. When Masonry crosses the threshold of the Commandery, it becomes Christian, and we support the Christian Church in every day life. We are endowed with a sense of mission which transcends all ordinary fraternal objectives. It is not enough to say that we "favor" ethics and good morals. The orders of Knighthood require that we live up to the high calling of Christ in our lives, that we take our stand as Christian warriors in the fierce struggle against evil in everyday life, and that we support the Christian Church with all the zeal we possess. It is important at the outset that we put first things first!

Templary is Christian to the core, and we must never allow this fact to escape us for one instant. Our very reason for existence as an organization depends upon our observance of this central fact.

Nothing is important in our order that does not relate itself to Christ, the Christian religion, and the Christian Church. Once we get that fact solidly planted in our minds and hearts, we can plan our future. Until we become so immersed in our Christian cause that it becomes a part of our daily character as well as our very way of life, we are not ready to start the journey. Unless Commandery leaders at all levels really take our allegiance to Christ seriously, they will find a trail of indifference, unconcern, and poor attendance, followed by a multitude of demits and even suspensions.

Our pledge of warfare against the deceits of the world is not allegorical but is very real and for our lifetime! Let it be proclaimed that this warfare is not defensive but aggressive. The righteous and benevolent influence of Templars and of our Commanderies is needed everywhere. Our influence in the form of our programs and projects is limited only by the devotion and resources of our members.

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TEMPLAR LEADERSHIP

Let us take a look at the all-important matter of Templar Leadership. Do we fully realize the great and lasting honor we have received by being entrusted with the leadership of our magnanimous order of Knighthood? Do we appreciate the true significance of our job to lead Knights Templar in our modern crusade for righteousness, morality, and the Christian religion?

While certain qualities have always been associated with ordinary leadership, Templar leadership requires qualifications which are vastly more demanding. Here are only a few!

A Sense of Christian Dedication

No Templar leader should start without re-dedicating himself to the cause of Christ.

Every one of us must be wholly and completely "on Christ's team," in thought, word, and deed. Only when we indulge in soul-searching self-analysis can we be ready to begin the job of leading others in our great Christian cause. Templary's cause is Christ's cause, and any Templar who would lead our sacred cause must believe heart and soul in Christ's cause on earth.

A Proper Attitude

No matter how much we respect the other elements of "dedication" and "attitude," there is one more necessity for which there is no substitute, and that is work! Teddy Roosevelt once said: "Success is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration." A leader can't succeed by being "on-and-off" the job. His efforts must be constant. He must be wholehearted in his devotion to his Commandery job. His Commandery must think of him as one who cares enough to sacrifice his time, effort, and pleasure to the cause he represents. When the rank and file get this image, he becomes their leader in reality and not merely by having been installed.

Intelligent Imagination

A leader must use his God-given intelligence and imagination to put work on the Trestle Board for his Sir Knights to perform. Templary is full of projects which will benefit any community where a Commandery is located. Each Commandery should select at least one Templar project and adopt it for its own this year and each succeeding year. Any leader with the will to succeed can go over a check list of dozens of Templar projects and get things "off-center," if he will only give the word.

The Selection of Our Leaders

The selection of our leaders is the personal responsibility of every member entitled to vote. He ought to understand that the selection of leadership in Templary is as sacred an act as anything he will ever perform. Templary will advance only through the selection of our best leaders. Selection should never be made on the basis of friendship, availability, or "someone who has time on his hands." Let us inquire in each instance when we consider a candidate for Templar office:

1. Does he have a sense of Christian dedication? Does he have an attitude which is aggressive and forward looking, which will attract the support of others? Is he willing to work? Will he use intelligence and imagination in setting up an active and interesting program? Will he give "all he has" to his Templar job if elected?

2. Is he well-informed as to the purposes of Templary and committed to its advancement? Will he adopt goals to be achieved and formulate plans for their accomplishment?

The Length of Officer Lines

How long should the lines be? Election of Commanders, in practice, occurs several years before the final year of command. By custom, the officer expects to continue through the entire line to the top. The interval varies widely from a few years up to as many as ten years. Thus, the question is asked today in many places, "How long should the lines be?" Grand Encampment requires that the first four officers of Grand Commanderies and the first three officers of Commanderies be chosen by election and permits the remaining officers, except the Treasurers and Recorders, to be either elected or appointed as may be prescribed by the Grand Commander ies. The present trend is clearly toward shorter lines.

The Scope of Leadership

Obviously, in no situation is leadership a one-man job. In addition to the prescribed officers, a variety of committees is needed. The usual ones are those in the areas of finance, ritualistic instruction and performance, social occasions, and as previously suggested by Grand Encampment, committees on membership, public relations, religious activities, Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Knights Templar Educational Loan Foundation, Patriotic and Civic Activities, and several others. In the average Commandery, each of these areas might best be served by a committee of three members. In the very small Commandery, some might be combined. In the very large Commandery, more and larger committees might be named.

It is the purpose of this brochure to provide sufficient information concerning all of the natural activity areas of Templary so that a Commander may be so basically informed that he may proceed, having intimate knowledge of the Commandery roster and of the abilities and interests of all members, to plan the program to be accomplished during his administration and the organization which will serve these plans best.

The best way to make such plans is in conjunction with the other dais officers who are equally interested and in- volved and with the Recorder. Together, these four usually form what may be called the Executive Committee. They not only plan together but are closely associated in the execution of the plan and in periodic review.

The best time to form such plans is several months before the beginning of the new Commandery administration.

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LEADERSHIP IN CONSTITUENT COMMANDERIES

Just as the Commander of an Army depends upon the troops in the front line to bring victory, so does the Grand Encampment depend upon the rank-and-file of Knights Templar in the local community to win the battle for Templary. Unless Knights Templar at the "grass roots" level are keenly interested and pursue Grand Encampment policies with vigor and dispatch, victory will not perch on our Beauceant.

The Grand Encampment fully understands this situation and wants to emphasize the importance of the local Commandery. It is vital that leadership of Constituent Commanderies should be in good hands, under active, qualified leaders. Also it is supremely necessary that the local Commandery should be a positive force for good in the community and so recognized by its citizens as well as fellow Templars. The answer lies in local leadership.

The battle to build Templary will be won or lost at the local level. The best plans are fruitless unless carried into execution by good leaders at the "grass roots" level.

Until they are carried out by local leaders, the finest plans of top officers will fall flat.

Therefore, we must improve the quality of local leadership and inspire Commanders to carry out plans which will strengthen the whole fabric of Templary.

Leadership is doubly important in Masonry because members of the Craft are trained to look up to the Worship- ful Master and wait for him to put his instructions on the Trestle Board, inasmuch as Masonic discipline requires complete and unquestioning respect for the Master. If the Master falters, there is "confusion among the workmen." To an even greater degree is this true in the Commandery, a semi-military organization, where orders are expected to be given by the Commander and carried out with alacrity.

Here are just a few of the qualities of leadership we so badly need:

Sense of Devotion

A leader must be completely "sold" on his cause; he must be so thoroughly convinced himself that he can convince others, and he must not have even a wavering doubt as to the merits of his cause.

Factual Equipment

A leader must be an arsenal of information about his cause, he must get all the facts and know all there is to learn about it, and he must be able to justify his cause everywhere and before all men.

Aggressiveness

A leader must have that extra quality of aggressiveness, he must remember that enthusiasm begets enthusiasm, and he must demonstrate an attitude of quiet assurance that instills confidence.

Hard Work

A leader must be willing to set the pace for all who follow his lead, he must be willing to work harder and longer than anyone else, and he must convince his followers that they can succeed by following him.

As we choose our Templar leaders for the fateful years ahead, let us try to select those who will be the best for Templary, regardless of personalities. Only then will we have a clear conscience. When line officers, after a reasonable time, fail to measure up, they should be privately encouraged to step aside or should be passed over. No man can afford to make a failure of the office of Commander. Of course, this is a delicate matter, but it is too important to "sweep under the rug." Let's face the bare truth-we need to improve Templary by selecting the best leaders we can find. Only then will we go forward "full steam."

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EXEMPLIFICATION OF RITUAL

The orders of Knighthood are generally conceded to contain the most beautiful and impressive ceremonies in all the realm of Masonry. The conferring of the orders is the method by which Christian Masons are enlisted and sworn to duty as a part of our militant corps.

Accordingly, the orders of Knight hood ought always to be conferred in a dignified and impressive manner. Any less is not only to cheat our petitioners but to fail miserably in

our duty. No detail of preparation should be neglected. No Sir Knight selected to perform these important tasks should take them lightly or permit any other activity to prevent their performance in keeping with the best traditions of our order.

Unfortunately, in too many places, the conferring of our orders has been allowed to become a matter of routine, conducted without apparent feeling and performed by a few who happen to be "in the line" or who are available by reason of regular attendance.

Where this exists to any extent, we urge thoughtful consideration of the following suggestions.

The Ritualistic Program Should be Planned

Far in advance, before any candidates are in view, this program should be planned. In most Commanderies, there should be three ritualistic cycles per year, two at home, and one area festival. A large and active Commandery might need one more. There is rarely any planned campaign for the enlistment of new members in the absence of a planned ritualistic program. Consider how embarrassed a devoted Sir Knight must be, having just convinced a Christian Mason that Templary is for him and needs him when he is unable to give a satisfactory answer to the natural and unfailing question of the important prospect or anyone who has other demands upon his time,

"When would I receive the work and how much time will it require?"

The Program Should be Coordinated

First, it should avoid conflicting dates.

Thus, we would not be conferring work while Grand Lodge is in session or on the same night when there is a reception for the Grand Master anywhere in the close area or on nights when local students are graduating.

Second, we should not plan Templar work just before the Chapter and Council work is to be done or just after a Shrine ceremony if we can avoid it.

We Should Use Our Best Ritualists

The use of ritualistic casts in all of the orders is recommended. These Sir Knights need not be the officers of the Commandery. There are several good reasons for this practice.

(1) More members may be used, thus both spreading the work and permitting more members to contribute to the program.

(2) The principal officers of the Commandery are relieved of their demanding parts unless they wish to take them. If they are doing their leadership job, they scarcely have time!

(3) A clearer differentiation between leadership and ritual is made, and thus we need not, on one hand, prevent a splendid leader from functioning just because he is a poor ritualist, or on the other hand, settle for a poor ritualist in order to get a good leader, and by and large, if we use those who can give the best performance, use more men, and have less turn-over in personnel, better ritualistic work will result.

Our Equipment Should be in Good Order and Ready for Use

The considerable amount of regalia and paraphernalia used in Templar work represents a large investment, and it must be ready and in good order when needed. This cannot successfully be "anybody's job." An equipment custodian should have this function to store the equipment properly; to see that it is clean, complete, and in good condition; to bring it out when needed; and to check it and put it away afterward.

Ritualistic Performances Should be Staged

The Commandery needs a "Director," a "Stage Manager," and a "Prop Man" just as in

any other performance. We ought to understand that you can't put on a "show" by the efforts of the "actors" alone. Someone has to select the casts, train them, see that they know in plenty of time when they are to perform, and know they will be there or provide alternates. Someone has to set up the stage, see to the lighting, change the scenes, etc. Much can be done toward a better performance by the use of local lighting to identify different scenes, by the use of music, etc.

The Candidate is the Audience

Everything is properly played to him. No activities of the sideline members, either inside or outside the asylum, should be allowed to distract his attention. During or after the work, there may well be some social function at which he will be the honored guest.

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PATRIOTIC AND CIVIC ACTIVITIES

At the 49th Triennial Conclave of the Grand Encampment, the purpose of this Standing Committee was stated: [Patriotic and Civic Activities Committee of the Grand Encampment]

"The committee shall foster and supervise activities of a patriotic and citizenship nature, whether in peacetime or in wartime, and shall present its recommendations for civic responsibility by Knights Templar individually and collectively, compatible with the patriotic principles of Templary."

This statement puts Templary squarely and firmly in support of those local activities which promote the civic welfare of every community as well as the national wellbeing of our country. It is the responsibility of this committee to afford an opportunity to demonstrate the good citizenship of Templars in every community as well as to promote our patriotic principles.

More than in other areas of activity, the idea of patriotic and civic activities is misunderstood. Some earnest Templars have complained, saying that of course we are patriotic and that no program is necessary to convince us of the we would say that it is not enough for Templars to be - rather, we must do! Other Templars, equally earnest, argue that civic activity by Masons is forbidden. We deny this most emphatically, and state that a non-partisan support of our American institutions is no more to be criticized than our support of the Christian religion!

What Can We Do?

By programs for such a purpose, we can be citizens who are better informed as to the structures, operations, and needs of our civic institutions. We can emphasize the need for men of our sort - Christian Masons - in positions of civic responsibility, and we can honor those who heed the call and provide an audience for their expressions.

We can relate ourselves, whether by program or project, to high objectives and give honor to those who have made great personal sacrifices to give us our American heritage by activities related to Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, and other national holidays.

Everyone must recognize that apathy and indifference have made deep inroads into American life. When we speak of "the good old days," we refer to the time when there was personal responsibility on the part of every citizen and a concern to see that the forces of crime, corruption, violence, and disorder were conquered before they could

gain even a foothold. We are appalled when we survey the present scene and contrast the days of law-and-order with what is rampant today. Countless thousands of people openly say that they "couldn't care less" about what goes on in civic affairs. Murders, hold-ups, and rapes are boldly perpetrated without too much fear of apprehension, because people "don't want to become involved." Men and women turn away from the scene of a crime and do absolutely nothing to help the hapless victim or the police. They don't have sufficient interest to care about their fellow man in deepest distress! Instances of this are not limited to the big cities. Even small towns and rural communities are becoming infected with the same "disease" that is typified by the expression, "so what?"

The hour is late to combat this terrible moral scourge, but attack it we must if we are to be true to our convictions. The cure lies deep in changing the moral fiber all over the country. America can't go on this way, or we will degenerate as all previous civilizations have done. Every force for good in America must join a stout counter-attack, and Templary with its militant spirit for righteousness must take an active part.

If ever there was a problem that can be started to be corrected on a local basis and does not need to wait for Washington, this is one that will lend itself to self-help.

Every Commandery in the country should have an active, alert, wide-awake committee to cooperate in the civic and patriotic activity that is necessary to combat this insidious problem. If civic leaders have not sensed the danger from this source, Templary should supply the facts and generate the enthusiasm to do something real and tangible about it. Every Commandery should have a committee, after careful consideration of the roster, to select those best qualified to plan and execute both programs and projects by experience, ability, and influence in community affairs. Let's look for the busy men who will be most effective and who might never have had time to serve as officers of the Commandery. Our Christian character demands that we plan a project for the good of the community - something constructive and unselfish which will earn the respect and appreciation of both our members and the general public.

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