

THE ORDER OF GOOD TEMPLARS IN TRANSYLVANIA'S SAXON TOWNS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Abstract. The Order of the Good Templars appeared in the United States of America, in 1850, as a fraternal organization for temperance and abstinence, following the organizational pattern of the Freemasonry, the members of the order being united in lodges. The order granted equal access to men and women of all races. The Order will spread from the United States into Europe. It will also appear in Transylvania, in the Protestant Evangelical milieu of Sibiu, Brasov, Sighisoara, Bistrita, Orastie, Sebes, and Medias etc. The Order of the Good Templars had a sustained activity in the Saxon area in Transylvania during the first half of the XXth century, acting with a certain firmness against alcohol consumption, but it did not manage to stop the members of the Transylvanian community from drinking alcohol.

Keywords: abstinence, anti-alcohol movement, The Order of Good Templars, lodge, Transylvania.

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The 19th century makes its debut through a period marked by scientific conquests. It is the period when man discovers more, a time full of inventions that make common man's life a lot easier. At the same time, innovations in medicine cause the growth of life expectancy. Doctors weren't concerned only with creating medication or better treatments but also with creating prophylactic measures. It is now when possible sources of different plagues like typhus, cholera, scarlet fever or measles are eradicated through extensive urban measures. Towns acquire new shapes due to the introduction of running water, sewerage, street paving and creating gutters.

One of the major debates regarding the wounds which affected society is about excessive alcohol consumption. Alcoholism is regarded as a plague which leads to physical and psychic destruction of some individuals. Apart from these aspects, it represents, now – during a period marked by nationalism – a possible cause for a nation's extinction and the elite is trying to fight with all means possible.

This is noticeable with the Transylvanian Saxons as well, where – through press articles, speeches and sermons in churches – they militate for prohibition and abstinence. Next to these means we find *The Order of Good Templars*.

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The Order appeared as a fraternal organization for temperance and abstinence, its members met in lodges, having the freemasonry as a structure model. In the year 1850, in Utica, state of New York, Daniel Cady founded an organization called *The Knights of Jericho*. In the year to come, at his cabin in Oriskany Falls, a town close to Utica, this organization was visited by another group led by Wesley Bailey and the two groups decided to unite and form *The Order of Good Templars*. The organization's motto was: *Friendship, hope and charity!* The Order admitted men and women equally and made no distinction by race. It knows a good reception in the American society and during the same year, in August, H. Curtis sets the foundation of the Grand Lodge of the United States of America. In a short while, by 1866, it had 168,500 members and 2,686 lodges.²¹

Concerning the Order's purpose, Wilhelm Morres, evangelical parish priest in Braşov, he points out that the group promotes abstinence from any kind of alcoholic drink and its members should follow a series of precepts in their lives:

- “ 1. one will avoid consumption of such drinks until the end of his life,
2. one will not offer anyone such drinks,
3. one will not prepare, purchase or sell such drinks,
4. one will persuade by any legitimate means to eliminate their consumption by the human society.”

The only exception made by the Order is the one concerning the Holy Eucharist or if advised so by the doctor. They would advise here, if possible, to use grape juice or any other non-alcoholic remedies.³

Also, each member will see to improve his health, his wealth, will be a true family man, will improve his social relations. He will constantly see to improve the life quality of his peers by preaching for a no-alcohol life, showing the major problems this brings upon the individual's health and upon society. A *good templar* does these through a thorough structure and by working together with the other members.⁴

Within the structure, if there are 10 adult members in a town, the basis of a lodge will be set. Although it is not written as a rule, it is shown that if a lodge grows over 50 members, the lodge cannot keep its familiar sense and it is advised that another lodge is formed. The lodges are seen as large families where the fraternal spirit dominates. Each lodge selects for leadership the mission. For the internal and external activity it selects a committee of seven members to which other auxiliaries are added. It is shown that more must know the responsibilities within the lodge and therefore the elections for

² August Forel, *Der Guttempler – Orden (Independent Order of Good Templars) Ein sozialer Reformator. Seine Geschichte, sein Zweck, seine Grundsätze, seine Organisation und seine Tätigkeit. Im Aufträge des Schweizerischen Grossloge des I.O.G.T.*, Flensburg, 1913, p. 3-4.

³ Wilhelm Morres, *Der Guttempler, Kalender des Siebenbürger Volksfreundes für das gemeinde Jahr 1914*, XLV, 1913, p. 81.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 82.

positions take place quarterly. The committee's election, the regularity of the meetings and all other regulations are set by the ritual book. Usually there are weekly meetings, at a preordained time in the evening, which don't take more than two hours. Punctuality is very important. Also, any meeting begins and ends in a song or a prayer. A new member is accepted freely by vote by the members. Inside and outside the lodge members identify themselves through a white and blue metal button which has engraved on it the earth globe and the inscription I.O.G.T. - *Internationaler Orden der Gut-Templer (The International Order of the Good Templars)*. Inside the order members are placed in a hierarchy by distinctions. After half a year of activity, each member receives a distinction – *Districtual*, after two years – *Grand Lodge* and after five years of activity *World Lodge*. As we shall see in the following paragraphs, according to the distinction he held, each member could become representative to the lodge he belonged and could participate in the meetings of the superior lodges.⁵

The ritual has at his roots moral and Christian principles and beliefs. For each member it has a compulsory character, the ceremonies and the rites of passage words, as well as order and discipline. It is not a religious ritual though, because within the order we find members of different Christian confessions and different political views, people who are more religious or less religious etc.⁶

The Order put accent on entering new young members within its ranks, to prevent them knowing the bad effects of alcohol. Therefor appear the *young lodges*, for children between 10 and 14 years old and the so called *guard lodges* for young people aged 15 to 18. They work alongside the adult lodges for abstinence and a life with no alcohol. The Order's agreement must be obtained for building a new lodge.⁷

Beside the regular meetings, each member must participate to public gatherings, where alcohol use is condemned, to militate for abstinence and to propagate their ideas in concerts, shows, reading evenings etc. Also, in society, they must have an impeccable behavior, to be punctual, tidy, to prove their discipline and will to help others.⁸

Within each lodge there is a hierarchy. Its leader was the Grand Templar, who presided over the meetings. His role was to represent the lodge, he had the obligation to respect the constitution, the ritual and the daily order of meetings. He also had the role to follow on the punctuality of the arriving members and to maintain a good atmosphere inside the lodge. The *Vice-Templar* or *The Grand-Old Templar* was his second in command, he received

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 83.

⁶ A. Forel, *op. cit.*, p. 20-23.

⁷ W. Morres, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁸ A. Forel *op. cit.*, p. 16-17.

help in presiding over the meetings and represented him in the meetings he could not attend. The *Secretary* position was an important one as well. It had to be held by someone extremely punctual – to hold meeting protocol and to render an account if there was or not much talking during the meeting – also to tell *The Grand Templar* of any irregularity in the lodge or done by any of its members.⁹

The Chief Templar was the one who led the young people meetings with a major role in forming the new generation. He was a person who knew very well the rules of the order and observed strictly their evolution. Then, *The Marshal* kept the lodges inventory, *The Supervisor* kept the order and discipline during the meetings, the *Chaplain* had an essential role in the ceremonial service and during the ritual, *The Treasurer* or *The financial Secretary* managed the accounts and the finances of the lodge.¹⁰

Where there existed more lodges in a city, the work would be carried out through collaboration and a district lodge would exist. The district lodge represented the lodges in that district or province, according to the country's administrative state. They are composed by at least one representative of each of the regions lodges. The condition was to hold at least the rank of *District*. The functions and dignities are the same as within a lodge. At a national level the district lodges for a group of 100 members a delegate is chosen for the Grand Lodge of a country. This is made of the district lodges' representatives elected annually. Here as well there is the condition of having a *Grand Lodge* rank. Next to them there are the so called *Old Representatives* and the extraordinary members (with no right to vote). The Grand Lodge gathers once a year, for two or three days, in a town planned ahead.¹¹

At the yearly meeting the leaders are elected. At the head of the Grand Lodge is the *Grand Templar*. He is the leader of the grand lodge and represents it. He calls a deputy (*The Lodges Deputy*) in each of the subordinate lodge, he will be the second in command to the *Grand Templar*, as his subordinate he has the role of first instance and has a specific role in building a new lodge.

The Grand Secretary is the one who keeps the agenda of the day, the accounts, the paperwork and the correspondence. Each lodge subordinated has to send *The Grand Secretary*, quarterly, a report with the number of the members, its internal activity and also each of the members could address the Grand Lodge.

Another grand office clerk was *The Grand Treasurer*. He is the one holding the accounts and alongside *The Grand Secretary* answers for the financial aspects of the Grand Lodge. Next to them were the other office clerks, following the structure of a subordinate lodge.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 16-17.

Discussions were held within the Grand Lodge and from there the organization was run in each country, the propaganda was made and a spirit of discipline was maintained on the inside. Every two years the Grand Lodge of a country would send representatives for the *International Supreme Lodge*. It was the highest instance of the order. Initially it had this role only for the United States territory, but since 1868 it has a universal character, it has lost it only during 1875 and 1889 when the order was split worldwide into two groups.¹²

The International Supreme Lodge would gather every two years in a meeting *that* lasted between 8 to 10 days, every time on another continent. The delegates were two for each Grand Lodge. One belonged to the Grand Lodge and the other to *The Old Representatives*. The first one represented 5.000 members, the second one 1.000 representatives. Practically each member with *World Lodge* sent his representative. Alongside these were the *Honorary Members* who had a right to vote and discuss. Each Grand Lodge paid the *International Supreme Lodge* a tax, which was used for the travel expenses of its representative to its world meetings.

With the same occasion the office clerks were elected. The leader was the *Right-Worthy Grand Templar – R.W.G.T.*, who represented the order worldwide and he was elected for two years. At the same time of his election, *The Grand Secretary of the International Supreme Lodge* and *the Grand Treasurer of the International Supreme Lodge* were elected as well. Constitution changes, rights, laws and order rituals were also discussed at this meeting, having the role of last instance in case of conflict.¹³

Thus, after the same principle and hierarchy are organized the young lodges, and the *Grand Chief of the Young Templars* is a part of the Executive Committee of the *International Supreme Lodge*, and the same are they represented in each Grand Lodge and District Lodge.¹⁴

Each member must personally and individually lobby for abstinence and lead a morally impeccable life. He who wanted to become a member was subjected to a trial period and on the duration of it his evolution was evaluated. Also, individual lobbying was done on the occasion of musical meetings, workout meetings and reading meetings, when he had to prove that a *good Templar* although abstinent he is cheerful and funny, he knows how to have a good time and he is not an ascetic. Proving the same during the holidays, strolls, concerts, picnics and presenting those not familiar with the practice, the laws and rules of the order and invites them to join in. During these occasions he offers brochures and literature which promote abstinence. Also, to do propaganda through the media and in the communities for the authorities to

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 16-17.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

adopt a legislation to promote the prohibition for alcohol production, sell and consumption.¹⁵

Good Templars are not against a socially active life. They promote the foundation of restaurants and hotels with no alcohol, they are not for the destruction of vineyards and orchards, and they are for making compotes, juices and syrups from the fruits.¹⁶

Due to this doctrine *The Order of the Good Templars* knows a good welcome in the American society and this determines them, in a short while, to extend through the American continent and not only.¹⁷

So, in 1868, in Birmingham, Great Britain, the first European lodge is born and from here the movement is spread all through the old continent. A schism appears in 1875, between the American lodges and the rest of the world and only in 1887, in Saratoga, U.S.A., the two branches of the order are reunited. This leads to the existence, in 1875 – worldwide – of 190.000 members in Great Britain, out of which 95.000 young people, 98.000 members in Sweden, 25.000 in Norway, approximately 6.000 in Denmark, 9.000 in Germany and 2.000 in Switzerland. Worldwide the number of members was of about 600.000, with lodges organized not just in Europe, but also Cape Town, India, Burma, Canada and all the English colonies. A major role in this expansion of *the Good Templars* has been played by the military lodges of the English officers.¹⁸

In the German space, the evolution is quite a rapid one. Although in 1883 we find the first Templar lodge mentioned in the “*Pioneer*”, in 1888 appears the first Grand Lodge of the Good Templars in Germany and a year later, the second Grand Lodge.¹⁹

In 1906, we find a number of 22.000 members in Germany and 630 lodges, and worldwide 86 grand lodges with 9600 subordinated lodges and approximately 630.000 members. At that time, in Germany only, the order had over 40 periodical publications.²⁰

So, from here to its apparition in the Transylvanian space there was just one step. An article appeared in 1899 in a supplement of the Wiener Arzzeitung magazine against alcohol consumption, signed by doctor Zerbes. This article managed to unite the members of the Saxon elite. Thus, on June 2nd 1899, at the Evangelical Schools Teachers’ Meeting, at doctor Heinrich Siegmund’s initiative (from Mediaș), he held a speech with the title *Alcohol and school*, a theme dr. Siegmund will retake a few days later in Mediaș with the title *About spiritual drinks*. In both speeches he will speak about the

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 29-30.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 29-30.

¹⁷ Georg Schuster, *Die geheimen Gesellschaften Verbindungen und Orden*, zweiter Band, Leipzig, 1906, p. 543.

¹⁸ A. Forel, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

²⁰ G. Schuster, *op. cit.*, p. 544.

harmful effect of alcohol consumption in the Saxon communities. These ideas will find an echo with the headmaster of the Evangelical School in Rupea, Johann Rehner and also with the evangelical priest from Bistrița, Gottlieb Budaker. In 1902, Heinrich Siegmund will have set the base for a magazine entitled *Volksgesundheit*, its purpose: the fight against alcohol's scourge. On October 10th, that same year, an announcement appears in the newspapers, the article was militating for the start of an anti-alcohol association called *Alkohol-Enthaltsamkeit-Vereines für Voklswohl und Volkserhaltung*. On January 4th, 1903, in Mediaș, the foundation was laid for the association which then had 51 members.²¹

The first *Good Templar* who comes to Transylvania, from Hamburg, is Epilinus, in 1904. Also, in the first issue of the *Volksgesundheit* magazine, dr. Siegmund had made the first introduction of the *Order of the Good Templars*. A year later, the Gerken couple, on their way from Berlin to Bucharest, will have set the grounds for the first lodge of the *Good Templars*, called the number 1 "*Honterus*" lodge, on June 1st, 1905, then, on June 18th that same year, in Mediaș, they lay the foundation for number 2 lodge "*Volksgesundheit*" and on May 19th, in Sibiu, they do the same with the number 3 "*Brukenthal*" lodge. The first *Grand Templar* of the lodge in Brașov was Wilhelm Morres, for the one in Mediaș was Dr. Siegmund, and for the one in Sibiu was Emil Siegerus. During that same year the *young lodges* and the *guard lodges* have appeared. The first of this kind was in Mediaș, ruled by Karoline Sykan.²²

The Order will evolve in all the space inhabited by saxons. So, in 1906, in Brașov, will appear a second lodge entitled "*Neues Leben*", in Mediaș "*Bürgerwehr*", and in Sibiu, "*Volkskraft*". One year later we will find the first lodge in a Saxon village, this is the "*Eintracht*" lodge in Vulcan (today in the Brașov county). Also in 1906, Dr. Siegmund and Friedrich Morres have participated at Germany's *Grand Lodge* meeting. In the same year the first *District Lodge* appears in Țara Bârsei and the second *District Lodge* for the rest of the lodges, and because of the movement's evolution in 1907, on June 2nd the foundation for Transylvania's *Grand Lodge* in Sibiu is laid. In just two years of activity a number of 12 lodges are built.²³

The Evangelical church didn't see with good eyes the activity of "*The Order of the Good Templars*", thinking of them as being a sect. This determines Dr. Siegmund, in the *Volksgesundheit* magazine's second issue (1906) to fight against this rumor through the article *Is I.O.G.T. a sect?*, and it was followed as a follow-up by Wilhelm Morres' article "*To the clergy men and teachers of our church*", where both fought against this aspect. In 1909,

²¹ *Aufbau herausgegeben Rumäniens Großlaube 2 (deutsch) des I.O.G.T.* nr. 45, Mediasch, 25. Brachtet 1930, p. 1-3.

²² *Ibidem.*

²³ *Aufbau herausgegeben Rumäniens Großlaube 2 (deutsch) des I.O.G.T.* nr. 46, Mediasch, 25. Erniting 1930, p. 1-2.

after Wilhelm Morres retires from priesthood from the Evangelical church from Bartolomeu, Braşov, any suspicion of connection between the church and the order has disappeared.²⁴

The order's propaganda, if initially done through the *Volksgesundheit* magazine, between 1911 and 1916 the *Mitteilungen der Großlauben Ungarns des I.O.G.T.*, will appear under Viktor Ziske's leadership. Unfortunately, this magazine is a bibliographic rarity today.²⁵

The sustained activity of the order in the Saxon space will soon after be worldwide acknowledged by the *World Grand Lodge*, in 1911, when – after meeting in Hamburg – Wilhelm Morres was elected on July 18th to the rank of *Chaplain* of the order.²⁶

In 1912 the first meeting of Transylvania's Grand Lodge takes place in Mediaş, on August 24th, when representatives of 16 local lodges have met, they had a total of 470 members. There existed also 7 *young lodges* and 5 *guard lodges* with 370 members.²⁷

In regard to the number of the members, Wilhelm Morres, in his study dedicated to the order shows that worldwide, in 1913, there are around a quarter of a million members and 600 Transylvanian Saxon members.²⁸

Until 1916 we have a number of 21 lodges affiliated to the Grand Lodge of Transylvania, out of which one active in Bucharest.²⁹

Name of the lodge	Town	The start of the work
Nr. 1 <i>Honterus</i>	Braşov	16. 06. 1905
Nr. 2 <i>Voklsgesundheit</i>	Mediaş	18.06.1905
Nr. 3 <i>Brukenthal</i>	Sibiu	21. 06. 1905
Nr. 4 <i>Vorwärts Sachsen</i>	Härmann	Uncertain activity before 1918
Nr. 5 <i>Karpahtenwacht</i>	Braşov	Uncertain activity

²⁴ *Ibidem.*

²⁵ *Ibidem.*

²⁶ *Auszug aus dem Verhandlungs-Protokoll der 43. ordentliche Sitzung der Weltloge (I.S.L) in Hamburg von 6 bis 14 iuli 1911*, Separatabdruck aus dem International Good Templar, Band XXIV, Heft /, Juli 1911, p. 45.

²⁷ *Aufbau herausgegeben Rumäniens Großlaube 2 (deutsch) des I.O.G.T* nr. 46 Mediasch, 25 Erniting 1930, p. 2.

²⁸ W. Morres, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

²⁹ *Aufbau herausgegeben Rumäniens Großlaube 2 (deutsch) des I.O.G.T*, nr. 55, Mediasch, 25. Hornung 1932, p. 2.

		before 1918
Nr. 6 <i>Neues Leben</i>	Brașov	Uncertain activity before 1918
Nr. 7 <i>Eintracht</i>	Vulcan	Uncertain activity before 1918
Nr. 8 <i>Bürgerwehr</i>	Mediaș	24.02.1907
Nr. 9 <i>Kokelwacht</i>	Mediaș	24.02.1907
Nr. 10 <i>Volkskraft</i>	Sibiu	17.03. 1907
Nr. 11 <i>Feste Burg</i>	Râșnov	Uncertain activity before 1918
Nr. 12 <i>Sachsentreue</i>	Bistrița	05.05.1908
Nr. 13 <i>Immer Vorwärts</i>	Brașov	Uncertain activity before 1918
Nr. 14 <i>Kraft und Mut</i>	Ghimbav	Uncertain activity before 1918
Nr. 15 <i>Durch Kampf zum Sieg</i>	Cristian	Uncertain activity before 1918
Nr. 16 <i>Steilauwacht</i>	Sighișoara	10.05.1908
Nr. 17 <i>Zum Schmied v. Nösen</i>	Bistrița	Uncertain activity before 1918
Nr. 18. <i>Volkswohl</i>	Sighișoara	Uncertain activity before 1918
Nr. 19. <i>Vortrupp</i>	Bistrița	15.12.1912
Nr. 20 <i>Neue Heimat</i>	Turnișor/Sibiu	09.02.1913
Nr. 21 <i>Carmen Silva</i>	Bucharest	09.06.1905

We notice that the Lutheran priest from Brașov Wilhelm Morres is the *spiritus rector* of the movement. Born in Brașov on May 22nd, 1849, after graduating the town's gymnasium he enlists in the Austrian army and

participates in the Prussian war in 1866 where he turns very ill. He comes back to Braşov and after he has recovered his health he follows the classes of the Evangelical Theological Seminar, becoming in 1869 teacher at the Evangelical School in Bartolomeu, Braşov, where he becomes rector in 1878. Starting with 1881 he becomes a priest at the Evangelical church in the same neighborhood and in 1909 he retires. All throughout his life he becomes known as the author of pedagogical and literary works. Also, apart from his involvement in the anti-alcohol movement he dedicates himself to a mission against smoking. He dies on October 22nd, 1936.³⁰

Alongside Wilhelm Morres we see Dr. Heinrich Siegmund's activity, from Mediaş. Born on September 30th, 1867 in Mediaş, after graduating high school in his hometown, he attends Medicine at the University of Vienna and in 1893 he returns to his hometown, where he works as a doctor. Starting with 1893 he becomes the local primary doctor, job that he retires from in 1927. He has a rich literary activity, and other than leading the *Volksgesundheit* magazine, he publishes articles of a medical view in different Saxon magazines. He dies on July 22nd, 1937 in Mediaş.³¹

By their side we find important people from the Saxon intellectuals, people like ethnologist Emil Sigerus, Dr. Joseph Bacon, the founder of Sighişoara's history museum or Dr. Julius Oberth, father of the renowned scientist Hermann Oberth.

The brotherhood character of the order will allow the foundation, in the Romanian space, of the first Romanian "*Order of the Good Templars*" in 1910, in Transylvania, in Sibiu, it will bear the name "*Andrei Şaguna*" Lodge. The solemnity of the founding of the lodge took place in the Romanian apprentices' reunion hall, in the presence of the German lodge's members from Sibiu, *Bruckenthal* and *For the Good of the People*. The leader of the Romanian Templars was elected in the person of Nicolae Popovici from Sibiu's seminar, and Aurel Lazăr as the deputy of the lodge.³²

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The order granted equal access to men and women of all races. The Order will spread from the United States into Europe. It will also appear in

³⁰ *Aufbau herausgegeben Rumäniens Großlaube 2 (deutsch) des I.O.G.T, Mediasch, den 25. Gilbfahrt 1936, Folge 79/80, p. 1-3.*

³¹ Fritz Berweth, „Dr. Heinrich Siegmund“ în *Südostdeutsche Vierteljahresblätter* 2, 1970, p. 164-168.

³² Oana Tămaş, *Între uzul şi abuzul de alcool din România: sfârşitul secolului al XIX-lea şi începutul secolului*, Cluj-Napoca, 2015, p. 244.

Transylvania, in the Protestant Evangelical milieu of Sibiu, Brasov, Sighisoara, Bistrita, Orastie, Sebes, Medias etc

Although we have no information concerning the end of the *Order's* activity, we believe this activity was interrupted at the debut of World War II, when the Nazism totalitarian doctrine did not allow the existence of secret societies, with ample activity in the community.