

= Knights Templar =

The Poor Fellow @-@ Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon (Latin : Pauperes commilitones Christi Templique Salomonici) , commonly known as the Knights Templar , the Order of Solomon 's Temple (French : Ordre du Temple or Templiers) or simply as Templars , were among the wealthiest and most powerful of the Western Christian military orders and were prominent actors in Christian finance . The organisation existed for nearly two centuries during the Middle Ages .

Officially endorsed by the Roman Catholic Church around 1129 , the order became a favoured charity throughout Christendom and grew rapidly in membership and power . Templar knights , in their distinctive white mantles with a red cross , were among the most skilled fighting units of the Crusades . Non @-@ combatant members of the order managed a large economic infrastructure throughout Christendom , innovating financial techniques that were an early form of banking , and building fortifications across Europe and the Holy Land .

The Templars ' existence was tied closely to the Crusades ; when the Holy Land was lost , support for the order faded . Rumours about the Templars ' secret initiation ceremony created distrust , and King Philip IV of France , deeply in debt to the order , took advantage of the situation . In 1307 , many of the order 's members in France were arrested , tortured into giving false confessions , and then burned at the stake . Under pressure from King Philip , Pope Clement V disbanded the order in 1312 . The abrupt disappearance of a major part of the European infrastructure gave rise to speculation and legends , which have kept the " Templar " name alive into the modern day .

= = History = =

= = = Rise = = =

After the First Crusade captured Jerusalem in 1099 , many Christians made pilgrimages to various Holy Places in the Holy Land . However , though the city of Jerusalem was under relatively secure control , the rest of Outremer was not . Bandits and marauding highwaymen preyed upon pilgrims who were routinely slaughtered , sometimes by the hundreds , as they attempted to make the journey from the coastline at Jaffa into the interior of the Holy Land .

In 1119 , the French knight Hugues de Payens approached King Baldwin II of Jerusalem and Warmund , Patriarch of Jerusalem , and proposed creating a monastic order for the protection of these pilgrims . King Baldwin and Patriarch Warmund agreed to the request , probably at the Council of Nablus in January 1120 , and the king granted the Templars a headquarters in a wing of the royal palace on the Temple Mount in the captured Al @-@ Aqsa Mosque . The Temple Mount had a mystique because it was above what was believed to be the ruins of the Temple of Solomon . The Crusaders therefore referred to the Al Aqsa Mosque as Solomon 's Temple , and from this location the new order took the name of Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon , or " Templar " knights . The order , with about nine knights including Godfrey de Saint @-@ Omer and André de Montbard , had few financial resources and relied on donations to survive . Their emblem was of two knights riding on a single horse , emphasising the order 's poverty .

The impoverished status of the Templars did not last long . They had a powerful advocate in Saint Bernard of Clairvaux , a leading Church figure , the French abbot primarily responsible for the founding of the Cistercian Order of monks and a nephew of André de Montbard , one of the founding knights . Bernard put his weight behind them and wrote persuasively on their behalf in the letter ' In Praise of the New Knighthood ' , and in 1129 , at the Council of Troyes , he led a group of leading churchmen to officially approve and endorse the order on behalf of the church . With this formal blessing , the Templars became a favoured charity throughout Christendom , receiving money , land , businesses , and noble @-@ born sons from families who were eager to help with the fight in the Holy Land . Another major benefit came in 1139 , when Pope Innocent II 's papal bull Omne Datum Optimum exempted the order from obedience to local laws . This ruling meant that the

Templars could pass freely through all borders , were not required to pay any taxes , and were exempt from all authority except that of the pope .

With its clear mission and ample resources , the order grew rapidly . Templars were often the advance shock troops in key battles of the Crusades , as the heavily armoured knights on their warhorses would set out to charge at the enemy , ahead of the main army bodies , in an attempt to break opposition lines . One of their most famous victories was in 1177 during the Battle of Montgisard , where some 500 Templar knights helped several thousand infantry to defeat Saladin 's army of more than 26 000 soldiers .

Although the primary mission of the order was military , relatively few members were combatants . The others acted in support positions to assist the knights and to manage the financial infrastructure . The Templar Order , though its members were sworn to individual poverty , was given control of wealth beyond direct donations . A nobleman who was interested in participating in the Crusades might place all his assets under Templar management while he was away . Accumulating wealth in this manner throughout Christendom and the Outremer , the order in 1150 began generating letters of credit for pilgrims journeying to the Holy Land : pilgrims deposited their valuables with a local Templar preceptory before embarking , received a document indicating the value of their deposit , then used that document upon arrival in the Holy Land to retrieve their funds in an amount of treasure of equal value . This innovative arrangement was an early form of banking and may have been the first formal system to support the use of cheques ; it improved the safety of pilgrims by making them less attractive targets for thieves , and also contributed to the Templar coffers .

Based on this mix of donations and business dealing , the Templars established financial networks across the whole of Christendom . They acquired large tracts of land , both in Europe and the Middle East ; they bought and managed farms and vineyards ; they built massive stone cathedrals and castles ; they were involved in manufacturing , import and export ; they had their own fleet of ships ; and at one point they even owned the entire island of Cyprus . The Order of the Knights Templar arguably qualifies as the world 's first multinational corporation .

== Decline ==

In the mid 12th century , the tide began to turn in the Crusades . The Muslim world had become more united under effective leaders such as Saladin , and dissension arose amongst Christian factions in , and concerning , the Holy Land . The Knights Templar were occasionally at odds with the two other Christian military orders , the Knights Hospitaller and the Teutonic Knights , and decades of internecine feuds weakened Christian positions , both politically and militarily . After the Templars were involved in several unsuccessful campaigns , including the pivotal Battle of the Horns of Hattin , Jerusalem was recaptured by Muslim forces under Saladin in 1187 . The Crusaders regained the city in 1229 , without Templar aid , but held it only briefly . In 1244 , the Khwarezmi Turks recaptured Jerusalem , and the city did not return to Western control until 1917 when the British captured it from the Ottoman Turks in World War I.

The Templars were forced to relocate their headquarters to other cities in the north , such as the seaport of Acre , which they held for the next century . It was lost in 1291 , followed by their last mainland strongholds , Tortosa (Tartus in what is now Syria) and Atlit in present day Israel . Their headquarters then moved to Limassol on the island of Cyprus , and they also attempted to maintain a garrison on tiny Arwad Island , just off the coast from Tortosa . In 1300 , there was some attempt to engage in coordinated military efforts with the Mongols via a new invasion force at Arwad . In 1302 or 1303 , however , the Templars lost the island to the Egyptian Mamluks in the Siege of Arwad . With the island gone , the Crusaders lost their last foothold in the Holy Land .

With the order 's military mission now less important , support for the organization began to dwindle . The situation was complex , however , since during the two hundred years of their existence , the Templars had become a part of daily life throughout Christendom . The organization 's Templar Houses , hundreds of which were dotted throughout Europe and the Near East , gave them a widespread presence at the local level . The Templars still managed many businesses , and many Europeans had daily contact with the Templar network , such as by working at a Templar farm or

vineyard , or using the order as a bank in which to store personal valuables . The order was still not subject to local government , making it everywhere a " state within a state " ? its standing army , though it no longer had a well @-@ defined mission , could pass freely through all borders . This situation heightened tensions with some European nobility , especially as the Templars were indicating an interest in founding their own monastic state , just as the Teutonic Knights had done in Prussia and the Knights Hospitaller were doing in Rhodes .

= = = Arrests , charges and dissolution = = =

In 1305 , the new Pope Clement V , based in Avignon , France , sent letters to both the Templar Grand Master Jacques de Molay and the Hospitaller Grand Master Fulk de Villaret to discuss the possibility of merging the two orders . Neither was amenable to the idea , but Pope Clement persisted , and in 1306 he invited both Grand Masters to France to discuss the matter . De Molay arrived first in early 1307 , but de Villaret was delayed for several months . While waiting , De Molay and Clement discussed criminal charges that had been made two years earlier by an ousted Templar and were being discussed by King Philip IV of France and his ministers . It was generally agreed that the charges were false , but Clement sent the king a written request for assistance in the investigation . According to some historians , King Philip , who was already deeply in debt to the Templars from his war with the English , decided to seize upon the rumors for his own purposes . He began pressuring the church to take action against the order , as a way of freeing himself from his debts .

At dawn on Friday , 13 October 1307 (a date sometimes linked with the origin of the Friday the 13th superstition) King Philip IV ordered de Molay and scores of other French Templars to be simultaneously arrested . The arrest warrant started with the phrase : " Dieu n 'est pas content , nous avons des ennemis de la foi dans le Royaume " [" God is not pleased . We have enemies of the faith in the kingdom "] . Claims were made that during Templar admissions ceremonies , recruits were forced to spit on the Cross , deny Christ , and engage in indecent kissing ; brethren were also accused of worshipping idols , and the order was said to have encouraged homosexual practices . The Templars were charged with numerous other offences such as financial corruption , fraud , and secrecy . Many of the accused confessed to these charges under torture , and these confessions , even though obtained under duress , caused a scandal in Paris . The prisoners were coerced to confess that they had spat on the Cross : " Moi , Raymond de La Fère , 21 ans , reconnais que [j 'ai] craché trois fois sur la Croix , mais de bouche et pas de c?ur " (free translation : " I , Raymond de La Fère , 21 years old , admit that I have spat three times on the Cross , but only from my mouth and not from my heart ") . The Templars were accused of idolatry and were suspected of worshipping either a figure known as Baphomet or a mummified severed head they recovered , amongst other artifacts , at their original headquarters on the Temple Mount that many scholars theorize might have been that of John the Baptist , among other things .

Relenting to Phillip 's demands , Pope Clement then issued the papal bull *Pastoralis Praeeminentiae* on 22 November 1307 , which instructed all Christian monarchs in Europe to arrest all Templars and seize their assets . Pope Clement called for papal hearings to determine the Templars ' guilt or innocence , and once freed of the Inquisitors ' torture , many Templars recanted their confessions . Some had sufficient legal experience to defend themselves in the trials , but in 1310 , having appointed the archbishop of Sens , Philippe de Marigny , to lead the investigation , Philip blocked this attempt , using the previously forced confessions to have dozens of Templars burned at the stake in Paris .

With Philip threatening military action unless the pope complied with his wishes , Pope Clement finally agreed to disband the order , citing the public scandal that had been generated by the confessions . At the Council of Vienne in 1312 , he issued a series of papal bulls , including *Vox in excelso* , which officially dissolved the order , and *Ad providam* , which turned over most Templar assets to the Hospitallers .

As for the leaders of the order , the elderly Grand Master Jacques de Molay , who had confessed under torture , retracted his confession . Geoffroi de Charney , Preceptor of Normandy , also

retracted his confession and insisted on his innocence . Both men were declared guilty of being relapsed heretics , and they were sentenced to burn alive at the stake in Paris on 18 March 1314 . De Molay reportedly remained defiant to the end , asking to be tied in such a way that he could face the Notre Dame Cathedral and hold his hands together in prayer . According to legend , he called out from the flames that both Pope Clement and King Philip would soon meet him before God . His actual words were recorded on the parchment as follows : " Dieu sait qui a tort et a péché . Il va bientôt arriver malheur à ceux qui nous ont condamnés à mort " (free translation : " God knows who is wrong and has sinned . Soon a calamity will occur to those who have condemned us to death ") . Pope Clement died only a month later , and King Philip died in a hunting accident before the end of the year .

With the last of the order 's leaders gone , the remaining Templars around Europe were either arrested and tried under the Papal investigation (with virtually none convicted) , absorbed into other military orders such as the Knights Hospitaller , or pensioned off and allowed to live out their days peacefully . By papal decree , the property of the Templars was transferred to the Order of Hospitallers , which also absorbed many of the Templars ' members . In effect , the dissolution of the Templars could be seen as the merger of the two rival orders . Some may have fled to other territories outside Papal control , such as excommunicated Scotland or to Switzerland . Templar organizations in Portugal simply changed their name , from Knights Templar to Knights of Christ .

= = = Chinon Parchment = = =

In September 2001 , a document known as the " Chinon Parchment " dated 17 ? 20 August 1308 was discovered in the Vatican Secret Archives by Barbara Frale , apparently after having been filed in the wrong place in 1628 . It is a record of the trial of the Templars and shows that Clement absolved the Templars of all heresies in 1308 before formally disbanding the order in 1312 , as did another Chinon Parchment dated 20 August 1308 addressed to Philip IV of France , also mentioning that all Templars that had confessed to heresy were " restored to the Sacraments and to the unity of the Church " . This other Chinon Parchment has been well @-@ known to historians , having been published by Étienne Baluze in 1693 and by Pierre Dupuy in 1751 .

The current position of the Roman Catholic Church is that the medieval persecution of the Knights Templar was unjust , that nothing was inherently wrong with the order or its rule , and that Pope Clement was pressed into his actions by the magnitude of the public scandal and by the dominating influence of King Philip IV , who was Clement 's relative .

= = Organization = =

The Templars were organized as a monastic order similar to Bernard 's Cistercian Order , which was considered the first effective international organization in Europe . The organizational structure had a strong chain of authority . Each country with a major Templar presence (France , Poitou , Anjou , Jerusalem , England , Aragon , Portugal , Italy , Tripoli , Antioch , Hungary , and Croatia) had a Master of the Order for the Templars in that region .

All of them were subject to the Grand Master , appointed for life , who oversaw both the order 's military efforts in the East and their financial holdings in the West . The Grand Master exercised his authority via the visitors @-@ general of the order , who were knights specially appointed by the Grand Master and convent of Jerusalem to visit the different provinces , correct malpractices , introduce new regulations , and resolve important disputes . The visitors @-@ general had the power to remove knights from office and to suspend the Master of the province concerned .

No precise numbers exist , but it is estimated that at the order 's peak there were between 15 @,@ 000 and 20 @,@ 000 Templars , of whom about a tenth were actual knights .

= = = Ranks within the order = = =

===== Three main ranks =====

There was a threefold division of the ranks of the Templars : the noble knights , the non @-@ noble sergeants , and the chaplains . The Templars did not perform knighting ceremonies , so any knight wishing to become a Knight Templar had to be a knight already . They were the most visible branch of the order , and wore the famous white mantles to symbolise their purity and chastity . They were equipped as heavy cavalry , with three or four horses and one or two squires . Squires were generally not members of the order but were instead outsiders who were hired for a set period of time . Beneath the knights in the order and drawn from non @-@ noble families were the sergeants . They brought vital skills and trades such as blacksmithing and building , and administered many of the order 's European properties . In the Crusader States , they fought alongside the knights as light cavalry with a single horse . Several of the order 's most senior positions were reserved for sergeants , including the post of Commander of the Vault of Acre , who was the de facto Admiral of the Templar fleet . The sergeants wore black or brown . From 1139 , chaplains constituted a third Templar class . They were ordained priests who cared for the Templars ' spiritual needs . All three classes of brother wore the order 's red cross .

===== Grand Masters =====

Starting with founder Hugues de Payens in 1118 ? 1119 , the order 's highest office was that of Grand Master , a position which was held for life , though considering the martial nature of the order , this could mean a very short tenure . All but two of the Grand Masters died in office , and several died during military campaigns . For example , during the Siege of Ascalon in 1153 , Grand Master Bernard de Tremelay led a group of 40 Templars through a breach in the city walls . When the rest of the Crusader army did not follow , the Templars , including their Grand Master , were surrounded and beheaded . Grand Master Gérard de Ridefort was beheaded by Saladin in 1189 at the Siege of Acre .

The Grand Master oversaw all of the operations of the order , including both the military operations in the Holy Land and Eastern Europe and the Templars ' financial and business dealings in Western Europe . Some Grand Masters also served as battlefield commanders , though this was not always wise : several blunders in de Ridefort 's combat leadership contributed to the devastating defeat at the Battle of Hattin . The last Grand Master was Jacques de Molay , burned at the stake in Paris in 1314 by order of King Philip IV .

===== Behaviour , clothing and beards =====

Bernard de Clairvaux and founder Hugues de Payens devised the specific code of behaviour for the Templar Order , known to modern historians as the Latin Rule . Its 72 clauses defined the ideal behaviour for the Knights , such as the types of garments they were to wear and how many horses they could have . Knights were to take their meals in silence , eat meat no more than three times per week , and not have physical contact of any kind with women , even members of their own family . A Master of the Order was assigned " 4 horses , and one chaplain @-@ brother and one clerk with three horses , and one sergeant brother with two horses , and one gentleman valet to carry his shield and lance , with one horse . " As the order grew , more guidelines were added , and the original list of 72 clauses was expanded to several hundred in its final form .

The knights wore a white surcoat with a red cross and a white mantle also with a red cross ; the sergeants wore a black tunic with a red cross on the front and a black or brown mantle . The white mantle was assigned to the Templars at the Council of Troyes in 1129 , and the cross was most probably added to their robes at the launch of the Second Crusade in 1147 , when Pope Eugenius III , King Louis VII of France , and many other notables attended a meeting of the French Templars at their headquarters near Paris . According to their Rule , the knights were to wear the white mantle at all times , even being forbidden to eat or drink unless they were wearing it .

The red cross that the Templars wore on their robes was a symbol of martyrdom , and to die in

combat was considered a great honour that assured a place in heaven . There was a cardinal rule that the warriors of the order should never surrender unless the Templar flag had fallen , and even then they were first to try to regroup with another of the Christian orders , such as that of the Hospitallers . Only after all flags had fallen were they allowed to leave the battlefield . This uncompromising principle , along with their reputation for courage , excellent training , and heavy armament , made the Templars one of the most feared combat forces in medieval times .

Although not prescribed by the Templar Rule , it later became customary for members of the order to wear long and prominent beards . In about 1240 , Alberic of Trois @-@ Fontaines described the Templars as an " order of bearded brethren " ; while during the interrogations by the papal commissioners in Paris in 1310 ? 11 , out of nearly 230 knights and brothers questioned , 76 are described as wearing a beard , in some cases specified as being " in the style of the Templars " , and 133 are said to have shaved off their beards , either in renunciation of the order or because they had hoped to escape detection .

Initiation , known as Reception (receptio) into the order , was a profound commitment and involved a solemn ceremony . Outsiders were discouraged from attending the ceremony , which aroused the suspicions of medieval inquisitors during the later trials . New members had to willingly sign over all of their wealth and goods to the order and take vows of poverty , chastity , piety , and obedience . Most brothers joined for life , although some were allowed to join for a set period . Sometimes a married man was allowed to join if he had his wife 's permission , but he was not allowed to wear the white mantle .

= = Legacy = =

With their military mission and extensive financial resources , the Knights Templar funded a large number of building projects around Europe and the Holy Land . Many of these structures are still standing . Many sites also maintain the name " Temple " because of centuries @-@ old association with the Templars . For example , some of the Templars ' lands in London were later rented to lawyers , which led to the names of the Temple Bar gateway and the Temple Underground station . Two of the four Inns of Court which may call members to act as barristers are the Inner Temple and Middle Temple .

Distinctive architectural elements of Templar buildings include the use of the image of " two knights on a single horse " , representing the Knights ' poverty , and round buildings designed to resemble the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem .

= = = Modern organizations = = =

The story of the persecution and sudden dissolution of the secretive yet powerful medieval Templars has drawn many other groups to use alleged connections with the Templars as a way of enhancing their own image and mystery . There is no clear historical connection between the Knights Templar , which were dismantled in the Rolls of the Catholic Church in 1309 with the martyrdom of Jacques de Molay , and any of the modern organizations , of which , except for the Scottish order , the earliest emerged publicly in the 18th century . There is often public confusion and many overlook the 400 @-@ year gap . However , in 1853 , Napoleon III officially recognised the OSMTH . The order operates on the basis of the traditions of the medieval Knights Templar , celebrating the spirit of , but not claiming direct descent from the ancient order founded by Hugues de Payens in 1118 and dissolved by Pope Clement V in 1312 .

The 19th Century German Templars did not claim any direct or indirect descent from the medieval knights , their name having a completely different origin .

= = = = Freemasonry = = = =

Since at least the 18th century , Freemasonry has incorporated symbols and rituals of several medieval military orders in a number of Masonic bodies , most notably , in the " Red Cross of

Constantine " (derived from the Military Constantinian Order) , the " Order of Malta " (derived from the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) , and the " Order of the Temple " , the latter two featuring prominently in the York Rite . One theory of the origins of Freemasonry claims direct descent from the historical Knights Templar through its final fourteenth @-@ century members who took refuge in Scotland whose King , Robert the Bruce was excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church at the time , or in Portugal where the order changed its name to Knights of Christ , other members having joined Knights of St. John . There have even been claims that some of the Templars who made it to Scotland contributed to the Scots ' victory at Bannockburn . This theory is usually deprecated on grounds of lack of evidence , by both Masonic authorities and historians .

The penalty of excommunication for joining the Masonic Lodge was explicit in the 1917 code of canon law (canon 2335) , and it is implicit in the 1983 code (canon 1374) . Because the revised code of canon law is not explicit on this point , some drew the mistaken conclusion that the church 's prohibition of Freemasonry had been dropped . As a result of this confusion , shortly before the 1983 code was promulgated , the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a statement indicating that the penalty was still in force . This statement was dated 26 November 1983 and may be found in Origins 13 / 27 (Nov. 15 , 1983) , 450 .

= = = Modern popular culture = = =

Based on Freemasonic speculation and popular literature since the 19th century , the Templars and associated " legends " or " mysteries " have become a common trope in modern pop culture .

Beginning in the 1960s , there have been speculative popular publications surrounding the order 's early occupation of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and speculation about what relics the Templars may have found there , such as the Holy Grail or the Ark of the Covenant , or the historical accusation of idol worship (Baphomet) transformed into a context of " witchcraft " .

The association of the Holy Grail with the Templars has precedents even in 12th century fiction ; Wolfram von Eschenbach 's Parzival calls the knights guarding the Grail Kingdom templeisen , apparently a conscious fictionalisation of the templarii .

Modern fictionalisation of the Templars begins with Ivanhoe , the 1820 novel by Walter Scott , where the villain Sir Brian de Bois @-@ Guilbert is a " Templar Knight " .

The popular treatment of the Templars as a topic of esotericist " legend " and " mystery " begins in the later 20th century . The historical novel series Les Rois maudits (1955 ? 1977) by Maurice Druon depicts the death of the last Grand Master of the Order , and plays with the legend of the curse he laid on the pope , Philip the Fair and Guillaume de Nogaret . Esotericist treatments become common in the 1980s . Among them , the 1982 The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail would prove most influential .

The 1988 novel by Umberto Eco Foucault 's Pendulum satirizes the presentation of the Templars in esotericist or pseudohistorical conspiracy theories . A revival of the 1980s themes took place in the 2000s due to the commercial success of The Da Vinci Code , the 2003 novel by Dan Brown (adapted into a film version in 2006) .

The Michoacán @-@ based Mexican criminal organization of The Knights Templar Cartel are named after the order and have based some of their iconography on it , including the appearance of medieval knights on the cover of their manifesto and code of conduct .

In the video game series Assassin 's Creed , the Templars are the antagonists who have waged a war against an organization called the Assassins . Some of the Templar grand masters , such as Robert de Sablé and Jacques de Molay appear in the games while some other historical figures such as Pope Alexander VI , Laureano de Torres y Ayala and François @-@ Thomas Germain are depicted as templar leaders.They are antagonists for most of the series but they are the main protagonists in Assassin 's Creed Rogue .