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Abstract

Most people would not describe Christian monks as militaristic. However, there are instances in history when Christians have strayed from their basic pacifist beliefs in the name of defending their religion. The most famous example of this would be the Military Orders of the medieval Crusades, when full scale war was encouraged by the Catholic Church in order to protect the Holy Land. These militant monks formed a new breed of religious organization where brothers were soldiers willing die defending Christianity against the infidel. Although the Order of the Temple, or the Templars, was the most infamous of the Orders, the Order of St. John, or the Hospitallers, was also highly influential. Both came to wield immense power in the twelfth century, despite their counterintuitive identity as religious warriors. Yet it is precisely their contradictory nature that makes them so intriguing. Although they were devout members of a pacifist religion, they were also its dominant military force. By the most basic tenants of Christianity, the Military Orders should never have existed. It is the goal of this paper to uncover the various factors that allowed for their ascendancy through the analysis of primary sources and secondary research. The rise to power of the Military Orders was due to shifts in religious military thought, acquisition of immense wealth through donations from prestigious patrons, ecclesiastical privileges, and a military need in the Crusader states.

Keywords

Crusades, Knights Templar, Knights Hospitaller

A Contrary Situation: The Rise of the Military Religious Orders in the Twelfth Century

By Sarah Hayes

Peace is one of the core beliefs of Christianity. In principle, Christians do not support war or violence of any kind. To become involved with a military expedition of any sort would be counterintuitive especially to those who have pledged their lives to religious orders. However in some instances, Christians have strayed from this basic belief in order to fight for their religion. The most famous example of this are the Crusades of the Middle Ages, during which full scale war was encouraged by the Catholic Church in order to protect the Holy Land. Out of these conflicts developed a new breed of religious organization, the military orders, which were made up of soldier monks who were willing die defending Christianity against the infidel. Despite their counterintuitive identity as religious warriors, they came to wield immense power in the twelfth century, particularly the Order of St. John, or the Hospitallers, and the Order of the Temple, or the Templars. The rise to power of the military orders was due to shifts in religious military thought, acquisition of immense wealth through donations from prestigious patrons, ecclesiastical privileges, and a military need in the Crusader states.

The members of the military orders were monkish knights who combined the life of a religious order with soldiering. Their primary function was the military defense of the Church and protection of the Crusader states. According to Desmond Seward, the military orders were “the first properly disciplined and officered troops in the West since the Roman times.”¹ The fact that they were religious orders as well as professional soldiers in an era when armies were only mustered in times of crisis and gave them a discipline that other military forces of the time did not have. However, they did remain religious orders. The Primitive Rule of the Templars states “You who renounce your own wills... and scorn the temptations of your body, sustained by the food of God.”² These are monkish vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty. Like monks, they followed an identical dress code when within their religious house, for example, the Hospitallers all wore a black habit emblazoned with a white cross and Templars were required to have a

¹ Desmond Seward, *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 17.

² “The Primitive Rule of the Templars,” *The Rule of the Templars*, trans. Judith Upton-Ward (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1992), http://www.the-orb.net/encyclop/religion/monastic/t_rule.html (accessed December 7, 2012).

tonsure.³ Men who joined the military orders entered a solemn and sober world, not the worldly life of secular knight. However despite their monkish lifestyle, they remained members of the laity and, unless they chose to be, were not bound to their order for life.⁴ The most famous of these military orders were the Templars and Hospitallers, but other smaller orders throughout Europe and the Holy Land also played important roles in fighting those considered enemies of Christ, who were usually other religious groups.⁵ They were established primarily in the twelfth century and quickly grew to enjoy immense wealth and power.

The infamous Knights Templar were established in the early twelfth century as a small group of knights dedicated to the protection of pilgrims in the Holy Land; however, they became one of the most important institutions in Christendom. Their founder Hugh of Payns sought to protect pilgrims on the route from the port of Jaffa to the holy sites in and around Jerusalem.⁶ Although there is debate over the exact date of the Order's foundation, it was probably between 1118 and 1120 that Hugh and others vowed before Warmund of Picquigny, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, to protect the pilgrims and lead lives of poverty, chastity, and obedience.⁷ They also received the support of King Baldwin II of Jerusalem, who allowed them to live in his palace, the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. In 1129 at the Council of Troyes in France, they were recognized by the papacy and received a rule, or code of behavior.⁸ Only a decade old, they were already receiving support from important sources. As they aided the Crusader states in their conflicts with Islam, the Templars grew in both numbers and political power. Malcolm Barber estimates that by the thirteenth century there were at least 7,000 knights, sergeants, serving brothers and priests in the Order and that they were in possession of at least 870 properties of varying size and

³ Helen Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2001), 83; "The Primitive Rule of the Templars." A tonsure refers to the way in which monks were required to have the crown of their heads shaved.

⁴ Alan Forey, *The Military Orders from the Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 2; M.C. Barber, "The Social Context of the Templars," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 34 (1984): 41.

⁵ Seward, 17. The various military orders were similar to the Hospitallers and Templars in terms of organization and factors that contributed to their growth, but they did not achieve the same sort of importance in the twelfth century and so shall only be briefly mentioned.

⁶ Seward, 30.

⁷ Forey, 1; Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 6-7. Due to the lack of consistent reliable documentation during the twelfth, there are many date discrepancies. Where such discrepancies occur I have done my best to determine the most accurate date. When the date is especially unclear, I will give a range of years.

⁸ Forey, 6. Seward gives the date of the Council of Troyes as 1128, however I have chosen to stay with 1129 as it is the date given in most other sources. Seward, 31.

importance throughout Christendom.⁹ Clearly, the Templars were a force to be reckoned with, but the Knights Hospitaller were equally important.

Though they would eventually wield as much military strength as the Templars, the Order of the Hospital of St John was founded in the late eleventh century as a refuge for poor and sick pilgrims. Again there is debate about the exact date of foundation, but the Hospital of St John was definitely founded before the First Crusade, probably between 1070 and 1080. Originally it was a hospital and guest house for poor pilgrims dedicated to St John the Almoner under the authority of the monastery of St Mary of the Latins in Jerusalem. Despite its previous existence, the ruler of the Hospital during the First Crusade, Gerard, was eventually regarded as the founder of the Hospital. He is credited with development of the Hospital as an independent institution from the St. Mary of the Latins and the increase in significant donations.¹⁰ Gerard also asked for and received official approval from the papacy in a papal bull by Pope Pascal II in 1113.¹¹ The Jerusalem hospital soon grew to 750 beds and accommodated a thousand pilgrims a year.¹² Unlike the Templars, it is unclear how the Hospitallers evolved into a military order. Although there are scholars who believe that the Hospital militarized due to a rivalry with the Templars, Helen Nicholson argues that “the Hospitallers took up military activities as a natural extension of their vocation of caring for pilgrims.”¹³ With the instability of the kingdom, it was logical that they should also protect pilgrims in their care. However, the largest push towards their development as a military order was probably the gift of strategic defensive castles, such as the castle at Beth Gibelin given to the Order by King Fulk of Jerusalem in 1136.¹⁴ If they were going to be given these important defenses, they had to be able to maintain them not as monks, but as knights. Together with the Templars, the Hospitallers’ wealth and defense of the Holy Land made the two the largest and most powerful of the military orders, but smaller important ones existed as well.

⁹ Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 1.

¹⁰ Nicholson, 2-5. The beginning of the Hospitallers are particularly murky due to its small initial size. I have chosen to follow Helen Nicholson’s account most closely, but have included other sources when necessary.

¹¹ “Papal Bull of Pope Pascal II,” in *A History of the Knights of Malta or The Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem*, trans. Whitworth Porter (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longsmans, & Roberts, 1858), <http://www.osjknights.com/pbulls-Pascal-II.htm> (accessed December 7, 2012).

¹² Bernard Hamilton, *The Leper King and His Heirs: Baldwin IV and the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 56; Seward, 36.

¹³ Nicholson, 13.

¹⁴ Forey, 18.

The late twelfth century saw the foundation of other important military orders, which played important roles in the military and medical life of the Holy Land as well as in Iberia and eastern Europe. The oldest military order after the Templars and Hospitallers was the Order of Lazarus, which functioned primarily in the Holy Land as an order that took in knights who had contracted leprosy. The Iberian Peninsula saw the development of the Orders of Santiago and Calatrava in the late twelfth century. Like the Templars, the Order of Santiago was founded for the protection of pilgrims, in this case, those en route to the Shrine of St. James at Santiago de Compostella. They were officially recognized by the papacy as a religious order in 1175. The Order of Calatrava was recognized slightly earlier in 1164, after defending the Castilian capital of Toledo from Muslim attack since 1158.¹⁵ Although they remained small in the twelfth century, the Spanish orders are notable for their eventual role in the Reconquista. According to Seward, “They were the perfected instrument of five centuries of warfare with Islam.”¹⁶ Their participation in the defense of Christianity made them the Spanish versions of the Templars and Hospitallers. The Germans also had an equivalent in the Teutonic Knights. Founded in the Holy Land in 1190, their rule states that “when Acre was being besieged...there was in the army a band of good people from Bremen and from Lübeck, who...started the aforementioned hospital.”¹⁷ Like the Hospitallers, they eventually outgrew their hospital roots and defended Christendom against the pagans in eastern Europe. Though these orders never achieved the same importance as the Templars and Hospitallers, they owed their growth to similar factors, beginning with a need for military protection.

A direct catalyst for the militarization of religious orders was the need to protect pilgrims created by the instability of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Fulcher of Chartres explains in his chronicle that in his lifetime, there was no period where roads to pilgrimage sites were safe for travel.¹⁸ Pilgrims were supposed to travel unarmed as part of their pilgrim vows, making them easy targets in this unstable environment. It was the Templars who first attempted to find a solution to this problem which the First Crusade was supposed to have solved. Their initial purpose was not to protect the kingdom, but “the roads and routes against the attacks of robbers and

¹⁵ Seward, 41-42, 148-153.

¹⁶ Seward, 143.

¹⁷ “The Rule and Statutes of the Teutonic Knights,” in “The Statutes of the Teutonic Knights: a study of religious chivalry,” trans. Indrikis Sterns (diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1969), http://www.the-orb.net/encyclop/religion/monastic/tk_rule.html (accessed December 7, 2012).

¹⁸ Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 3, 6-7.

brigands. This they did especially in order to safeguard pilgrims.”¹⁹ In addition, the Hospitallers also began to provide protection to the pilgrims who came into their care.²⁰ Without the need for the protection of pilgrims, the religious orders would never have developed into military organizations or evolved into defenders of the Church against the infidels. On the Iberian Peninsula, the Order of Santiago was also established to protect pilgrims to the Shrine of St. James.²¹ The protection of pilgrims was the primary reason behind the orders’ increasing militarism and provided a foundation for their later growth and power. This would also not have been possible without important theological changes within the Catholic Church.

In an ideological sense, the growth of the military orders was fostered by a theological shift in attitude of the Church towards just warfare. Prior to the First Crusade, the Peace of God movement had developed a policy within the Church that knights should be restricted from fighting among themselves and instead put their energies into fighting for the Church. Prior to this, the knightly class had been in almost a constant state of civil war amongst themselves and with the Church.²² At the Council of Clermont in 1095, Pope Urban II advocated for the service of secular knights for the church by declaring that “you have promised more firmly than ever to keep the peace among yourselves and to preserve the rights of the church, there remains still an important work for you to do.”²³ By deliberately trying to encourage secular knights to fight for God in the Crusades, the Church created an acceptable form of warfare within Christian ideology. While Urban was not encouraging monks to go on Crusade, the military orders could not have existed without the ideology behind his speech because of Christianity’s traditional pacifism. The key element to this new ideology was the idea of *miles Christi*.

The term *miles Christi* was essential to the ideology of the military orders and is critical in understanding their rise to power. Coming into use through the writings of St Augustine and literally meaning “soldier of Christ,” it reflects the duty of a Christian knight to protect Christendom from outside evils. As the monk fought the spiritual enemies of the Church from

¹⁹ William of Tyre, “The Foundation of the Order of Knights Templar,” in *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, in *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, trans. James Brundage (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1962), <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/tyre-templars.asp> accessed 8th December 2012.

²⁰ Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 7.

²¹ Seward, 151.

²² Barber, “The Social Context of the Templars,” 28.

²³ Fulcher of Chartres, “Urban II: Speech at the Council of Clermont, 1095,” in *A Source Book for Medieval History*, ed. Oliver J. Thatcher and Edgar Holmes McNeal (New York: Scribners, 1905), <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2-5vers.html> (accessed 8th December 2012).

within his monastery, the soldier of Christ fought Christianity's physical enemies. Instead of committing the sin of murder, the traditional Christian view of warfare, a *miles Christi* was actually doing penance for his sins.²⁴ The Hospitallers and the Templars fought Islam in the Holy Land and the Teutonic was hugely instrumental in fighting paganism in eastern Europe.²⁵ The knights of the military orders were by definition *miles Christi* and their development and rise to power would not have been possible without the widespread acceptance of this idea. To the Church, the military orders provided the perfect outlet for the knightly class even when there was no official crusade being promoted.²⁶ Therefore, the Church was more than willing to support them and allow their power to grow both in the Holy Land and in Europe. As the dominant European ideology, the Church's changing theology played a large role in the growth of the military orders, and was aided most directly by the theological support of St. Bernard.

The largest single ideological supporter of the military orders was arguably St. Bernard of Clairvaux, whose familial connections to the Templars led him to write the pivotal *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, which created an ideological basis for militant monks. Bernard had connections to the Templars and Hugh of Payns through the Counts of Champagne. Around 1130, he was asked by Hugh for help recruiting and wrote *In Praise of the New Knighthood*. Although the document refers specifically to the Templars, it provides a rationalization for the military activities of all of the Orders.²⁷ "A new sort of knighthood" Bernard writes "...unknown to the world is fighting indefatigably a double fight against flesh and blood as well as against the immaterial forces of evil in the skies."²⁸ Here, Bernard gives the clearest explanation possible of how a brother of a military order fought both the spiritual battle of a monk and the physical battle of a secular knight. At the same time he also completely separates them from secular knights writing that "the knights of Christ fight the battles of their lord in all peace of mind, in no way fearing to sin in killing the enemy or to die at his hands, since indeed death, whether inflicted or suffered, is not tainted by crime but is marked by a large degree of glory."²⁹ By fighting for Christ, the military orders were fighting a just cause in order to bring about peace; therefore, killing their enemies in battle was not a sin, as had been traditionally taught. It should be noted

²⁴ Barber, "The Social Context of the Templars," 28-29, 34.

²⁵ Forey, 2.

²⁶ Barber, "The Social Context of the Templars," 39.

²⁷ Seward, 30-31, 37.

²⁸ Bernard of Clairvaux, "In Praise of the New Knighthood," in *The Templars: Selected Sources*, trans. Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 216.

²⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux, 219.

however, that although Bernard provided a powerful case for the existence of warrior monks, opposition remained to this admittedly contradictory ideal. Barber explains that, in the case of the Templars, Bernard's patronage was crucial because through his endorsement, they "received donations and recruits on a large scale, as well as a number of exclusive privileges from the papacy."³⁰ Bernard was the one of the leading religious writers of the time and by giving his support to the military orders he invited subsequent support from religious and secular sources that was critical to their rise to power and influence. He provided justification for all of the orders, bringing them to the attention of powerful people who were critical to the growth of the Order's material power.

If the protection of pilgrims and theological shifts were important factors in the rise of the military orders, the accumulation of wealth through generous benefactors was absolutely essential to the growth of their economic power. The primary sources of wealth for the military orders rested in the gifts western benefactors gave them for primarily spiritual reasons. Older wealthy nobles would commonly turn their lands over to the Orders so that they might be taken care of in their old age. Those of a lower economic status could become a servant for an Order if they had no material goods to give. In the cases of both the high and low born, the Orders would provide protection and sustenance. Greater than these two benefits of giving was the motivation to donate in order to achieve salvation. By giving to the military orders whose function was to fight the enemies of Christ, benefactors sought to redeem their own sins, much like the brothers who joined the Orders.³¹ Promoting spiritual forgiveness through donation to the military orders contributed to their rise in power by allowing them to accumulate great economic and political power. They were able to accumulate astonishing amounts of that wealth from the patronage of key figures in Europe of the time.

The military orders greatly benefited from the patronage of high ranking clergy and secular rulers in both the East and the West. In the East, the Hospitallers received castles from Count Raymond II of Tripoli and King Fulk of Jerusalem.³² The key political figures in the Holy Land knew that increasing the power of the military orders in this way would help them hold onto their own power. Raymond II's son, Count Raymond III of Tripoli, was a benefactor of the

³⁰ Barber, "The Social Context of the Templars," 46.

³¹ Barber, "The Social Context of the Templars," 39-43.

³² Ernle Bradford, *The Shield and Sword: The Knights of St. John* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), 25, 27.

leper Order of Lazarus.³³ The promise of salvation attracted powerful benefactors to even the smaller orders. In the West, all of the military orders enjoyed the support of the clergy and high ranking aristocracy. The abbots of Cîteaux and Clairvaux as well as the archbishops of Sens and Reims were all early patrons of the Templars.³⁴ The Templars also enjoyed the support and donations of the Counts of Flanders, Anjou, Champagne, and Blois.³⁵ Hugh, the Count of Champagne went beyond mere patronage and actually joined the Templars around 1125.³⁶ As in the East, Western monarchs provided support as well. The kings of the Iberian Peninsula, such as King Alfonso I of Aragon and King Alfonso IX of León, were particularly generous.³⁷ The people that the military orders received patronage from were the most powerful in Europe and the Latin East. By becoming attached to and benefiting from their prestige, the military orders gained a legitimacy and power that they could not have gotten anywhere else. Without their support the Orders would never have achieved the power or the wide range of wealth that they did.

The great wealth of the military orders came in both the form of liquid capital and landed properties all across Europe. In the West, the Templars and Hospitallers came to hold property all over Europe, the Templars as early as 1127.³⁸ Even the smaller Orders came to control vast stretches of land. Naturally, the Teutonic Knights controlled large properties in eastern Europe and the Orders of Santiago and Lazarus, acquired lands as far away from León as Hungary and Jerusalem as England.³⁹ Gifts of property in multiple kingdoms and empires meant that the military orders were not under the control of any one secular power, giving them more freedom from outside control. Naturally, as they accumulated more wealth they attracted criticism and made enemies that would eventually become dangerous. Sometimes they received liquid capital, such as when Fulk, count of Anjou and future king of Jerusalem, gave the Templars thirty livres angevines a year beginning in 1120 or when King Alfonso IX of León decreed that the Order of Santiago be given ten percent of all the money coined in his kingdom.⁴⁰ One of the most

³³ Seward, 41.

³⁴ Forey, 15.

³⁵ Seward, 32-34; Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 11, 13.

³⁶ Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 11.

³⁷ Alfonso I of Aragon, "The will of Alfonso I, King of Aragon and Navarre (October 1131)," in *The Templars: Selected Sources*, trans. Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 161; Seward, 152.

³⁸ Seward, 36; Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 13.

³⁹ Seward, 97, 152, 41.

⁴⁰ Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 11; Seward, 152.

interesting donations was in 1131, when King Alfonso I of Aragon willed to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Templars, and Hospitallers “my whole kingdom, as well as the lordship I have in all the extent of my kingdom, the sovereignty and rights I have over all the population of my land.”⁴¹ Although the will was never implemented, it signified that the Orders were powerful enough to justify being left an entire kingdom. The Kingdom of Aragon did not come under Templar and Hospitaller control, however, their vast holdings were able to successfully maintain the Orders as defenders of the Holy Land. They provided both everyday supplies and revenue was used to train brothers and fortify castles.⁴² The great wealth of the military orders gave them complete economic independence and their control of significant land, resources, and manpower allowed them to become a significant political and economic force in Europe. This acquired wealth was essential for maintaining the Orders and building up defenses. The economic power of the military orders contributed to their uninterrupted growth that was also the result of freedoms they were granted by the Church.

If the military orders gained much through the donations of secular rulers and the clergy, they also owed much of their growth in power to the privileges and exemptions given to them by their largest ecclesiastical benefactor, the papacy. The Hospitallers were brought under the protection of the papacy by Pope Pascal II in 1113 and the Templars received papal approval from the papal legate at the Council of Troyes in 1129 when they received their rule.⁴³ A host of freedoms were to follow. Both had their own priests and churches and were not subject to the authority of bishops. This meant that unlike other monastic orders, they answered only to the Pope. Thus, they were not controlled by a large church hierarchy above them and could grow unchecked by local authority. Seward writes that “...they were both a Church within a Church and a State within a State.”⁴⁴ This is perhaps best demonstrated by their control over taxes called tithes, which were traditionally reserved for the Church. In the Middle Ages, ten percent of every Christian’s annual income was paid to the church, but thanks to papal authority, the Templars and the Hospitallers were exempted from paying them.⁴⁵ By doing so, the Church singled out these Orders and took part of its own wealth away. This special privilege was carried even further. In the Primitive Rule of the Templars it states “you who live the communal life may

⁴¹ Alfonso I of Aragon, 161.

⁴² Seward, 37; Hamilton, 57.

⁴³ Seward, 30-31; Forey, 15.

⁴⁴ Seward, 35, 37.

⁴⁵ Nicholson, 6.

receive tithes.”⁴⁶ When Pope Pascal II officially recognized the Hospitaller in 1113, the papal bull declared “Moreover, as to the tithes of your revenues... we do hereby fix and decree, that they shall be retained by your own Hospital, all opposition on the part of the bishops and their clergy notwithstanding.”⁴⁷ Allowing the orders to receive tithes not only gave them another important source of income and economic power, but also political power by acknowledging them as an authority worthy of collecting taxes. The income that they received from tithes would have otherwise gone to the church, which gained the Orders important enemies and critics in the upper echelons of the clergy. The collection of tithes was a form of economic power whereas the acquisition of strategically important castles was critical to the Orders military power.

After the First Crusade, there was a chronic shortage of able bodied men for the armies of the Crusader states, which played a direct role in the rise to power of the military orders. Despite the immense effort that had gone into the capture of the Holy Land during the First Crusade, very few Crusaders remained behind in the East to protect it.⁴⁸ The small number that did stay behind was further depleted due to the near constant warfare and disease.⁴⁹ Yet the Kingdom of Jerusalem was constantly under threat of attack and although the defense system was strong in theory, there were not enough men to make it effective. Castles and cities at strategic locations were to be manned by garrisons which could retreat behind thick walls and hold off sieges indefinitely. A host of the kingdom could be formed from these garrisons and the knights provided by nobles who owed loyalty to the crown. However, there were not enough men to properly fill either and when the host of the kingdom was assembled, the garrisons were greatly reduced, leaving them highly vulnerable.⁵⁰ There were not enough men to properly defend the kingdom, but the military orders provided a perfect solution. Spiritually bound to helping the religious cause of the Crusader states, they development to fill the military weaknesses of the Franks played a large role in the growth of their defensive power.

The military orders gained impressive economic power through their donated wealth, but their political and military power in the Holy Land came from the castles they controlled that were placed strategically for defense. These castle came under the control of the military orders most commonly through the gifts of patrons in the Crusader states. Count Raymond II of Tripoli

⁴⁶ “The Primitive Rule of the Templars.”

⁴⁷ “Papal Bull of Pope Pascal II.”

⁴⁸ Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 2.

⁴⁹ Forey, 7.

⁵⁰ Hamilton, 54-55.

gave the Hospitallers a number of strongholds, such as Crac des Chevaliers, in the hopes that they might help repel attacks by the Muslims in his lands. The Hospitallers were also given Beth Gibelin in the Kingdom of Jerusalem to defend against the Muslim presence in Ascalon.⁵¹ The Templars played a critical role in the kingdom's defense with their castles at Gaza, Safad, Ahamant, and La Fève. Sometimes lands were given that were still in Muslim hands in the hopes that it would encourage the receiving Order to retake it.⁵² With so much of the Crusader states defensive power entrusted to them, the Hospitallers and Templars became a powerful force in Crusader politics. The safety of the kingdom was under their control. Similarly, on the Iberian Peninsula, the Order of Calatrava was established to garrison a castle that was strategic in the defense of the Castilian capital of Toledo and the Order of Santiago was given defensive castles on the Castilian frontier.⁵³ It was not only the Holy Land where military orders were critical to the survival of secular power. However, it was in the Crusader states that they became the key force in military matters.

By supplying essential manpower and maintaining defensive castles the military orders eventually outgrew their initial function of protecting pilgrims to become one of the largest powers in the military world of the Latin Franks in the East. "Because of their sacrifices, Outremer, land of the Crusades...endured for nearly two centuries," writes Seward.⁵⁴ Even when there was no open campaigning, there was constant attack on the edges of Crusader territory, which, led to the establishment of fortresses under the control of and manned by the military orders. The Orders also played key role in any military attacks in the Crusader states, such as in 1168 when the Hospitallers sent 500 knights with a Frankish host into Egypt.⁵⁵ By the reign of King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem, the kingdom could not launch a military venture without the support of the military orders. There were not enough knights in the kingdom to muster a host without them and such was their power that the kings of Jerusalem could not force them to participate.⁵⁶ The orders had control over how the military forces functioned in the Crusader states. Thanks to their wealth, privileges, and essential military strength, the Hospitaller and

⁵¹ Bradford, 25, 27.

⁵² Hamilton, 56.

⁵³ Seward, 148-152.

⁵⁴ Seward, 18.

⁵⁵ Bradford, 26-27.

⁵⁶ Hamilton, 88.

Templars had grown from a charitable organization and a small group of poor knights to forces that wielded immense power in both Europe and the Holy Land.

The rise of the military orders in the twelfth century was due to a number of theological, economic, and military factors as well as the support of powerful benefactors. It was the perfect combination of ecclesiastical promotion, donations of a variety of capital and practical need. Without these circumstances, such contradictory groups would not have been able to form. The idea of a fighting monk was against previous Christian ideology and yet it was met with great success. The different forms of support made a militant ideal acceptable in Christian society, despite its counterintuitive nature. The military orders developed into some of the most important political, religious, and military organizations of the twelfth century, despite the fact that the combination of religion and warfare make for a truly contrary situation.

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