

The Sword and The Trowel

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The old idiom “**the devil is in the detail**” meaning that something might seem simple at a first look but will take more time and effort to complete than expected. But the “devil” is not a welcome guest in an asylum of Knights Templar. Yet confusion, poor tactics and ritual, and lack of interesting programs is frequently the saboteur of Virginia’s Conclaves.

When Nehemiah was appointed the Governor of Judea, he was permitted to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and restore the city to its former fortified condition. He also met great opposition from the neighboring Persian Governors. As the threats increased, he gave orders for the Builders to keep their ranks and have their armor on while they worked.¹

Zerubbabel met with similar opposition from the Samaritans while rebuilding the Temple and, although the events connected events to Nehemiah’s restorations of the walls of Jerusalem occurred long after the completion of the second Temple, Masonic Advance Degrees refer to the time of Zerubbabel. Hence, the Scottish Rite Fifteenth Degree, the Knight of the Sword, refers to the building of the Temple of Zerubbabel and combines the Trowel and the Sword adopted as a symbol.²

Freemasonry teaches us that it is a progressive science, a system of ethics wherein moral precepts are taught by lessons based on the allegorical use of the operative craftsman's tools. Symbolic Freemasonry prepares the candidate in the use of symbolic stone for that Spiritual Temple. Capitular and Cryptic Freemasonry instructs the candidate in the allegorical use of operative tools of the craftsman. Finally, Chivalric Freemasonry instructs the candidate in the allegorical use of the weapons in the discharge of the duties of knighthood whereby the Moral Temple, built and restored in Symbolic, Capitular and Cryptic Freemasonry, can be defended and beatified by the precepts of Christianity.

In Craft Masonry, the Sword reminds us of the Tiler and his duties to protect the bounds of the Lodge from the unworthy, uninitiated and imposters. The Trowel symbolizes completion of spiritual work and enlightenment.

“**The devil is in the detail**” when it comes to Templar Membership. If we are to believe that “every Christian Mason should be a Knight Templar,” we need to take the business of Templar Masonry seriously and maintain the high standards: our heritage must be a directional sign on the

¹ Flavius Josephus *Antiquities*, Book XI, Chapter VI, Section 8

² Arturo De Hoyos, 33^o, Grand Cross, *Masonic Formulas and Rituals of Albert Pike*, Scottish Rite Research Society, Washington D.C., 2010, pp. 336-354

highway of life, a guidepost to the future, not a hitching post for the past. Our objectives must be clear: they are the 4 R's of an effective Membership Enhancement Program – ***Recruitment, Reinstatement, Reactivation, and Retention.***

Recruiting new members is hard work. It requires time, resources and a commitment to a singular purpose. **Solicitation is not only allowed, it is encouraging!** To be visible you need to attend Symbolic Lodges and Royal Arch Chapters and bring petitions with you. Participate in the Orders, memorize your lines and deliver them with feeling, and execute your tactics with precision. Make new Knights feel welcome to your Commandery, assign him a mentor, and provide what information he needs to assimilate into Templar Masonry.

Reinstatement is just important as recruiting new members. Demits and suspensions are a loosening of knightly ties and they should be serious concern to every Officer and Sir Knight in each Commandery across Virginia. Personal attention is needed to prevent demits and suspensions. Often the Sir Knight feels he is too old be of service to Templar Masonry, he has lost interest in Templary, or he cannot attend the Conclaves. Be alert to opportunities to obtain restorations and affiliations and take the initiative and interview former members. Establish enthusiasm, motivation and commitment among Commandery members.

Reactivation and Retention are probably the hardest to achieve in any Commandery. There are many reasons why members of the Templar Craft do not attend Conclaves or have not attended for a long time. The longer they stay away, the more difficult it is for them to return. Leadership is vitally important in stimulating membership interest and attendance. Contact those Sir Knights who have stopped attending the Conclaves. Telephonic contact is acceptable, but face-to-face contact is far preferable. Ascertain their reasons for not attending and solicit their thoughts on how to make the Commandery more interesting and important to them. Offer to provide transportation. Stress the importance of their attendance and their participation. Make them feel valuable and make them feel missed!

Brother Norman Vincent Peale, a positive thinking expert, said “Every problem can be solved if you take some quiet time to reflect, seek guidance, and put things into perspective.”³ And Civil Rights leader Coretta Scott King was fond of saying “It doesn’t matter how strong your opinions, if you don’t use your power for positive change, you are, indeed, part of the problem.”⁴

So, “put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”⁵ Keep your sword by your side as you build the Templar Craft with the Towel. Let me finish with an appropriate poem:

³ Ed Halpaus, Grand Lodge Education Officer, *Report of Masonic Membership Survey*, Grand Lodge A.F.&A.M. of Minnesota, last modified March 22, 2014

⁴ *The Quill and the Cloth*, Holy Rosary Catholic Church, North Mannato, Minnesota, August 22-23, 2015

⁵ Ephesians 6:11: New International Version (NIV)

The Sword and Trowel

Author Unknown

Due to an oath of service,
It has come that I must stand
Within this foreign country,
On this strange, enchanted land
To raise the ancient Temple,
So long lost beneath the sand
Of time and Man's corruption,
And thus must I have at hand
Both sword and mason's trowel
So to serve the Lord's command.

Princes, kings, and potentates
Sent us all across the shore
To cut down the infidels
In a bloody holy war.
They promised righteous glory,
Even life forever more,
And so we've battled inward
Boldly taking on the chore,
Serving up our enemy
To the mercy of our Lord.

But in a lonely vigil,
On a cold and eerie night,
Blew a moaning mournful wind
That filled my heart with fright,
And glimpsing an invader,
Thrust my sword with all my might
Into an airy phantom,
My own shadow in moon's light,
And thus my eyes were opened
And my soul was given sight.

Within that silent moment
I was graced with light shot through,
And for what seemed an hour,
Yet within a breath or two,
I was freed from all my sin,
And stood with my Christ anew
As He vanquished my true foe,
Not pagan, Moslem, or Jew,
But the hubris, hate, and lust
Sitting on my heart's back pew.

And now I know my duties
Are most truly to protect
The Cross from all dishonor
And the Temple to erect.
Not with metal sword or tool
But by love must I perfect
The site of Christ's next coming
Where His light shall intersect
The heart of a true brother
Though he's of another sect.

So I take the sword and trowel
As the tools that I must test,
Not upon a foreign land
But within this human breast,
To conquer evil forces
And intolerance arrest,
Building a fraternity
That will serve the noble quest
To spread illumination
And True Glory manifest.