

OUR TEMPLAR INHERITANCE

In this short series of lectures, usually only assigned to fill in pregnant pauses in the evening's work, individual topics are covered. The sources of reference are varied and appear in the notes either as references or more generally as the bibliography after each topic.

The Mantle and Habit

Our modern day mantles and habits vary in shape, colour, age and at times, may well be suited to participate in a well known washing powder advert!

There are listed in the original Rule of the Templars, 28 Rules for the wearing of the Templar's mantle and 49 Rules (if I can count correctly without the aid of a calculator) for the wearing, behaviour and privileges of the mantle and habit. The mantle of pure white (symbol of purity and chastity) was conferred upon the original Order on 14th January 1128 at the Council of Troyes by St Bernard of Clairvaux (Cistercians wore a white habit). At the council of Troyes the Templars received the official Papal recognition by Pope Honorius and Stephen, Patriarch of Jerusalem. The Order of the Temple received the Latin Rule and the white habit reflecting the influence of its sponsor St Bernard's white habit of the Cistercian (Rule 17) Order (or was it the white of the Canons of the Holy Sepulchre?). The white mantle was worn on every occasion by the Knights in chapel, meal times (Rule 280), even and especially into battle when it was allowed to be open. To be deprived of it was considered a most serious punishment and loss of privileges. Sergeants and married brothers wore a black habit and a brown cloak with a red cross on the back and the front (Rule 68/141). The white mantle was only conferred upon Knights of noble and legitimate birth (Rule 337). Chaplains of the Order had the right to wear the white mantle only if they were elected a bishop or archbishop and then only after humbly seeking the consent of the Master and the convent (Rule 434). They usually wore a green mantle. The mantle was at times fur lined in winter for all ranks.

Five Rules governed the Red Cross. The Order of the Temple received the right to wear the red cross at Easter 1147 when it was presented in the garden of St. Denis in Paris when the armies of the Second Crusade were mustered in the abbey gardens. St Louis, King Louis VII of France was presented with the Oriflame by the Pope, Eugene III. Also assembled were 300 Templar Knights under the command of Everard des Barres, Prior of France, later to become the 3rd Master of the Order (1149 - 1152) who was attending the General Chapter in Paris. Pope Eugene III granted the Templars exclusive right to wear the eight pointed red cross on their left side over the heart. This is where our modern symbol is placed upon installation as a knight. Red was considered the colour of martyrdom, "As a reminder to shed their blood for Him who sheddeth His blood for thee". The red cross would be lost to a knight whilst doing penance (Rule 470) but if a knight died whilst doing penance (they often did!) the red cross was returned to the deceased (Rule 469).

In the original and secret orthodox reception of a Knight Templar, after all enquiries and obligations of poverty, chastity and obedience had been answered and sworn, the mantle was bestowed upon the new made Templar Knight (Rule 678). He was then blessed by a priest of the Order and Psalm 133 was recited "Ece quam bonum et quam jocundum habitare fratres in unum". ("Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity".) The psalm was followed by the versides "Mitte eis auxilium de sancto, et nihil proficiat inimicus in eis" and the Prayer of the Holy Spirit, "Qui corde fidelium". The Master then raised him up by the hands and kissed him on the mouth; the Knights present did likewise. This practise led to accusation of homosexuality at their trial of 1307-12 but you will need a week's holiday for me to tell you of that fascinating story.

Interestingly, in the Baldwyn Encampment Ceremony, disclosed by Richard Carlisle in 1825 and published in 1829, the mantle is invested upon the candidate after the usual questions and obligations with the words, "First I clothe you with a mantle. Receive it as the Lord's yoke, for it is easy and light, and will bring rest to your soul. As a habit it is of little worth, and we promise you nothing but bread and water." (Perhaps if this was enacted today, the words "but only if you return your card to the Registrar by the Third Monday before the Fourth Tuesday proceeding the Tenth day of Lent!" would be added.)

A Brief Resume of the Rules (Not in order!)

Rule 138 stated that the knight has a cape (the hooded cloak enveloping the whole body and fastened by a string or hook). The tunic was short in the Order's early days but became longer in the mid-12th century and longer still in the 13th century. The knights were issued with 2 white mantles, the fur lined one in Summer was returned to the Draper.

Rule 324 states "No brother may wear a hood on his head. No brother may wear a coif without a cloth cap. No brother should hang his mantle round his bed on hooks, for each brother is obliged to honour his habit".

Rule 281 stated that it was obligatory to wear the mantle in Church and Rule 280 also said whilst eating. The hood was worn only in the infirmary and when going to various meals but it should not be kept on when the office was being sung (Rule 314). The mantle was allowed to be opened when at war but fastened otherwise. Addison P79 writes that the white mantle could be looped up over the armour and chain when worn in battle.

Rule 68 states "that the sergeants and squires should not wear white habits."

Rule 69 forbade married members of the Order to wear white habits or cloaks.

Rule 245 stated that any Knight giving the habit of the house to anyone outside the Order, or not qualified, without the consent of the Chapter, will lose his habit. No Knight may have been deprived of his habit unless with the authority of the chapter.

Punishment of a Brother would at times involve "Deprivation of the mantle (Rule 266) and it would only be restored to him at the will of his Brethren, except in exceptional circumstances where the mantle was withheld for one or two years. In the case where a Brother threw it off in anger and refused to resume it at the admonition prayers or when requested by his fellow Knights or even if a bystander to the discarding of the mantle picked it up and put it on the offending Knight, he would lose his mantle.

(Rule 463) The loss of habit was accompanied by isolation in disgrace, usually in cells and public floggings. Rule 508 allowed the Knight to receive corporal punishment with the mantle fastened.

Rule 452 states the Templar loses his habit if he strikes a Christian.

Rule 453 states he loses his habit for lying.

Rule 451 deemed that if a Knight broke the laces of his mantle in a fit of temper he would be excommunicated; he would return his equipment to the stores and he would have to seek absolution.

Rule 454 loses the habit for false accusation against another Brother.

Rule 416 governs penance's and each penance has the habit mentioned therein.

Rule 441 states that any receiving Brethren would lose their habit if the new Knight is found unhealthy or unworthy. (Cuch.) (see Rule 460).

Rule 457/464 stated that a Knight loses his habit for disobedience.

Rule 425 stated that when expelled from the Order the Knight lost his mantle and habit. The habit was considered the badge or distinguishing sign of the Order.

Rule 443 advocates that the habit could be lost for a year for many offences. If the Knight was on a 3 day penance per week for a year he was allowed to wear his habit and keep his mantle laced up and act humbly.

Rule 467 stated that if the habit is torn or given back willingly it cannot be reissued for a year and a day accompanied by loss of all privileges.

Rule 462 stated that if a Knight left the house in anger he may not take his habit or mantle but if he returned within 2 days he would not be expelled or at best, lose his mantle for a year.

Rule 512 bade him eat his food off his mantle whilst "on the ground" doing penance.

Rule 451/589 did not allow a Knight to assault a Brother, even by breaking the fastenings of his mantle. The offending Brother could well have been put in irons and disqualified from carrying the piebald banner. There were 9 offences for expulsion, but 31 offences for the loss of habit. In the Rule there are 149 references to the conduct and wearing of the habit and 28 references for the conduct of the mantle as already mentioned.

Rule 485 allows the Brethren to return a Knight's habit if the Chapter agrees. (There's hope for us all).

From the above brief notes it is obvious to appreciate the high regard that the Templar Order had for the mantle, habit and red cross. On those nights when we attend a preceptory perhaps the wearing of the habit and mantle, adorned with their Red Cross, perhaps ought to be viewed with a greater significance. The bestowing of a Knight's habit is a very under rated affair, thankfully the awarding of the mantle is given its legitimate importance.

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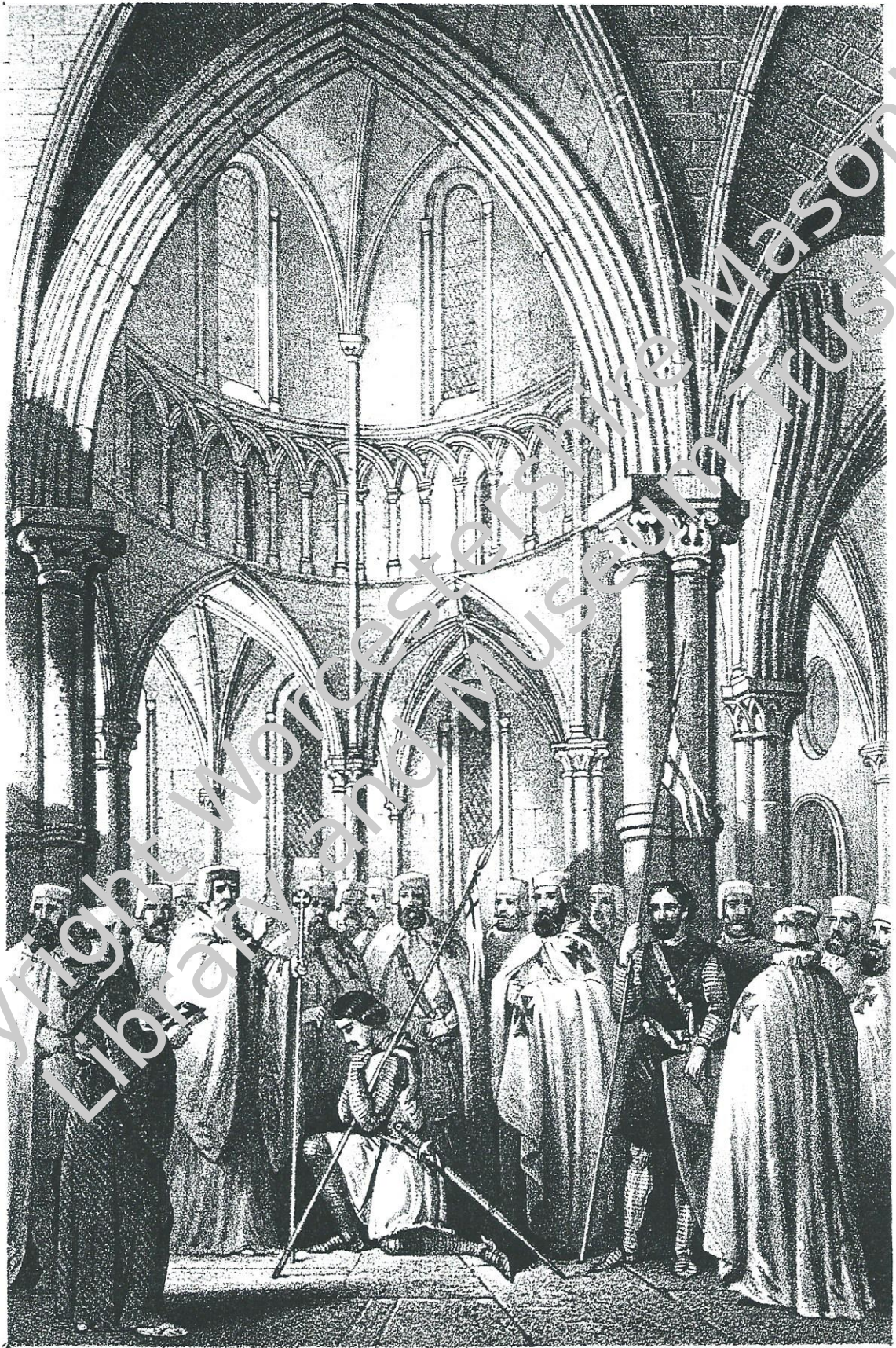
P.S. No Knight of serving brother was allowed to wear gloves except the Chaplain (Rules 268 and 325) and the masons when working, to protect their hands (Rule 325).

P.P.S The Cistercians were reformed Benedictines but the Latin Rule of the Templars has close similarities to the Rule of St Benedict. An expelled Templar often entered the stricter Order of St Benedict or St Augustine in order to save his soul.

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THE ADMISSION OF A NOVICE TO THE VOWS OF THE ORDER OF THE TEMPLE.