



# SOME SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATIONS OF THE COMMANDERY JEWELS OF OFFICE

by Sir Knight George L. Marshall, Jr., PGC, KCT, ADC

Many Commanderies use breast jewels for their officers. These are suspended from a black and white ribbon (although the ribbon may sometimes be green) and are pinned above the left pocket of the uniform coat. A brief allusion to the symbolic significance or explanation of the jewel emblem for each office is given in the script for the Commandery installation of officers. However, as this article will demonstrate, the symbolism may be extended beyond that stated in the installation.

We will start with the office of Eminent Commander and work down the line. For each jewel I will first state what is said about its emblem in the installation (given in bold italics). Then I will extend the symbolism as applicable. Before proceeding,

however; it is important to remember that the symbolic interpretations of any object are dependent upon the person or cultural group doing the interpretation. Thus, as is the case with most Masonic symbols, their interpretation may take many forms- thus, no one interpretation or set of interpretations can be considered as "correct" or definitive.



The jewel of the Eminent Commander is gold color for both the suspension bar at the top and the jewel. The jewel is a passion cross surmounted by rays of light. The rays of light are symbols that suggest to you the humility, love, and pure benevolence that emanate like rays from the religion of the Blessed Emmanuel. As I have already discussed the Latin Cross and the Passion Cross in a previous article in the Knight Templar magazine (January 2010, pages 24-28), I will refer the reader to that article and proceed to the next officer.



The jewel of the Generalissimo is shown at right. The metal is silver color for both the suspension bar and the jewel as it is for all remaining officers' jewels as well. The jewel is a square, surmounted by a paschal Lamb. The square is to remind you that friendship and love should ever govern Freemasons and particularly Knights Templar. The square, as we know, is the jewel of office of the Worshipful Master of a Blue Lodge. Additionally, we are taught that the square is a symbol of morality. Since the square was used by operative masons to prove that angles were 90° or "right," it naturally became an emblem of accuracy, integrity, and rightness. As stones are cut to fit into a building, so our acts and thoughts are built together into a structure of character badly or firmly and must be tested by a moral standard of which the simple square is a symbol.

The paschal lamb atop the square has long been a symbol of Christ, apparently coming into use about the 15th Century. This symbol is sometimes referred to by the Latin name Agnus Dei (Lamb of God) or in heraldry, Holy Lamb. Heraldry defines it thus: a representation of a lamb passant [walking] having around its head

a nimbus [halo] and supporting on the dexter [right] shoulder a crosslike staff bearing a flag argent [silver or white] charged with a cross gules [red].

(Words in square brackets are supplied by me.) The term "paschal" originally related to the Passover, or Seder, of the Jews, and the paschal lamb was a lamb slaughtered and eaten on the eve of the first day of Passover. Jesus, the Lamb of God, was crucified during the time of Passover and so became our symbolic paschal lamb. The cross borne by the lamb represents the manner of his death and the flag His banner under which we as Templars have become His Knights. The walking or marching lamb illustrates that activity we should pursue in marching steadily onward to help spread His kingdom on earth.

Thus, this jewel also reminds us to conduct ourselves with those high standards of morality and character which were taught by the Lamb of God while He walked among men and with that unconditional love that He exemplified in His sacrifice on Calvary.



At right is the jewel of the Captain General. The jewel is a level, surmounted by a cock. As the undaunted courage and valor of the cock stimulate him to conquer his enemy and fight to the last extremity, so should you be stimulated in the discharge of every duty. In the Lodge we are taught that the level is a symbol of equality. "We meet upon the level" because Masonic rights, duties, and privileges are the same for all members without distinction. Time, like all things in nature, passes equally for all men. So, it further symbolizes that we walk on the level of time until death, by its gloomy democracy, erases all distinctions and reduces us all to the same level.

Depending on the culture, the cock (or rooster) symbolized pride, honesty, courage, vigilance, arrogance, strength, watchfulness, or flamboyance. The ancient Greeks believed that the rooster rose to attention and saluted the sun every morning with a hearty cry, symbolizing victory over night. As such, the rooster was considered a solar emblem to the Greeks and was adopted as a sacred sign to the god Apollo as well as Zeus, Persephone, and Attis. In Christianity, the rooster is noted for crowing three times when Peter denied Christ. As such, it became a symbol for Christ's passion. Later, the rooster would signify the repentance of the saint and religious vigilance as well as resurrection.

Hence, the rooster's habit of crowing at the dawning of each new morning has made it a symbol of the daily victory of light over darkness and the triumph of good over

evil. This habit, along with its fiery red comb, also makes the rooster the symbol of fire, the sun, and of Christ, the light of the world, who announces an end to spiritual darkness and despair.

This jewel therefore reminds us of the need for attentiveness and vigilance in the performance of our duties lest we fall prey to carelessness and inattention and in so doing degrade the offices we hold as leaders and as soldiers of the cross. It also reminds us that all men are equally near to and equally far from their Heavenly Father.



Jewel of the Senior Warden is shown to the right. The jewel is a hollow square with a mailed arm and hand grasping the sword of justice. It is to remind you that as the Children of Israel marched in a hollow square in their journey through the wilderness in order to guard and protect the Ark of the Covenant, so should you be vigilant in guarding every avenue from innovation and error. Let the sword of justice, therefore, be ever drawn to guard the Constitution of the Order.

The hollow square (also known as the infantry square) was a formation assumed by the infantry when threatened with a cavalry attack. It was used by the Romans and Chinese in ancient times and more recently in the Napoleonic Wars. Thus, it may be interpreted as a symbol of protection or security. However, the geometric square has many other interesting symbolic interpretations. The square has often been interpreted as a symbol of the earth and of earthly things. For instance, the four sides have been taken as symbols of (1) the four directions: north, south, east, and west; (2) the four seasons: spring, summer, winter, and autumn; (3) the four prime elements: earth, air, fire, and water; and (4) the four principal stages of human life: birth, child, adult, and death. So the square speaks to us of order and stability, of matter and materialistic things. In some circumstances it can also refer to the four functions of consciousness - thought, feeling, intuition and sensation. It's a shape of balance. It's a shape that comments on earthly existence and our relationship to it and in it. The square is the here and now of this life.

The mailed hand grasping a sword is a common symbol found in heraldry. As the installation informs us, it does indeed commonly symbolize the sword of justice. If we look carefully, we notice that it is the right arm and hand. In ancient European arms this heraldic symbol is often thought to symbolize the arm of God. We could therefore extend the symbolic meaning of this part of the jewel to represent divine justice which is perfect rather than human justice which is imperfect.

Taken as a whole then, an alternate symbolic interpretation of the Senior Warden's jewel might be as follows: Within the square (representing our earthly existence) is enclosed the arm of divine justice (representing the spirit of divinity within us) which reminds us of our duty to dispense, insofar as we possibly can, true justice and charity to our fellow men as well as a reminder of the words of our Lord found in Luke 17:21, "...behold, the kingdom of God is within you."



Jewel of the Junior Warden. The jewel is an eagle with wings spread holding in its talons a flaming sword. It suggests to you the performance of your duties with justice and valor, having an eagle eye on the prosperity of the order. This jewel is one of the most interesting in that its two main components, the flaming sword and the eagle, possess a wealth of symbolic meanings of which only a few will be mentioned here.

The Iranian Empires (Persia) were among the first who used the eagle as a standard. In ancient Egypt, the eagle signified complete freedom and power. The massive wings of the eagle stood out on each side of the sun disk which represented Horus, the supreme god in Egyptian mythology. In 102 B.C. the Roman Consul Gaius Marius decreed that the eagle would be the symbol of the senate and people of Rome.

In other ancient cultures, the eagle represented spiritual protection, carried prayers, and brought strength, courage, wisdom, illumination of spirit, healing, creation, and a knowledge of magic. The eagle had an ability to see hidden spiritual truths, rising above the material to see the spiritual. The eagle represented great power and balance, dignity with grace, a connection with higher truths, intuition, and a creative spirit.

In the Old Testament of the Bible, the eagle is the messenger of God and a link between Heaven and earth. It is said that the eagle sheds his feathers in the beginning of spring and with fresh plumage, assumes the appearance of youth. To this idea, allusion is made in Ps. 103:5 and Isa. 40:31. God's care over his people is likened to that of the eagle in training its young to fly (Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11, 12). It is easy to see how the eagle, which represents the most spiritual and penetrating power of human thought, might well be a symbol of the Lord's omniscience and His ever watchful care.

Because it soars upward, the eagle is a symbol of the resurrection or ascension of Christ. By extension, the eagle symbolizes baptized Christians who have

symbolically died and risen with Christ. (Since, as the eagle plunges into the sea and emerges with renewed vigor, so baptismal immersion envelops the believer and lifts him out renewed and cleansed.) The eagle is also the symbol of John the Evangelist because of his lofty and "soaring" gospel. (It is much more theological in nature than the other three.) Because the eagle seems to easily ascend the skies, looking into the sun with unblinking focus, we could ascribe to it a symbol of the Christian's unblinking faith in Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Light. In Revelation, John saw four animals in the midst of and about the throne, "The fourth beast was like a flying eagle." (Rev. 4:7) In this way was expressed the Divine intelligence and guard and providence.

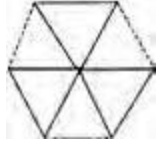
"So He drove out the man, and He placed cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden, and a flaming SWORD [chereb, destroying weapon] which turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life." (Genesis 3:24) The flaming sword was nothing else than the special symbol of God's immediate presence with the Holy Spirit. While it essentially involved the principle of divine righteousness which could no longer permit a sinful human race to partake of the tree of life in the old way, it also clearly pointed forward to the coming redemption and the provision through Christ which was to open the way of life eternal even to sinful men through the blood of Jesus and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit. We read in Revelation, "And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." (Rev.1:16) Is the flaming sword that guards the Garden of Eden the same as the sword that issues from the mouth of Jesus? Is the word of God "sharper than a two edged sword," or is the flaming sword a symbol for the word of God guarding yet pointing the way to the tree of life? It is of Masonic interest that formerly and indeed up to a comparatively recent period, the Tiler's sword was wavy in shape and so made an allusion to the "flaming sword which was placed at the east of the Garden of Eden which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." Further, St. Michael is the first among the archangels and prince of the heavenly host. He is often shown as a handsome warrior angel carrying a flaming sword representing the power of God.

But the flaming sword symbol is not confined to Judaeo-Christian theology alone. A flaming sword with immense destructive power appears in Norse mythology. It is said to be wielded by Surtur, the leader of the demons of Muspelheim. In Buddhism, Manjushri, the bodhisattva (a deity or being who has attained enlightenment worthy of nirvana but who remains in the human world to help others) of wisdom, holds aloft in his right hand the flaming sword of awareness that "cuts through the net of misunderstanding." Its fiery flames which emanate to all directions represent the blazing of the wisdom-awareness fire of full enlightenment.

Thus, the Junior Warden's jewel might also be taken to symbolize to Knights Templar that we, like the eagle, must daily renew and strengthen our faith in Christ, relying on God's watchful care, in order that one day we may worthily enter the gates of the New Jerusalem and partaking of the Tree of Life, live forever with our Lord in His heavenly mansions.



At the right is the Prelate's jewel. The jewel of this office is a triple triangle with a red passion cross in the center of each triangle. It is also an emblem of Deity. This jewel, like that of the Jr. Warden, is also rich with symbolic



interpretation. To begin with, the triple triangle has long been taken as a symbol of Deity. For us as Templars, the three equilateral triangles of the Prelate's jewel represent the three figures of the Christian godhead-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The triangles being the same size remind us of the equal importance of all three. Further, each triangle has three sides, symbolic of the omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence of the Holy Trinity. It is of interest that if we join the triangles with lines as in the figure at left, we produce a six-sided geometric shape known as a hexagon. It is the cross-section of the cell constructed by the bee, which is an ancient symbol of both industry and community. Other occurrences of the hexagon in nature are in some crystals such as basalt, and in snowflakes.

We notice that the three triangles have a total of nine sides. In the New Testament, the number nine is significant because Jesus Christ expired at the ninth hour after being nailed on the cross; he appeared nine times to his disciples and apostles after his resurrection; and Saint Paul enumerated nine fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In fact, the number nine is used fifty times in the Bible. This number also finds references in other religions and cultures. To mention but a few, some peoples believed that the sky was divided into nine celestial levels. This was true for the Buddhists and also for the last worshippers of Mithras; the Chinese prostrated nine times in front of their emperor; the nine openings of the man for Islam; the nine stages that should traverse the souls of Aztecs to reach the eternal rest. They counted also nine underground worlds. In Brahmanism, Vishnu incarnates in nine avatars to sacrifice himself for the salvation of men.

Finally, we see that the jewel contains three passion crosses. The three crosses in Christian symbolism represent the work of the atonement at Calvary where Christ was crucified with two thieves (typical of the human race), one on His right and one on His left. (Luke 23:32-33). In this symbol we find the truth of God's grace. One thief hurled insults and ridiculed Jesus, ultimately rejecting the salvation He offered. His fate was sealed. The other acknowledged Jesus as the Christ and called upon Him to save him. He saw Paradise that very day. Likewise, we all face the

same choice with the same consequences. Thus, these crosses represent rejection, repentance, and redemption.

Taken as a whole then, this jewel reminds us of God in three persons, of the sacrifice of Jesus the Son of God for the sins of the world, and of the choice we have in accepting or rejecting him as Savior and the Lord of our life. It symbolizes salvation and our community of Christian Masonic Knights bound together by the indissoluble bonds of faith, hope, and charity and striving to cultivate the nine fruits of the Spirit mentioned by Paul.



The Treasurer's jewel is the crossed keys. The installation ceremony is silent as to its symbolism. In the Roman Catholic Church, the crossed keys are a symbol associated with St. Peter, because Christ said to St. Peter that he would give him the "keys of the kingdom." As a Masonic symbol, its exoteric or open meaning is the twin sciences, moral science and physical science, a way of representing Masonic knowledge. In old Masonic texts the crossed keys are mentioned in their esoteric sense as a symbol of Anubis, the Egyptian god represented with the head of a jackal, who leads the dead to judgment and also of Osiris, the god of the underworld and the dead. The "Cross Keys" also is the name used on several English pubs. As such, the symbol of crossed keys represents hospitality. Finally, a key is a symbol of power. It represents power over wealth-to lock it up for security and unlock its container to bring it forth for use. Extending this idea, it also represents the power to admit or to exclude. The Treasurer's jewel thus reminds us that we are the guardians and conservators of Templary and of our responsibility to guard well the doors of our Asylums against the unworthy and the impious.

The crossed quill pens, which seem to be the international symbol of a secretary,



are the Recorder's jewel. Like that of the Treasurer's jewel, the installation ceremony is silent as to its symbolism. Its obvious symbolic meaning is that of the Recorder's responsibilities for letter and document (records) writing and



preservation. In another sense, crossed quills are recognized as one of man's oldest and most important tools used to record knowledge and learning. For over 200 years, a pair of crossed quill pens has been set before lawyers who plead cases before the United States Supreme Court. In this context, the crossed quills could be taken to symbolize justice and equity. The Recorder's jewel signifies the necessity of self-improvement and education to the Templar, and his duty to be fair and impartial when judging the motives and actions of others.



The Standard Bearer's jewel. The jewel of this office is a Masonic plumb surmounted by the banner of the Order. It has always struck me as unusual that the plumb should appear here, rather than in the Sr. Warden's jewel as one might expect if the inclusion of the immoveable Masonic jewels in our Templar jewels should follow in progression as begun with the Generalissimo's jewel. One of the earliest and simplest instruments used in construction, the plumb and its line was an essential tool of the stone mason. As the level was to insure evenness of a surface, the plumb was to insure perpendicularity and right angles to that surface. And so it is that this tool was taken from the operative mason to the speculative mason as a symbol of the best of conduct, unequivocal uprightness, and constant integrity required to build a spiritual temple reflective of the best of one's efforts.

The ritual of our order refers to two banners, the Grand Standard and the Beauceant. As the Beauceant is most commonly used in historical references to the medieval Knights Templar as their peculiar banner, I will follow that convention here. The origin of the word "beauceant" is uncertain. An anonymous pilgrim who visited Jerusalem around the twelfth or thirteenth century had the following to say of the banner of the Templars, "...when they go to war, a standard of two colors called balzaus is borne before them." The late author John J. Robinson claimed in his book *Born in Blood* that "The word beau is now generally conceived to mean beautiful, but it means much more than that. In medieval French it meant a lofty state, for which translators have offered such terms as 'noble,' 'glorious,' and even 'magnificent.' As a battle cry then, 'Beau Seant' was a charge to 'Be noble' or 'Be Glorious'." The Beauceant consisted of a black section above a white one. Its main purpose seems to have been as a rallying point for the Templars. During battle, the Templars were often separated from one another, and the flying banner would allow them to easily regroup in order to continue the attack. Symbolically, the black section is said to have depicted the sins of the secular world that the Templar knights had chosen to leave, while the second section was white depicting the purity that the order offered them, a sort of transformation from darkness to light.

(Note that the ribbon of the Commandery officers' jewels contains the Beauceant colors). The use of black and white metaphorically to symbolize duality is quite ancient. All civilizations hold black and white as symbolic connections between light and dark, good and evil, life and death, sky and earth, fire and water, male and female, etc. Black is also the symbolic color for the earth and white for the spirit. A symbolic meaning of the Standard Bearer's jewel then, might be that as Masonic Templars engaged in the struggle between good and evil (represented by the banner), our conduct and integrity must be such as to stand the test of the Great Architect's plumb.



The Sword Bearer's jewel is depicted at right. The jewel of this office is a triangle with crossed swords. As we have learned throughout our Masonic journey, the triangle is a symbol of Deity. The crossed swords represent military might. If the crossed swords are pointing downward, it symbolizes resting or peace. If the crossed swords are pointing upward, it symbolizes a time of war or conflict. The Sword Bearer's jewel is thus a striking reminder of our constant warfare with the "lying deceits and vanities of the world," and that a firm reliance upon God will insure us the ultimate victory. As the Sword Bearer's duty is to assist in protecting the banner of our order, so it is the duty of each of us to protect and defend the faith of our risen Lord and Savior.



The jewel of the Warder, shown at left, is a hollow square with crossed swords and a trumpet thereon. The symbol of the square was discussed in conjunction with the Senior Warden's jewel and that of the crossed swords in the Sword Bearer's jewel. Besides its obvious use as a musical instrument, the trumpet is a symbol of a specific message for a particular time. For instance, a speaking trumpet was a trumpet-shaped acoustic device to intensify and direct the human voice. Reference to it is found throughout the Bible, but to us as Christians, it has a special significance. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God." (1 Thess. 4:16) Here

Paul refers to the coming of Christ to resurrect those who have died in the faith and to gather to Him those who are alive. To continue, "...and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Notice that the crossed swords are pointing downward symbolizing rest or peace. With the three symbols upon the Warder's jewel considered as a whole, we might interpret its symbolism as being that of heralding that time when war and suffering shall be no more, when we are at rest from our labors, and when the resurrection of Jesus will be consummated by the resurrection of all the faithful and a renewed creation-an eternal kingdom of peace, justice, and love.



The jewel of the Guard is a hollow square, with a battle-axe thereon, and is shown at the left. The symbol of the square was discussed in conjunction with the Senior Warden's jewel. The battle-axe is a symbol of authority and of the execution of military duty. The battle-axe denoted a warlike quality of its bearer. The symbolism of the Guard's jewel thus teaches us to be vigilant in the cause of Christ, to protect our order with fidelity, and to fight valiantly for those things, both moral and spiritual, which will hasten the coming of our Lord again and the ultimate redemption of His people.



The final jewel is that of the Sentinel. It is a hollow square, with a sword thereon. As already noted, the symbol of the square was discussed in conjunction with the Senior Warden's jewel. The sword has many symbolic meanings. Alchemically, the metaphorical sword cleanly pierces the spiritual soul of man. This symbolic action sacrifices physical bondage to release a path to ethereal or enlightened freedom. In Christianity the sword symbolism deals with protection, righteousness, and justice. Double edged swords give us symbolism of duality of nature and the dual powers of manifestation. Here we see creation as well as destruction (death and life) housed in the instrument. The sword is said to be the emblem of military honor and should incite the bearer to a just and generous pursuit

of honor and virtue. It is symbolic of liberty and strength. On the other hand, it has been taken as a symbol representing war, aggression, and power. The sword superimposed upon the square may therefore be taken as symbolic of our desire to sever our attachment to the things of this material world and to pursue a steadfastly Christian honor and virtue which will gain us admission into the heavenly world, into "that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

It is my sincere hope that this article has stimulated you to look beyond the mere ribbon and metal of these badges and the reference made to them in the ceremony of installation of officers and to reflect more deeply upon the symbolic meanings they can impart to us as Masonic Knights Templar. If so, its purpose will have been fully realized, and the labor involved in writing it will not have been in vain.

Sir Knight George Marshall, Jr., PGC, KCT, and Aide-de-Camp to the Grand Master can be reached at [geomarsh@yahoo.com](mailto:geomarsh@yahoo.com) or 161 Anna Kathryn Dr., Gurley, AL 35748

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