

February 2023 The Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of the District of Columbia SK Douglas N. Cohen, Grand Commander; SK Carter L. Diggs Jr. Editor

“Templar Ritual Relationship to the British Royal Funeral”

A short time ago, we witnessed for the first time in over seven decades the funeral for a British monarch. The ritual and pageantry of that event is the most impressive in the world, which we only seldomly see. At one time, the British royal ritual was rivaled by France and the Holy Roman Empire, but those traditions, many at the end of World War I, have been replaced. The core of the British funeral has remained steadfast since the death of the last Anglo-Saxon King of England, Saint Edward the Confessor on 5 January 1066. You will see that there is a clear relationship to these [British](#) royal rituals with those of Knights Templar, for they developed side by side over the last nine centuries.

Upon strict observation, there are many obvious parallels in the British Royal transition of power to those for a change of authority to a new Commander at the Commandery, Grand Commandery, and Grand Encampment level. Several of these parallels are the seamless transition of authority, the protocol of hierarchy, the alignment of hierarchy, the regulated awards system, the tiled floor pattern, the principle officers, the procedures for opening the first meeting, the ceremonial installation, and symbols and hats. Upon observing both, it is obvious to agree and impossible to deny that these two systems evolved side by side and influenced each other.

First, the passing of authority from one to the next is seamless, from “God Save the Queen” to “God Save the King”. The government election process has been separate from the royal funeral and succession process, as the British public elects representatives to Parliament, and there was no doubt, codified in law since 1689, that Charles III would become King at the passing of his mother Queen Elizabeth II. Where previously, elections for the DC Grand Commandery were held on the same day as Installation, we changed our procedures so that elections are separate, and over four months prior to, the Installation of the new leadership team. This aligns to the Grand Encampment that has a clear succession, and the next Grand Master is known three years in advance. In this way, the Sir Knights, as with the monarch’s team, can focus their efforts on the ceremony. Additionally, there is no procedure for removal of a monarch or a Grand Master except under extraordinary circumstances. This has only taken place once each, at the abdication of Edward VIII in 1936 and with the Grand Encampment last year.

Secondly, there is clear similarity in the salute to the superior and the acknowledgement of hierarchy. In Templary, since the ancient Templars of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, Knights used the hand salute, the Roman symbol that “I am unarmed and acknowledge you in friendship” the junior knight salutes his senior. In the Masonic Lodge, a Brother presents the due guard to the Master or Warden. In Royal Britain, the subjects bow deeply to the sovereign, and he returns with a slight bow, seen many times during the events of the funeral and accession. The tradition of bowing to the monarch began in ancient Egypt, and has been part of British tradition for over a thousand years.

Next, the seniority and hierarchy of rank is evident in both systems. During the royal procession of the monarch’s casket from place to place, the lying in state, and the funeral and burial, military units and pall bearers are arranged by protocol. Various military services are highlighted at different times, due to history, and military regiments are formed based upon the longevity of service. For example, the Coldstream Guards, the oldest within the British Army formed in 1650, were arranged first in line. The Grand Encampment where Grand Commanders are introduced to the Grand Master by seniority of the establishment of their Grand Commandery, starting with several encampment formed between 1797 and the Grand Encampment in 1816.

Next, one important element is present at all times and hidden in plain sight. The Masonic tiled floor, called the Mosaic Pavement, the iconic white and black checkered pattern, existed in Ancient Egypt and Greece and within King Solomon’s Temple. The pattern represents balance, symbolizes light and dark, the duality of good and evil, the Sun that rules the day and the Moon that governs the night, or the source of light and the absence of it, or darkness. This floor has existed in Westminster Abbey since the twelfth century, near the time of Sir Hugues de Payens, first Knight Templar Grand Master’s visit to England in 1128. This floor is also present at St. George’s Chapel at Windsor Castle, location of the Queen’s burial and home of the Knights of the Garter. Templars and Brother Masons all know that his floor exists in every Lodge and Commandery.

Next is the long history of senior members in charge of both Royal and Templar functions. All tasks related to heraldry are governed by the College of Arms, founded in 1484 by Richard III, and led by the Earl Marshal, a position existing since 1165 and hereditarily held by the Dukes of Norfolk of the Howard family. The Earl Marshal has command of all royal ceremonies in the name of the monarch. This is like a conclave of Knights Templar with the Captain General and Senior Warden serving the purposes of the Marshal and Master of Ceremonies. The rank of Generalissimo, an Italian term for the military rank of the highest degree,

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or the General of the Generals, first used by the Holy Roman Empire in 1632, assists the Commander with policy and presides in his absence. Under him, the Knights below the dais are led by the Captain General, a rank used interchangeably with Commander-in-Chief in Europe since 1470, and for the first time in England in 1513, bestowed temporarily during Henry VIII's absence. The rank was used permanently for the first time by in 1645 for Sir Thomas Fairfax, the second Lord Fairfax of Scotland in the New Model Army.

The next similarities are the Honors and Awards governed by strict protocol. The monarch bestows several Honors twice a year following rules of the College of Arms, at New Year's and the King's Official Birthday, a holiday traditionally celebrated in May or June since 1748. Just a few of these include The Order of the Bath for military distinction, and Order of the British Empire for various other accomplishments. The oldest and highest honor is Knight of the Garter since 1348, a personal gift from the monarch. The Grand Encampment largely followed this example by creating the College of Honors that regulates and governs the awards of Companion of the Temple (CT), Knight Commander of the Temple (KCT), Knight Grand Cross of the Temple (KGT), Knight Templar Cross of Honor (KTCH), and on rare occasions the Grand Cross Templar (GCT).

Another similarity is the preparation of the first session during a transition period. We witnessed, two days after the Queen's death, the first part of the Accession Council, a formal event since 1837, led by Lady Penny Mordaunt. Her usual job is Leader of the House of Commons, but for ceremonial purposes serves as the Lord President of the Privy Council of the United Kingdom. After brief business, including approving the text of the *Proclamation of Accession*, the Lord President led a small group, including the Prince of Wales – the heir, Prime Minister – leader of government, Archbishop of Canterbury – head of the Church of England, to the throne room to provide an update to the King, while a master of ceremonies prepared the Privy Council for the second part of the Council. Shortly thereafter, the Lord President returned ceremoniously to the Council with the King, wherein the King presided over the second part of the Council. These procedures are very similar to the ceremonial opening of a Conclave of Knights Templar. The Eminent Commander leaves an assemblage of Sir Knights in the command of the Captain General, departing to his apartment, symbolizing the throne room, with the Generalissimo – his heir and head of government, and the Prelate – his religious guide. When preparations are complete, the Captain General, as master of ceremonies, directs the Senior Warden to invite Commander to return. The Commander and his entourage return in ceremonial fashion, is formally welcomed, and presides over his conclave.

At this point in time, we now await the coronation that will take place in May 2023, the formal crowning of the Sovereign. The action of crowning the monarch is known as enthronement, which is much more elaborate, but very similar to the installation of a commander in Templary. Many of the symbols of regalia to be used for Charles III were made for Charles II in 1661 upon the restoration the monarchy. Oliver Cromwell executed Charles II's father Charles I in 1649 and destroyed and melted down all the royal regalia. At the most climactic part of the ceremony, Charles III, before the three Swords of State and while holding the Sovereign's Scepters and Orb, will take the oath of office. The Archbishop of Canterbury will then place St. Edward's Crown, the 1661 replica of a lost 13th Century version, on the monarch's head. At this moment, the lords of the realm are to cover themselves with their coronets. A coronet is defined as a crown subordinate to the royal crown. There are different coronets in ascending order of importance, an ascetic splendor from Baron, Viscount, Earl, Marquess, Duke, and Royal Duke. The rank of lords are also distinguished by the rows of ermine spots on their mantles, from two for Baron, two and one-half for Viscount, three for Earl, three and one-half for a Marquess, four for a Duke, and six for a royal Duke. At a Templar installation, the new commander takes his oath of office bare headed upon his sword of office, then puts on his chapeau, hat with feathers, as do the other Sir Knights present. Knights Templar rank differences are shown by different colors most notably on the shoulder boards of their mantles, but also elsewhere on their uniform in ascending order from green at the Constituent Commandery level, Red for Grand Commandery, and Purple for Grand Encampment. At an enthronement and installation, both national flags and Royal or Commandery Banners are present.

Upon strict examination of the British Royal Funeral and a Templar change of command, there is no doubt that there is a connection between royal protocol and the rituals of the Knights Templar. Numerous elements are in common with similar histories. There is therefore no doubt to the historic connection between the Ancient Knights Templar and the monarchies of the European Middle Ages.

Sir Knight Robb Mitchell, KCT, Right Eminent Past Grand Commander GCKTDC 2022