

GENERAL SUPPLEMENT

The space on these two pages is provided by the *Knight Templar* magazine to be used by the Grand Commanderies to communicate with the individual Sir Knights in their jurisdiction on a monthly basis. From time to time and for various reasons, we fail to receive any material from the editor of the state supplement for a given month. When this happens, we take the opportunity to offer you this information provided by the Public Relations Committee of the Grand Encampment. – The Ed.



A Brief Resume on the History of the Knights Templar

Part II

by

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Hugh de Payens had departed Jerusalem as one of a group of just nine knights bound together in an obscure, unofficial order. He returned later as Grand Master of an order which was only responsible to the Pope; possessed gold, silver, and property wealth; and was composed of three hundred knights sworn to stand and die if the master so ordered. Instant obedience to his superiors was required of every Templar, and since the order was responsible to no one but the Pope, it essentially created its own system of punishments up to and including the death penalty, for disobedience.

The Templar Rites of Initiation and Chapter Meetings were conducted in total secrecy. Any Templar revealing any proceeding, even to another Templar of lower rank than himself, was subject to punishment including expulsion from the order. To preserve secrecy, the meetings were guarded by knights who stood outside the door with their swords drawn. Although there is no documentation, legend has it that several times spies or perhaps merely the curious met their death the moment they were caught.

The reception of a knight into the order was a very solemn ceremony. Unlike the Knights of Malta whose form of reception was open and public, none but Templars were permitted entrance. Perhaps this difference between a public and secret reception was attributed to the spirit of persecution exhibited by the Church toward the order in the later days.

Ultimately the Templars held over nine thousand manors all over Europe plus mills and markets. During its two-hundred-year history, over twenty thousand initiates brought land or money dowries to the order. They eventually owned ships to transport men and supplies to the East as well as fighting ships to guard the fleet. With their fleet, the Templars earned revenues by transporting material, secular Crusaders, and Pilgrims to the Holy Land. The Templar financial activities varied from serving as a "safe deposit" for traveling nobles, to administering the estates of the ailing nobility who wished for their heirs a safe inheritance. The Church at Rome contributed often and encouraged the same actions in its followers. The wealth of the Templars grew as did their reputation as perhaps the first "world bankers." Toward their later days, the glory and simplicity of the order began its slow decline through weaker Grand Masters.

With the fall of Acre in 1292, the Templars abandoned Palestine and the Holy Lands and returned to the comfort and wealth of their Preceptories across Europe. At the beginning of the 14th Century, the throne of France was occupied by Philip the Fair, an ambitious, vindictive, and avaricious prince. This prince had been in controversy with Pope Boniface. The Templars had, as was usual with them, sided with the Pope against the King. The King of France became envious of the extreme wealth of the order, and their power interfered with his designs of political control over Europe. He then secretly concerted with Pope Clement V, whom Philip had placed upon the throne of Peter. Their plan called for the destruction of the Templars and the seizure of their wealth and Preceptories.

Their plans having been made, Pope Clement V wrote to De Molay, the last of the Templar Grand Masters, inviting him to come and consult with him on matters of great importance to the order. De Molay obeyed and arrived in Paris early in the year 1307, accompanied by sixty knights and a large treasure. De Molay had made the voyage in the hope of one final crusade to retake the Holy Lands from the Muslim hoards. A date which even today children around the world consider an "unlucky day" had its roots in the occasion of this visit.

The day De Molay arrived in Paris was Friday, October 13, 1307, and he was immediately imprisoned as was every Templar in France. By secret order of the King, the Templars were arrested on the pretended charges of idolatry and other crimes against the throne of the King and the authority of the Church. The fires that the King and Pope ignited soon swept across all of Europe. On the 12th of May, 1310, fifty-four knights were publicly burned at the stake. Neither Knight nor Templar Chaplain was spared.



To be continued next month with Part III