

TEMPLARS IN THE CHARTRAIN (1120-1312)

1. INTRODUCTION

So many stories and legends presented as historical truth¹ have been told, and still are told, about the Templars and Chartres that it is important to try to assess within our period of interest—the twelfth and thirteenth centuries broadly defined—who they truly were and what influence, if any, they may have had in the region and, in particular, on the design and building of the cathedral as is often stated.²

The spiritual force that gave rise to the Templars has to be sought in the great evangelical awakening of the 11th century, which lasted throughout the 12th century, and that we see at work in the creation of the eremitical movement. In the words of Chenu:³

Looking over the movement as a whole and despite crossbreeding in it, one can discern two basic patterns of foundation on the level of action in the church. One was a special adaptation of the Christianized feudal institutes of knighthood: the Knights Templar and the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre served, both within Christendom and on its frontiers, as a militia of Christ, with the approval and active support of St. Bernard.

¹ We have to guard here against the myths surrounding the Knights Templar, what Tyerman (2004, 3) calls “their popular elevation into a sinister, cultic, secret society, guardians of ancient mysteries, precursors of the Freemasons.” This, he says “reflects a false history... championed by...conspiracy theorists allied to cool money sharks bent on commercial exploitation of public credulity.”

That is indeed wise and needed advice given the proliferation of books purporting to reveal the secrets and “codes” of enigmatic, shadowy organizations, not to mention films and entertainment exalting “chivalric feats.” However, the baby shouldn’t be thrown out with the bath water either. If the historian must rely on material documentary evidence—written or archaeological—there is no doubt that other less obvious evidence embedded in traditions under the form of stories, legends, rituals, liturgies, symbols and relics carefully sifted, may also yield useful and interesting insights. Esoteric teachings and traditions, if that is what is in question here, are not generally consigned to written records but orally transmitted from master to student and closely guarded. Witness the lack of records about the ancient mysteries of Greece and Rome after their suppression. There is also the belief that oral transmission is not reliable as the “telephone game” that children like to play supposedly demonstrates, where one child whispers a sentence to his neighbor who, in turn, whispers it to his other neighbor, etc. until it comes back to the first, totally different. However, it is also a fact that sacred texts have been transmitted orally for thousands of years and kept uncorrupted by the use of correcting codes, e.g. Indian Vedas and other texts such as Pāṇini’s Grammar. On the other hand, written texts are always subject to scribal errors. In any case, whatever may be written down directly may make little sense to the uninitiated. It is often presented under the form of parables or visual symbols which require a context or a key to be fully understood and experienced. It is also patently clear that there is a difference between the insights yielded by a purely intellectual approach to a doctrine or religion and those obtained from its practice. Furthermore, within the last decade, some startling discoveries have been made in the Vatican secret archives by the Italian historian Frale. Her findings throw an entirely new light on the role of Pope Clement V and the French king, Philip IV during the Templars’ trial and, to a large extent, clear the “mystery” of the Templars. (Frale 2009 and Frale 2011).

² Strachan 2003, 25 ff.; Charpentier 1972, 47 ff.; Dupuis 2005. These, and numberless others as well, belong, to some extent and in various degrees, to what has been called the “parallel universe of Templarism.” Web sites are too numerous to even consider here.

³ Chenu 1997, 245-246.

The other was the fraternity, the penitential order, based on institutional poverty, lacking a hierarchy of authority, owning no material possessions, disaffected from the trappings of ecclesiastical life—even from the traditional liturgy—in brief, little inclined to conform to any classical pattern. ...It was the Book of the Apocalypse which nourished hopes and odd desires, not all of them healthy. This it did not so much by its prediction, which fostered temptation to millenarism as by the promise of an eternal judgment upon the contingencies of time.

Working on behalf of popes and kings, the Templars became a vital and eventually—to their own prejudice—a fatal link between spiritual and temporal powers. Part of the Church, yet only under the direct authority of the pope, they were pretty much autonomous and free of local episcopal supervision. This doesn't mean, however, that they did not receive from, nor give help to, the local bishops in the dioceses where their commanderies were established and numerous examples of such collaboration may be seen in the charters that have found their way to the historical record. In some cases, however, it created frictions and difficulties.

The Templars, i.e. the “Knights of Solomon’s Temple” or the “Poor Knights of Christ,” as they were commonly known at the beginning, formed a religious military order (“God’s militia,” in the words of Bernard of Clairvaux.), the first to be founded by the Catholic Church. They were organized in three hierarchical levels externally distinguished by their vestments: the knights clad in a white mantle marked by a red cross; the sergeants, or servants, wearing black clothes and coat, and the chaplains, or



Fig. 1 Two Templars playing chess



Fig. 2 Battle Dress & Liturgical Dress

priests, in clerical garb, both displaying, also, a red cross. The servants, or *hommes de métier* (craftsmen), were often local people who worked at jobs on the farms or in houses or businesses of the Order. Some might have been salaried.⁴

Their presence throughout Europe required some sort of territorial structure. It was based on “provinces” similar to, but distinct from, those of the mendicant orders. These provinces, distinct also from the church dioceses, reflected the geopolitical realities of the time. The knights were divided by languages (*tongue* or *pays*) so there were knights of the tongue of France, Italy, Spain, England, Germany, etc. with each tongue divided into priories, each priory into commanderies and each commanderie into members. Members might be churches, chapels, houses, farms, industrial, artisanal or commercial enterprises. These members were staffed by knights, chaplains, sergeants and associates or *bourgeois* who worked under the rule of the commander (*preceptor*) or his delegates. Associates or bourgeois were men and sometimes also women from the area who had vowed to follow the rule of the Order and worked in some capacity at specific members. They often had donated their estate to the Order and were then taken care of for life as monks would.



Fig. 3 Two Templars on one horse

⁴ Folliot 1983, 138.

Through their military function and recruitment, the knights naturally belonged to the warrior class. They came for the most part from the lower nobility though some might not have been necessarily of knightly stock, simply people of means and property with possibly some soldierly training. Some, however, particularly among the leaders, were from powerful feudal families from northern France. The sergeants or servants were former artisans, laborers, or farmers whose main function was not so much to fight as to contribute to the economic life of the order, although they might be pressed into battle as the need arose, particularly overseas. They then constituted a corps of foot soldiers and light cavalry fighting alongside the heavy armed cavalry of the knights or served in what would now be called a corps of engineers: constructing siege machinery, digging trenches and tunnels to weaken walls and defenses, building castles and fortifications or directing local laborers in their work.

Some of these sergeants served as squires to the knights, helping with the care of horses,⁵ armor, and weapons; others dealt with the logistics and quartermasters' duties needed by an army in the field. Others, in the commanderies, worked in administrative positions or on the land, doing agricultural, construction, and maintenance work. The third category of members, or chaplains, were priests serving for life, ministering to the spiritual needs of the other members of the Order. The knights, who originally served at will, eventually could only leave to join a stricter order such as the Cistercians.

From lands and other gifts received either from their recruits or their families, or from pious souls wanting to contribute to the defense of the Holy Land and to their salvation, the Templars became rich land owners on a par with other feudal lords. Their

⁵ That expensive war horses were a precious commodity is illustrated by the seal of the Order representing two knights mounted on the same horse. As Barbara Frale (2009, 49) remarks, "There are many theories regarding the mysterious meaning of the Templar seal." To her, the most credible one refers to "the double character of the Templars which brings together the material skill of the warrior and the spiritual gifts of the monk. The Templar knight represented the perfect achievement of that ideal combination of physical force and inner strength." Be that as it may, and to return to the horses in the flesh rather than sealed in wax, we note that some of the Templars' farms, as we shall see, in the region of Chartres as well as Outremer, were devoted to the raising of horses. "A knight has three horses, and because they fell victim to warfare and disease and had a lifespan of only twenty years, they needed to be renewed at a greater rate than local breeding allowed... Each Templar had a squire to help look after the horses... Sergeants, more lightly armed than the knights, each had a horse and acted as their own squire." (Haag 2009, 131)

agricultural and commercial activities, whose profit was consecrated for the most part to the crusading effort, were part of the productive and economic life of the community.⁶

The fact that they individually took vows of poverty meant that they could not own anything personally. The Order, however, could. Since it was not allowed, according to its rule, to divest itself of its wealth, it means that it grew rich very quickly,⁷ with the result that it was in a position to lend money at very advantageous rates, well below usury. The Order soon became a *de facto* banker to those always thirsting for rather substantial sums of money, such as kings and secular lords as well as ecclesiastical princes—popes, cardinals, and bishops.⁸

Spiritually, they were fully devoted to Christ-the-King and to the Blessed Virgin Mother, patroness of the Order, just as secular knights owed allegiance to their feudal lords and to their ladies. Also, as in the case of the secular knights, the Order did not emphasize education. In fact it shunned it as unfit for warriors. This was, after all, a

⁶ The expenses of maintaining a knight were considerable. According to Haag (2009, 131) “In the second half of the twelfth century France this required 750 acres to equip and maintain a mounted warrior. A century later costs had quintupled to 3,750 acres. In the Holy Land where much had to be imported, costs were even higher.”

⁷ As men of the Church they were also exempt from any taxes. In addition, kings and popes, lords and bishops, accorded to them many other privileges such as that of collecting rent or taxes from certain properties or of receiving prebends from certain churches, all sorts of rights on their domains for themselves, their people, and their domestic animals, e.g. collecting dead wood for heating and cooking, having their cows and pigs graze certain fields. They also received royal privilege of justice.

⁸ Their wealth, however, became naturally an object of criticism on the part of many. In a society where money is officially seen as the source of evil, wealth is always a subject of suspicion. When associated with religious institutions the suspicion turns to conviction of sin. When the institution presents itself as “poor,” as in “The Poor Knights of Christ,” hypocrisy is added to the list of sins. Mannier (1872, xiv-xvi), whose sympathies plainly lie with the hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem, an order clearly seen as rival to the Templars in their overlapping functions, attributions, and resources, draws a not-too-flattering portrait of the Templars on that score. Not only the powerful, says he—kings, dukes, and counts (e.g. of Normandy, Champagne, or Flanders) as well as bishops and popes—but also the humble and even the poor had given them a not negligible support that contributed substantially to their revenues. Furthermore, their possessions in Palestine and in Syria were considerable and their revenues from these sources well covered war expenses in the Holy Land so that their possessions in Europe were available for “capitalization” and new acquisitions.

The result of all this, according to Mannier, was to make the Templars prideful and disdainful. Possessed of a spirit of independence, they ignored at times, says he, the advice and even the orders of the Roman curia. When King Louis IX (Saint Louis) was taken prisoner by the Moslems during the crusades they went so far as to refuse to contribute to his ransom while their treasury bulged with gold! (Mannier here may be overlooking legalities that made such action impossible. Nevertheless, it certainly had an unfavorable effect on public opinion.) Towards the end of the thirteenth century, together with their wealth, they had accumulated many enemies and quite a few envious, particularly among the nobility and the clergy (those, by the way, who were also their debtors). They also became unpopular since they were held responsible for the fall of Jerusalem into the hands of the Moslems and the loss of most of the Latin kingdoms in the East.

fighting order, not a contemplative one.⁹ Except a few who chanced to have received some formal education prior to their joining, rare were those who could read Latin, the language of the educated class and clerics. Knights and squires generally spoke and read French—the language of the warrior class in the Middle Ages. For most, this was their native language but knights of other tongues also joined.

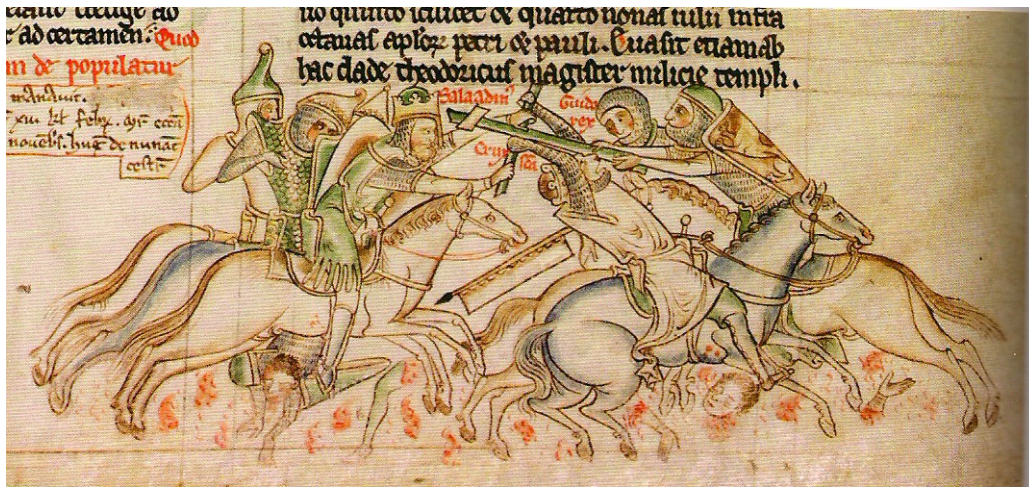


Fig. 4 The Battle of Hattin

Templars were devout people of simple and solid faith uncomplicated by the subtle theological questions debated in the cathedral schools and the burgeoning universities of Paris, Oxford, or Bologna. Militarily, they constituted a well trained fighting force backed up by a strong logistical organization and well financed by their farming estates, their received donations, and their commercial and banking activities. Disciplined through a type of monastic rule, they took vows of poverty, abstinence of sexual contact with any person, and total obedience to their commander. Their loyalty, by modern standards, might be considered bordering on the fanatical side of zealotry. And indeed so were they perceived by the Moslems¹⁰. As a consequence, rarely were they spared when taken prisoner.¹¹

⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux, in a letter to the pope, wrote that what the Holy Land really needed was “fighting knights not singing and wailing monks” (Haag 2009, 99).

¹⁰ Maalouf 1984, 111.

¹¹ Ibid. 1984, 194.

A number of Templars were permanently established *Outremer*¹² and consequently more or less on constant alert in their defense of the new Frankish colonies against Moslems,¹³ but a sizeable contingent¹⁴ was established in various countries of Western Europe. There, their function was basically one of fund raising for the needs of the crusading effort in the Orient.¹⁵ Templars didn't participate in the crusades against other Christians such as the one against the Albigensians. Their fund raising was done either through direct cash donations or through collecting various taxes, dues, or rents on properties (land, houses, watermills, wine presses, etc.) that had been deeded to them, or through the profit of farming of the properties they themselves exploited directly, working the land, raising cattle, sheep or horses and selling their harvest and animals or by having tenants do it on their behalf.

The Templars formed therefore an organism distinct yet apparently well integrated within the framework of Church and society. In the following we briefly examine the origin of the order in the early twelfth century at the dawn of the crusades, and look at its development until its suppression in the early fourteenth century. We then consider in more detail its presence in the region of Chartres during its existence and what influence this might have had relative to the cathedral.

2. THE ORIGIN OF THE TEMPLARS

¹² Outremer: Literally 'oversea,' included, loosely speaking, what we refer to as the Middle East from Turkey to Egypt but particularly Palestine and specifically the Holy Land.

¹³ The record, however, in the first three decades following 1119 shows little activity in the East. It is particularly on this basis and their apparently small number in relation to the stated task that all sorts of hypotheses regarding their "real" purpose have been framed. Nevertheless, this ignores their presence in Spain during part of this period and their contribution there to the war against the Moors. (See footnote 15 *infra*).

¹⁴ In the thirteenth century the Templars may have had up to 7,000 knights, sergeants, brothers, and priests with perhaps 2500 serving in the Holy Land (Zinn 1995, 902).

¹⁵ The Templars, however, were also very active in the Iberian Peninsula during the *Reconquista* fighting against the Moors, the Moslems of Spain. King Alfonso I of Aragon (the northeastern part of the peninsula) died childless in 1134. In an 1143 settlement of his will, the Templars received six major castles in his kingdom, a tenth of the royal revenues and a fifth of any land to be conquered from the Moslems in recognition of their past contribution to the war against the Moors and in anticipation of their future contribution. This made the Templar Order a major player in the reconquest of the land from the Moslems who had ruled a large part of the peninsula for nearly four centuries. Templars not only fought in the field but also built many castles and fortifications to prevent further Moslem in raids. Their activities extended to the western part of the peninsula as well, where the kingdom of Portugal was emerging to independence. Here, also, Templars acquired land reconquered from the Moors. They also served as models for the development of other military orders under royal patronages in both Spain and Portugal. At the dissolution of the Order by the pope in 1312 the Templars kept operating in Portugal under another name.

We begin with the historical account as it has been pieced together by academic historians of the period. In this, we broadly follow Helen Nicholson's popular account¹⁶ as well as accounts by Christopher Tyerman and *The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, edited by Edward Peters and the more recent publications of Barbara Frale and others already mentioned in the previous section.

The lack of emphasis on learning among Templars may partly account for the lack of historical activity usually found in the religious orders and, consequently, the lack of records regarding the founding and history of the Templars. Conspiracy theorists may see in this a rather deliberate attempt to keep secrets, particularly when it is seen in relation to the destruction of part of their archives in a great fire at their former headquarters in Cyprus when the Ottoman Turks captured the island later in the sixteenth century (1571). These archives had passed into the care of the Order of the Hospitallers at the time of the suppression of the Templars by Pope Clement V in 1312. However, as Nicholson points out¹⁷:

The loss of the Templars' central archive means that we do not know exactly what property and privileges the Templars had in the crusader states and in Cyprus. However, anything that concerned both them and the hospital is preserved in the hospital's archives, while papal bulls for Templars are preserved in the papal registers in the Vatican. For the Order's European possessions much remains in archives and museums across Europe... In short, a good deal of material about the Templars survived. The Order is far from being a mystery.

This being said, the historical origin of the Order remains rather unclear.¹⁸ The written accounts of these beginnings are not concordant and appear to depend a great deal on both the time elapsed from the event to the time of writing and the position of the writer.

Simon, a monk of St. Bertin near St. Omer in northern France, writing within a generation of the beginnings of the Order, says that "On the advice of the princes of God's army [some crusaders who had decided to stay in the Holy Land] vowed themselves to God's temple under this rule: They would renounce the world, give up personal goods, free themselves to pursue chastity, and lead a common life wearing a

¹⁶ Nicholson 2004.

¹⁷ Nicholson 2001, 8-12.

¹⁸ As Mannier (1872, ix), puts it, "As most of our institutions from the Middle Ages, the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem had a rather obscure and most humble origin." This evidently applies also to the Order of the Temple.

poor habit, only using weapons to defend the land against the attacks of insurgent pagans when necessity demanded.”¹⁹

Orderic Vitalis, an Anglo-Norman monk writing in the 1120s or 1130s says Fulk V of Anjou²⁰ had joined the “Knights of the Temple” for awhile when on pilgrimage to Jerusalem before returning home. He doesn’t mention when or how the Order began.²¹

Other writers—Anselm of Havelburg, Otto of Freising, Richard of Poitou—voiced other speculations regarding dates and the original purpose of the Order.

Nicholson concludes that

Contemporaries disagreed over how the Order of the Temple began. They agreed that the Order was set up with the approval of the highest religious and secular authorities in the kingdom of Jerusalem, and that the Order was given approval quickly [1120] and was probably founded in 1119. Contemporaries also disagreed over the Order’s original purpose—defending pilgrims visiting Christian holy sites, or defending the territories of the new crusader states against Muslim raids.

Similarly there was disagreement as to how various elements, particularly in the Church, reacted to it. Such an armed militia within the Church seemed to many in direct contradiction with the Gospels.²² To others such as the leaders of the Council of Troyes (1129) the Order was a welcome initiative. They saw it in fact as a way of getting a

¹⁹ Simon de St. Bertin quoted in Nicholson (2004, 24).

²⁰ Fulk V reigned as Count of Anjou from 1109 – 1129. He became king of Jerusalem in 1130 and died there in 1143. His pilgrimage to Jerusalem referred to by Orderic must have therefore taken place between 1109 and 1129, i.e. close to the formation of the Order of the Templars. Tyerman, (2006, 252) mentions 1120 when Fulk temporarily attached himself to the Templars in Jerusalem. This then clearly implies the existence of the Order in 1120.

²¹ See Nicholson 2004, 26.

²² Isaac de l’Etoile, the Cistercian Abbot of the Monastery of l’Etoile near Poitiers, had this to say, for example:

There has sprung a new monster, a certain new kind of knighthood, whose Order—as a certain man says neatly—is from the fifth Gospel [because it doesn’t come from the other four!] because it is set up to force unbelievers into the Christian faith by lances and cudgels and may freely despoil those who are not Christians, and butcher them religiously; but if many of them fall in such ravaging they are called Martyrs of Christ. (Quoted by Nicholson 2004, 36).

Ivo, bishop of Chartres (1090-1116) in a letter to Hugh, Count of Champagne, admonishes him for abandoning his wife and joining the “Militia of Christ.” (Nicholson 2004, 22)

On the other hand, another Bishop of Chartres, John of Salisbury (1176-1180) writing *ca* 1159 in his *Policraticus*, a commentary on contemporary society, praised the Templars who “lay down their lives for their brothers... waging a war for the right reasons.” Nicholson 2004 37.

It appeared that a complete reversal of values was taking place. According to MacCullough (2009, 385-86): [whereas] the hugely popular military saints of the early Church—Sergius, Martin, George—had gained their sanctity when they renounced warfare; now the very act of being a soldier could create holiness...In the crypt of Auxerre Cathedral...the bishop commissioned a picture... in which Christ himself was portrayed as a warrior on horseback...an image impossible to imagine in the early church...and still alien to the Greek Church. A Greek visiting Spain was offended when he heard St. James of Compostella referred to as “a knight of Christ.”

handle on the warrior class by setting up an example of what a Christian knight ought to be. Much of the chivalric culture of the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries that inspired in literature the Roman of the Round Table, the story of the Grail, and the troubadour and trouvère songs of love and heroism can be traced, if not directly at least atmospherically, to the religio-military fraternities and orders that sprang from the same source—be it the Templars, the Hospitallers, the Teutonic Order of Knights, the English Order of St. Thomas of Acre, the Sword Brothers of Livonia, the Prussian Knights of Dobrin, or others.

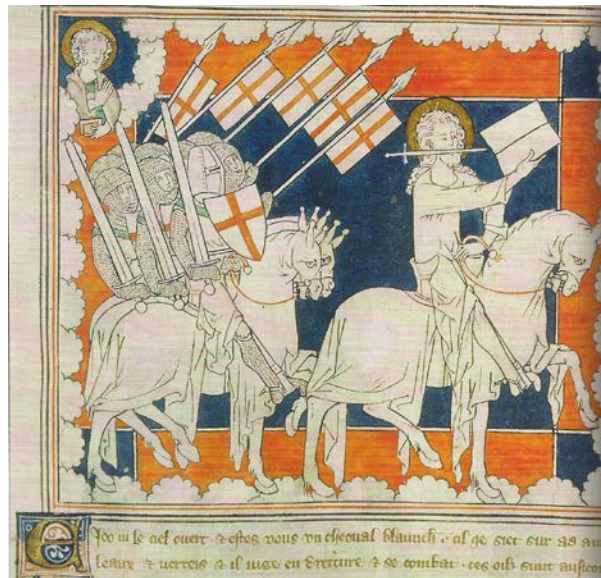


Fig. 5 Christ leading the hosts of heaven

This attempt to reconcile the ideals of warriors' heroism and those of the Gospel was not new, of course.²³ In the days of Charlemagne, Alcuin and Meinhard saw them as mutually exclusive. Already in the fifth century Predentius, in his *Psychomachia*, had approached the problem by changing plane, taking it from the physical to the psychological level, substituting abstract qualities for individual human beings where “*Sobriety* can smash *Luxury* in the teeth... without leaving herself open to the charge of *Superbia*, a theme to be found again in the Chartrain Alain de Lille in his *Anti-Claudianus*.”

²³ Levine 1971, 105-128.

“The *Song of Roland*, in which the hero is more complex than the personification of abstract qualities,” as Levine remarks, “may be the most elaborate attempt to assert the validity of combining Christ and the military heroes. However, here, nothing of fundamental significance appears problematical as the rigid and narrow schematization negates, in fact, the very concept of reality.”

Obviously, there was much debate among theologians in particular regarding what Tyerman²⁴ refers to as “combining charity with violence, religious vocation with fighting,” i.e. the concepts of the just war and holy war which had been of concern to St. Augustine already much earlier in the fifth century. For St. Bernard²⁵ there was no doubt that the Templars were fighting the good fight and that war was wholly justified.

Much of the later view of the Order was influenced by a letter written before 1136 by Bernard to Hugh de Payens “Knight of Christ and Master of the Knighthood of Christ” in which he sets out the Order’s spiritual basis. At the Council of Troyes in 1129, attended by Bernard and Hugh de Payens, the rule of the Order of the Temple was established and the members of the Order were given a habit. “This suggests,” says Nicholson²⁶ “that Bernard played an important role in drawing up the Latin version of the Order’s rule.” This rule formed the basis of other military orders. It became a public document “far from secret.” At the council, the clerk, Jean Michel, recorded that Hugh de Payens made a presentation to the Council on how the Order began²⁷ and its way of life.

“The Order of the Poor Knights of Christ,”²⁸ as it was officially known up to then, added to its title “and of the Temple of Solomon” when it was then recognized by Pope Honorius II.

²⁴ Tyerman 2006, 253-257.

²⁵ Tyerman (2006) makes the point that though Bernard shows an intimate knowledge of the Epistles of Paul who “was fond of martial metaphors, his message was wholly contrary to that of the Abbot of Clairvaux” who used them literally (ii Tim. 2: 6 and ii Corinthians 10: 3-4).

²⁶ Nicholson 2004, 27. The rule of the Templars was, in fact, close to that of the Cistercians.

²⁷ However, no details are given about it. It suggests that it was something that happened in the Holy Land rather than from an initiative originating in Rome or in Western Europe in general.

²⁸ Barbara Frale (2009, 27) makes an interesting remark, “At the beginning of the twelfth century poverty meant something quite different from what it means today... *poor* was not the opposite of *rich* but rather the opposite of *potent*, which referred to military and social power. To be poor was to be humble or powerless; it did not equate to economic need.” The sense still applies in the vernacular as when we refer to “a poor fellow” (*un pauvre homme*) which evidently does not necessarily imply that the person has no money or wealth.

What seems to have taken place, as we previously mentioned, is that, following the first crusade, a few knights and soldiers remained in the Holy Land to defend the land and the holy places, prevent attacks against unarmed pilgrims as well as against Frankish settlements. Some among these knights banded together to form a confraternity to counteract the situation—policing the pilgrimage routes to Jerusalem and defending Christian churches, monasteries, and castles.²⁹ Such confraternities of warriors were common at the time. They began to appear in Europe in the eleventh century. During the first crusade similar groups formed for sharing resources and for providing mutual help along the way. Hugh of Payens and Godfrey of St. Omer apparently were at the origin of such a confraternity and sought the sponsorship of Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem (1118-30). The latter offered them residence at the Al-Aqsa mosque on the site of the ancient temple of Solomon, from which they evidently derived their title.

In reality, the facts are complex and, as noted, not well documented. The period is one of great instability: in the Church, popes and anti-popes were jousting for position and power under the manipulations of emperors, kings, and powerful Roman aristocratic families; in the political and economic domains, the needs and interests of Outremer and those of the West were often in conflict. In all this Bernard of Clairvaux played a dominant diplomatic role.

According to Frale, it is King Baldwin II who was the driving force in setting up the confraternity of Hugh of Payens as a powerful fighting force. She writes:³⁰

The highly personal and modest nature of Hugh of Payens's proposed rule for his brotherhood was in sharp contrast to the needs of Baldwin II, who was faced with a dwindling Christian population and a lack of a dependable military force capable of defending it... The establishment of a true military order would mean not only recruiting a significant number of soldiers but also finding the vast economic resources necessary to maintain the army, ensure adequate provisions, and procure all the requisite equipment.

Besides the fact that the Templars' purpose seems to have overlapped, to a large extent, with that of the already existing Order of the Hospitallers of St. John of

²⁹ They were particularly responsible for protecting the route from Jaffa to Jerusalem (Tyerman 2006, 217). Their number, which remained at nine from their beginning in around 1119 to 1129, seems to be disproportionate to the immensity of the task. This has been an argument seized by some "theorists" to propose the idea that this assignment was simply a front cover for a more secret mission (see *infra*). But as previously mentioned, this ignores the fact of the participation of the Order in the war of reconquest in the Iberian Peninsula against the Moors

³⁰ Frale 2009, 28.

Jerusalem,³¹ it is noteworthy to remark that the originators of the concept of this new order were closely related through family ties and geographical origin. They all belonged to the high nobility of northeastern France. From its very beginning the members of the Order were interacting at the highest levels of Church and State. It therefore appears the Order might have been created—or its creation used—to get, on the part of St. Bernard,³² a better control over the goings-on in the Holy Land and in Christendom in general after the capture of Jerusalem by the crusaders.

Gordon Strachan,³³ suggests that, at the origin, the Templars may have had a short range mission Outremer. Given their background, number, and record, this mission might have been to connect with the living source of knowledge that sustained the apparently higher state of civilization that Islam was perceived to have attained.³⁴

Strachan attributes much significance to the fact that not only were there just nine knights but that no more knights were added for another nine years.³⁵ He sees in this a

³¹ The explicit mission of the Hospitallers of St. John was to lodge and care for Christian pilgrims; as said above, the Templars' was originally and officially to secure the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem for pilgrims. This created an endemic rivalry between these two orders. The Hospitallers expanded their mission to a military one after the capture of Jerusalem (1099). Finally, at the dissolution of the Templars in 1312, the Templars' assets were deeded by the pope to the Hospitallers. The Hospitallers were founded somewhat earlier than the Templars. A charter of 1060 mentions a donation to a house of Hospitallers in Normandy (commanderie of Villedieu-lès-Bailleul) by William the Conqueror. (Mannier 1872).

³² Besides the sway of his spiritual authority, St. Bernard, in the early 12th century, was most influential in matters of state politics, advising, popes, kings, and emperors. The original nine "poor knights" were all of high birth, well-educated, well-connected, and devoted. Besides Hugh of Payens, a vassal of the Count of Champagne, who, himself, will eventually join the Poor Knights, and Godfrey of St. Omer, we find André de Montbard, brother of Aleth de Montbard, the mother of St. Bernard; Payen Montdidier, Archambaud de St. Aignon, André de Gundodomare, Roral, Godefroy, and Geoffroy Bisol.

³³ Strachan, (2003, 26-27. n. 14) quoting from the Encyclopedia Britannica, vol. 21, p. 374: "There was, no doubt, a certain interchange of ideas between Sufism and Christianity. The Knights Templar, for example, almost certainly made intellectual contacts with the Sufis." Also from Picknett and Prince (1998, 163), "Many Templars were soaked in the culture of the East and some may well have come into contact with the Sufi schools."

³⁴ In the twelfth century Islamic civilization was then at its apogee. The contact of early Frankish crusaders first with the refinements of Byzantium and second with the highly civilized Moslem world enjoying a level of art, architecture, music, and science unequalled in the West, had a profound effect on their outlook. Suger, the Abbot of St. Denis, tells us of the wondrous description by returning crusaders of the marvels they had seen. Obviously that was one of the motivating factors that made him envious and desirous of equaling and even surpassing these marvels when he set out to renovate his abbatial church at St. Denis.

³⁵ According to Strachan, "The fact that there were only nine Templars for the first nine years, can best be understood as a code... for learning from Islamic higher education... the really shocking revelation with which they [the nine Templars] had to come to terms was the trauma of meeting men who made them feel culturally inferior, intellectually unlearned, and spiritually shallow."

As for number 9 it is also found in the nine hierarchies of angels in the theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius, the 9 categories of Aristotle (quantity, quality, relation, position, place, time, state, action, and affection); the nine degrees of wisdom as shown on a stained glass window at the Cathedral of Laon where

clue to link them to the mystical tradition of Sufism³⁶ in Islam where nine plays an important role in some aspect of the doctrine.

3. DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPRESSION OF THE ORDER

3.1 Cultural Christian/Moslem Contacts

Typical Templars, of course, were no scholars; they were men of action; hence, perhaps an incentive, in this view, on the part of people like St. Bernard to send over some individuals who, though trained in the art of war, as all high-born were then, had nevertheless, together with a well-established network of high level international connections, a level of education and a discipline enabling them to learn quickly and effectively what could be gleaned from the more esoteric circles among the “Saracens.”³⁷ It should be noted that Peter the Venerable (1092/94 – 1156), the famous Abbot of Cluny, a contemporary and, in spite of their differences, friend of St. Bernard, took steps, while in Spain, where Cluny had many dependent monasteries, to investigate the nature of Islam and to hold debates with educated Moslems.³⁸ Later, in the second half of the

a woman, as a personification of wisdom sits behind a nine-rung ladder. Nine, besides many interesting properties and esoteric meanings, has for its root 3, the Trinity. It is circular, i.e. “incorruptible” by virtue of its recurrence in the products of its multiplication in the decimal system (e.g. it recurs continually in the sum of its product digits: $4 \times 9 = 36$ and $3 + 6 = 9$; $5 \times 9 = 45$ and $4 + 5 = 9$, etc.)

³⁶ Sufism is a sect of Islamic mysticism dating from the eighth century A.D. It developed chiefly in Persia. By the twelfth century its influence had spread throughout the Moslem world, notably in literature and the fine arts. The celebrated poet Rumi was a Sufi. It is based on an absolute trust in God, patience and gratitude leading to an intuitive knowledge of God culminating in love, which manifests itself in “joy of suffering.” Its ideas and asceticism were indeed close to those of the Cistercians. “From the twelfth century onwards fraternities or orders of mystics crystallized, transforming Sufism into a mass movement.” (*Dictionary of Oriental Literature*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974, vol. 3, p. 176).

³⁷ Strachan (2003, 28) thinks that such contacts occurred and that knowledge was thus passed to the West and came to Chartres in particular.

Says Strachan, “The first Templars had found the source of much of the learning which had long been taught in the Cathedral schools...specially [at] Chartres ... [i.e.] the legacy of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, and Ptolemy... [and] that Sufi and Islamic scholars had taken their studies to a more advanced level [and] were prepared to share this knowledge. As a result of this openness, the first Templars learned about Islam’s more advanced, spiritually-integrated form of architecture.”

Strachan sees proof of this in the construction by the Templars, or at least under their supervision, of the three central bays of the Al Aqsa Mosque in the early twelfth century, which bear striking similarities to the Royal Portal at Chartres erected beginning in or around 1145. His photographs of both portals make the point quite well (p. 29). If that is the case, then this would confirm the designation of the Cathedral as the new Temple of Solomon, since it was believed at the time that the Al Aqsa mosque was the actual Temple of Solomon.

³⁸ Brooke 1969, 160.

Maalouf (1984, 129) writes: “If the emir Usāmah [a leading Damascene diplomat specialist of Frankish affairs], did not hesitate to call the Templars ‘my friends,’ it was because he believed that their barbarian mores were gradually being refined by contact with the Orient. Among the Franj [Franks], he explains, we

twelfth century, somewhat less than one hundred years after the first crusade, a mood of tolerance had begun to pervade. It was thought that it was better to try to convert a Moslem than to kill him. Indeed no less a saint than Francis of Assisi went all the way to Syria to preach before Moslem leaders. The result was not, and has not been over the centuries, miraculous, but the growing contact at a more reasoned level, brought about, together with a new respect between people, some degree of affect on the contemporary theological thought. Also the fact that Christians could walk and breathe where Jesus had walked, breathed, and preached made him more human,³⁹ less of an apocalyptic judge, and more of a fellow human being, something that can indeed be sensed in the “beaudieu” sculptures on the portals of Chartres and Amiens, for example. Being the Divine Son, he also became a human brother.

This relatively more tolerant age and a certain balance of forces between crusaders and Moslems⁴⁰ must have therefore facilitated cultural exchanges between them as well as with the Jews of Spain and of Palestine. This is the period that saw the flowering of the translation schools of Toledo, where Moslem, Jewish, and Christian scholars worked side by side or even together on bringing out ancient Greek and Hebrew texts into Latin as well as recent Arabic manuscripts and translations.

Besides these “cultural exchanges,” political and diplomatic contacts Outremer between Templars and Moslems were frequent. As Frale remarks⁴¹:

The Order formed cordial relationships with several Muslim emirs, based on common economic or political interests; religious discussions were carefully avoided. This friendly coexistence required the reciprocal respect of cultural differences. These political relationships would later be used by the enemies of the Order to spread rumors about the Templars’ possible secret conversion to Islam.

find some people who have come to settle among us and who have cultivated the society of Muslims. They are far superior to those who have freshly joined them in the territories they now occupy.”

It is therefore not far fetched to see someone like this emir pushing his civilizing mission one step further by teaching them some of the classical liberal arts inherited from the Greeks and further developed by the Moslems.

³⁹ This thirst for contact with the physical witnesses of Jesus’ earthly presence found partial mitigation in the abundance of relics which came into the public domain, so to speak, after the sack of Constantinople. We shall have occasion to consider this further.

⁴⁰ Maalouf (1984, 185) writes: “The Andalusian traveler Ibn Jubayr, who visited Damascus that year [1184], was surprised to find that in spite of the war caravans traveled freely between Cairo and Damascus, passing through Franj territory. ‘the Christians’ he noted, ‘make the Muslims pay a tax, which is applied without abuses. The Christian merchants, in turn, pay duty on their merchandise when they pass through the territory of the Muslims. There is complete understanding between the two sides and equity is respected. The men of war pursue their war, but the people remain at peace.’

⁴¹ Frale 2009, 84-85.

3.2 Possible Architectural Consequences

The Cistercians, the order of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the spiritual guide of the Templars, had a splendid tradition of fine, stripped down buildings with high quality masonry—minimalist *avant la lettre*, even Puritan in this respect. They would find a kindred spirit in the tradition of purity and clarity of geometric design so evident in the Islamic arts of calligraphy, building decoration, and, indeed, architecture—or was it where they found their inspiration? As Christopher Brooke⁴² points out, the Order “attracted a wide variety of men of initiative and talent in its early days [and we] should find, specially among lay brothers, a certain number of skilled masons and of men of many crafts.” As the recruitment of Templars grew over the twelfth century, we should not be surprised to find among these crypto-Cistercians, sergeants well trained in the building arts, indeed *hommes de métier* as they are termed in the charters. Such people would not be indifferent to some fine specimens of Islamic architecture. They also might be well disposed to bring their findings back to Europe, particularly to France, from which most of them originated.⁴³

That the Templars found wisdom among the Sufis or Solomon’s secrets under the Mount of the Dome, we will probably never know. Nevertheless they apparently left their mark at Chartres in the form of the cross⁴⁴ in the halo of the Christ of the Apocalypse on the Royal Portal.⁴⁵ Jean Villette⁴⁶ also relates that a Templar’s cross painted in ochre on

⁴² Brooke 1969, 135.

⁴³ The example of the similarity between the Al-Aqsa Mosque portal and that of Chartres west would seem to confirm this view. However, see *infra*, Section 4.2, for more consideration of architectural consequences.

⁴⁴ This, according to Strachan. The shape of the Templar cross, however, is not unique in design. Numerous examples can be seen in reproductions in Nicholson (2004, 64, 117, 127, 164, & 235).

⁴⁵ The Templars are credited (Richmond 1949, 44) with building the entrance porch of the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the temple mount, “according to the principles of Islamic sacred architecture.” “This,” says Strachan (2003, 30) “is confirmed by Saladin’s decision to save this porch from destruction when he ordered to pull down all crusader buildings in the vicinity after his reconquest of Jerusalem [1187].” On the other hand, the arches of the royal portal at Chartres, started ca 1145, under Bishop Geoffrey of Lèves follow exactly the same geometry as those of the porch of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This would confirm the Templars’ influence at Chartres, according to Strachan. The *croix pattée* in Christ’s halo would be their signature.

It should be noted that Geoffrey of Lèves, Bishop of Chartres (1116-1148), the founder of the Abbey of Josaphat near Chartres (cf. *infra*) was also the clergy representative from Chartres at the Council of Troyes (1118) that formerly established the Templars’ Order while the Count of Chartres represented the nobility. Furthermore, Geoffrey was a great friend of Bernard of Clairvaux, spiritual guide of the Templars, and accompanied him on a number of journeys to Italy and Aquitaine between 1128 and 1138, regions where the Cathar heresy was rife and where the presence of Templars was relatively dense—all this,

the vault of the nave was visible over the entrance of the labyrinth⁴⁷ before the cross was painted over in the course of the renovation in the mid-twentieth century.

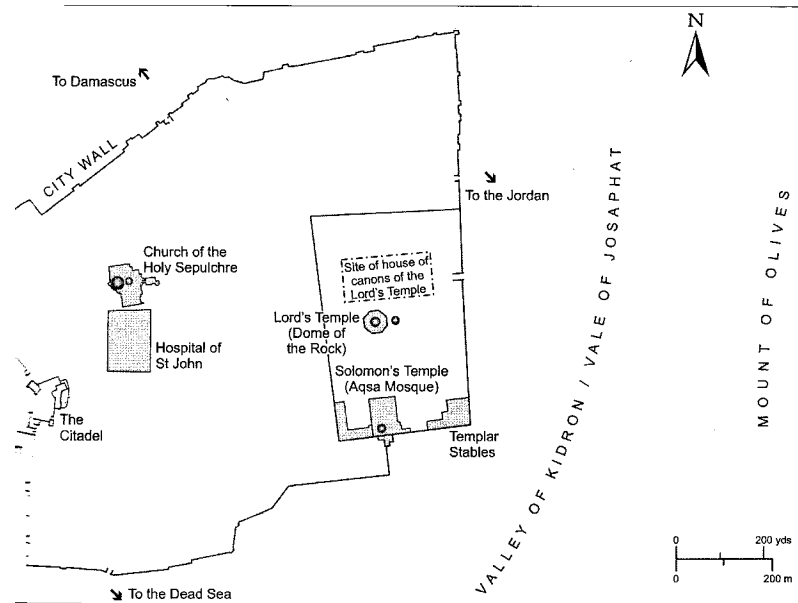


Fig. 6 The old city of Jerusalem during the Crusader period.

The Templars' influence did not, of course, limit itself to architectural details. Forming a highly disciplined brotherhood in a society such as that of *Outremer*, where civil authority was weak and divided, they moved in to fill the vacuum, becoming virtually a state within a state.

3.3 The Templars' Political Outreach

An armed militia protecting pilgrims' routes, they extended their duties to protecting lines of communication, the *routes templières*, building commanderies along

circumstantial evidence of high level Templar sympathies and potential involvement with the church at Chartres.

⁴⁶ Villette 1997, 128. (See present study, chapter, "The Labyrinth Experience.") Note that this type of cross might also have been a Maltese cross, referring to the Order of the Knights of Malta, a later military order. That cross could therefore have been painted at a somewhat later date and be unconnected with the Templars.

⁴⁷ Would this indicate a possible link of the Templars to the labyrinth of Chartres, of the defenders of the actual *Chemin de Jérusalem* to the so-called *Chemin de Jérusalem*, as the labyrinth is also known? Would then the labyrinth be perhaps a device used in the initiation or dubbing of new Knights Templar at Chartres? Or is it just a reminder that the *Chemin de Jérusalem* was under the Templars' protection?

the way, not only in the East but in Western Europe as well. These command posts, or fortified residences, offered lodging in their *hopitots* to pilgrims, travelers, and merchants. They served as warehouses for merchants' goods. Basically enclosed farms, tended by tenants, the *mesnie du temple*, these commanderies, which numbered nearly a thousand, including those in Europe⁴⁸ by the time of the dissolution of the Order in 1312, served also as granaries or silos stocking grain that could be distributed in case of scarcity or famine. The skill of the Templars at organizing agricultural production was indeed one of the principal sources of the great wealth that they accumulated. Another was the development of a banking system. In so doing they protected commerce, encouraged artisanal production, created markets under their supervision, and thereby helped the circulation of money that primed the economic engine. All this, aided by more favorable climatic conditions that prevailed in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, contributed in large part, though indirectly, to the flowering of the cathedral building boom of the thirteenth century.⁴⁹ In the case of Chartres, no direct contribution can be traced to the Templars. The wealth of the chapter itself, and that of the bishop at the head of the largest diocese in France, added to the gifts brought by the afflux of pilgrims attracted by the renowned miracles of Our Lady, helps account for the fact that the building was essentially completed in less than twenty-six years.⁵⁰

3.4 *Toward the End; Troubles Brewing*

By the end of the thirteenth century the Templars had accumulated not only considerable wealth but also many enemies. And these enemies were not only the secular powers. Reporting only and directly to the pope,⁵¹ the Templars were independent of the

⁴⁸ The number of 9000 mentioned by Matthew Paris in his *Chronica Majora* and still quoted in various articles (e.g. Bernadette Arnaud, "Les derniers jours des Templiers," in *Science et Avenir*, juillet 2010, p. 58) would appear entirely fictional. Perhaps was Matthew Paris referring to "members" rather than commanderies when he said "manors." In any case Matthew, a monk and chronicler of St. Albans, was not particularly an admirer of the Templars.

⁴⁹ According to Nicholson (2004, 13): "The Templars did not contribute towards the building costs of cathedrals or castles in the West as they had barely enough money to finance the building of their own castles in the East."

On the other hand, Mannier (1872, xiv – xvi) asserts that their *Outremer* possessions were sufficient to sustain their war effort while their treasury "bulged with gold."

⁵⁰ Vroom 2010, 115-16.

⁵¹ It is also noteworthy to remark that even the popes had warned Templars repeatedly (see Bothwell-Gosse, A. *The Knights Templar*, London: John M. Watkins, 2003, 14-15).

bishops and diocesan clergy in whole jurisdiction they were established. The secretiveness displayed by the Order and the fact that they had their own priests left them open, on the part of the secular clergy and the mendicant orders to rumors of private and peculiar rituals and to unflattering gossips. All this contributed to the sense that they were, through their wealth and military power, not only a state within a state, both Outremer and in Europe but also a church within the Church. This explains, for instance, the unfavorable light that William, the Archbishop of Tyre and an historian of the times, often throws on their activities. When both secular and religious powers find themselves united in a single individual, as in the case of the religiously overzealous French king,⁵² fearful of their power and greedy for their wealth we reach a dangerous paroxysm.

This was the time when, after the loss of the Latin kingdoms, for which many held them responsible, Templars retreated from *Outremer*. In spite of their losses on the battle fields, they still amounted to some thirty thousand knights, five thousand of them French, according to Mannier.⁵³ Many, however, had passed their primes which did not inspire the viability of the Order. After 1291 they, as well as the Hospitallers, became based in Cyprus. Here, they were in a position to plan their return for the reconquest of the Holy Land. In the meantime, without an immediate war to fight, the Order became, *de facto*, a “financial power house” as Frale⁵⁴ calls it. Over time, the result was a transformation of the Order. The development of new activities—custody and investment of funds to finance future crusades—mainly based in Europe required skills and abilities not easily found among knights but rather either among “hommes de métier,” i.e. sergeants, former artisans, shop keepers, people engaged in commerce at any level or, at least, among people issued from this social milieu and acquainted with its practices. Though the administrative positions that issued from these developments some of the

*In 1207 Pope Innocent III had denounced them for their excess: “Employing doctrines worthy of demons, they give their cross to every tramp who can pay two or three pence a year.”

*In 1224 Urban IV degraded and excommunicated the Grand Marshall, Etienne de Sissi, because he had refused to submit to papal authority and taken arms against the See of Peter.

*Clement IV (1265-1268) pointed out to them that they had gained enmity of all the kings and princes of Christendom.

⁵² Philip IV, the grandson of Louis IX, had forcefully and successfully lobbied for the canonization of his ancestor and wanted to be recognized as “the most Christian king” in Europe, with the French Church under his control (Gallicanism, see *infra*).

⁵³ Mannier 1872, xvi. Even approximate numbers are hard to come by. The number given by Zinn may refer to French knights only.

⁵⁴ Frale 2009, 138.

new administrators rose to positions of great power within the Order. The result, as Frale⁵⁵ puts it, is that:

In the final years of the thirteenth century, there were two poles of power within the Temple: one in Cyprus composed primarily of soldiers still engaged in diplomatic dialogue with Christian governments in the East to devise new plans for taking back the Holy Land and one in the West, led by financier-sergents and knights with administrative and diplomatic posts for whom maintaining good relations with the rulers of Europe was the top priority.

With the Grand Master, Guillaume de Beaujeu, fallen at the siege of Acre, Jacques de Molay, who had had a brilliant career, was eventually elected with the support of the military faction against Hugh de Perraud. Hugh had served for thirty years in the West, in diplomatic posts and as commander of important houses. To conciliate both parties, a deal was struck whereby Jacques de Molay became Grand Master of the Order based in the East, while Hugh de Perraud was appointed at the second most important post as Visitor General based in the West. Furthermore, Perraud received Molay's proxy "granting the right to act as his plenipotentiary to assist the pope in case of need without having to wait for approval from Cyprus."

This effectively gave the Order a two-headed structure, a temporary arrangement contingent upon the historical situation. This worked well until early in 1307 when the Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, had to return from the East, summoned by the pope, as we shall subsequently see. As required by the Order's bylaws, he then checked the books and found that an enormous loan (300,000 gold florins) had been made to the French king by the treasurer, Jean de la Tour, with, presumably, the authorization of the Visitor General, Hugh de Perraud. Molay was not pleased. The pope, however, doubtless to smooth things over with the king, directed Molay to reinstate the treasurer that he had just fired and to maintain Perraud as Visitor General. Molay obeyed but was greatly offended.

At his return to the West in March 1307, the Grand Master of the Order, however, together with a considerable retinue, opted for reestablishing themselves in Paris at their Temple house, a *de facto* fortress in the heart of the Ile-de-la-Cité,⁵⁶ facing the Louvre, the king's palace. As Mannier comments, "Having such hosts in his own neighborhood was not designed to make the king feel secure." He knew their spirit of independence and

⁵⁵ Ibid 139.

⁵⁶ It served as prison during the French Revolution and was razed to the ground in 1811.

their great wealth; he was also aware of his enormous financial indebtedness to them. In fact, the temple in Paris was a kind of bank and finance ministry for the king.

3.5 Denunciations, Arrestations, Trial—The End of the Order

For centuries, the end of the Order of the Temple has been even more obscure than its beginning. This has been fertile ground for speculations, some serious, but many more the brain concoctions of conspiracy theorists of diverse talents and views. However, in the last decade, thanks to the fortuitous discoveries of documents in the secret archives of the Vatican, and to a renewed interest in the question by well-trained scholars, it is now possible to form a clearer view of the events that led to the extinction of the Order.

3.5.1 Denunciations and Rumors

At the turn of the fourteenth century the French king, Philip IV, The Fair, was unhappy with the Templars. He wanted to mount a new crusade to retake the Holy Land and thought that both the Order of the Temple and that of the Hospitallers should be fused into a single entity in order to increase military coordination of the campaign. This proposal, however, was opposed by the Grand Masters of both orders, Jacques de Molay and Fulk de Villaret respectively. One of the goals of Philip, besides the reconquest of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, was to extend French influence over areas under Byzantine control, notably Armenia.⁵⁷ The opposition of the orders greatly frustrated his ambitions. This must be seen in the context of the conflict between king and papacy with the king vying for control of the French church with the support of a number of French bishops and cardinals. His goal was to make the French church independent of the church of Rome,⁵⁸ what Henry VIII would manage with the English church centuries later. If this could succeed, the king would also control the orders, at least the French part of them. This would therefore considerably enhance his military power.

Having control of the orders would also give him direct control of their wealth—a very powerful attraction for the king of a nearly bankrupt country.

⁵⁷ Haag (2009, 214) goes as far as saying that “[Philip the IV’s] ambition was to conquer the Christian Byzantine Empire and to establish himself on the ancient imperial throne at Constantinople.”

⁵⁸ This current that existed in the French church for centuries is known as Gallicanism.

Though the prestige of the Templars remained high, the secret aspect of their organization led readily then, as it would now, to speculations and rumors. Such rumors had been put into circulation by some defecting members but also by the king's agents⁵⁹ who had infiltrated the Order. These rumors related in particular to the initiation ceremonies where hazings of a gross and obscene nature were allegedly taking place. Worse even, and more damning, were the suspicions of heresy such as idol worship and secret conversion to Islam, or the Cathar faith.

While his lawyers were secretly preparing their indictments "the king was defaming the Order's most eminent members in the various courts of Europe."⁶⁰ Under pressure from the king, the pope, Clement V, had to act. He summoned the Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, from Cyprus for an explanation and asked for a copy of the rule of the Order. This rule had been drawn under the guidance of Bernard of Clairvaux nearly three-quarters of a century before. It contained the complete text of the initiation ceremony.⁶¹ "Both the leader who officiated at the ritual and the postulants followed a precise script." The recruit was examined three times, shown the rule and had to swear complete obedience to the commands of his superiors. He then received his mantle and was officially a member of the Order in all respects. This ended the scripted part of the initiation. However, as Frale has been able to show through her careful analysis of many trial testimonies, another part of the ceremony, following a purely oral tradition, took place immediately after. The new recruit was taken to a secluded place where the initiator said: "All the words you have made to us are empty words. Now you will have to prove yourself with deeds."⁶² It is here that the recruit was asked to deny Christ, spit on the cross, and kiss the initiator on the mouth, the belly, and buttocks, and sometimes even the penis. When the recruit refused he might have been subjected to beating, threatened with

⁵⁹ Frale 2009, 151: "As many as twelve spies were charged to join the Order and live peacefully among the Templars and collect any information that could be used against them."

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Frale (2009, 160) explains "When Bernard of Clairvaux delineated the rigid ethical and disciplinary code of the Templars, he was perfectly aware that this way of life would not be accessible to everyone. For this reason, he insisted on inserting into the text of the rule a clause exhorting the leaders of the Order not to accept new vocations too hurriedly but rather to subject candidates to a test to ascertain their character and commitment. The exact nature of the text is unclear. Bernard elegantly alluded to St. Paul's advice to 'put them to the test to see if they come from God.'"

It is probably this clause which may be at the origin of the secret hazing to which recruits were submitted (see *infra*).

⁶² Frale 2009, 163-164.

a sword on his throat, with prison and even death. Though the rule forbade sexual contact with any other person, the recruit was told in some places that if he could not be chaste, to unite with his brothers and not to refuse them if solicited. “In practice, all the candidate has to do,” says Frale, “was to submit to those words in silence with no signs of rebellion as proof of his obedience.”

At the end of this hazing, the new Templar was taken to the chaplain where he confessed his new sins and asked for forgiveness. Upon sincere repentance, he was absolved. The trouble was when some new Templar also confessed to priests outside the temple, notably Dominicans or Franciscans, “ignorant of the real function of the secret ceremony. They increased the fears and the disquiet of the recruits rather than comfort them and no doubt fed the rumor mill. The reasons for this kind of hazing were never mentioned to the recruits except that it was a test of their obedience. But from the trial records initiators themselves didn’t seem to be very clear about it either. One of the problems that came to light in the papal inquiry was the secrecy of the actual rule. Though the recruit was “shown” the rule—he didn’t read it— only the part of it that applied to his specific duty was disclosed to him orally. Only the grand Master and his close circle of advisers (his “companions”) had the complete text and presumably knew it.

“The best informed opinion within the Order about the function of this strange [initiation] practice identified it as a test of courage and martial disposition,” concludes Frale.⁶³ Though this kind of “scurrilous barrack antics” may be construed as a form of humiliation that often takes place in secret or exclusive organizations, the fact remains that, on the face of it, it constituted “acts of repudiation of the faith, typical of heretics” as Frale notes.⁶⁴ To understand this strange ritual more fully, a wider context is required. A clue to this larger view may be given by another event that is also sometimes reported within this “hazing” and that is the worship of a “head,” sometimes referred to by the made-up name of “Baphomet.”⁶⁵ This “head,” as convincingly shown by Frale, would be

⁶³ Frale (2009, 1660) and Haag (2009, 223) see it as a “preparation for the worst in Outremer, for that day when they might be captured and thrown into a Muslim dungeon, be tortured or face execution unless they abjured their faith.”

⁶⁴ Frale 2009, 157. A point on which the lawyers of Philip IV will base their indictments.

⁶⁵ Said to be a deformation of the pronunciation of “Mahomet.”

nothing but what is now known as the “Shroud of Turin”⁶⁶ that would have come into Templars’ hands sometime after the sack of Constantinople in 1204. If the top echelon of the Templars, Grand Master and companions, truly believed the Shroud to be an authentic image of Christ, a true icon and true relic⁶⁷ that had direct contact with the body of Christ, a mere representation of a cross in comparison was nothing sacred in itself. Therefore spitting on it and denying it amounted to no more than spitting on the ground or in the air.⁶⁸ The fact that only the Grand Master and his inner circle knew this, though recruits and even initiators were kept ignorant of it did not lessen in any way the virtue of the relic and its effect on the participants, nor make them guilty of heresy in the eyes of those who knew. As good soldiers, recruits and initiators were following orders and strictly adhering to the rule enjoining them to obey orders of their superiors. Furthermore, by confessing sincerely afterwards they received absolution. The slate was wiped clean.

Fräle writes:

At the conclusion of the inquest, the pope understood that the strange custom perpetuated by the Order as a compulsory test required new Templars to deny Christ and spit on the cross. Although it was an unworthy tradition that the Templars had further embellished with other vulgar and violent practices, under no circumstances could it be confused with heresy, an offense that implied a strict and long-term adherence to subversive doctrines.

The Templars’ crime, therefore, was tolerating the development of this shameful ritual and failing to eradicate it or denounce it to the higher authority of the pope.

That is a far cry from heresy.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Folded in such a way that only the head is exposed in this case. See *infra*, section 3.6.

⁶⁷ “The Templars were ascribed the capacity to distinguish true relics from false ones... King Louis IX asked for the Templars’ advice during his search in the Byzantine empire for the most important relics from Christ’s suffering and death” (Fräle 2009, 87).

There were, of course, many reasons why knowledge of the true nature of this relic was not disclosed among Templars except for the very top. One might be its invaluable price and the desire to keep it as protection for the Order. However, having been charged by King Louis IX to search for the most important relics of Christ’s suffering and death, there is no doubt that the Templars should have turned the relic over to the king in the first place rather than keeping it for their own purpose and that to have done so was a grave fault against the king, akin to lese-majesty or high treason.

Had the Templars done what they were supposed to do, the Shroud would have no doubt ended up in the Sainte Chapelle in Paris, no doubt. But then it would have certainly followed the same fate as the other relics stored there during the French Revolution and been destroyed.

⁶⁸ One is reminded of the Buddhist story where a monk on a journey in the cold of winter takes refuge with his companion in a temple and decides to burn a wooden statue of the Buddha to get warm and explains this to his bemused companion by saying, “It is just a piece of wood. The Buddha is not burned.”

⁶⁹ Another point to take into consideration in order to understand these rituals is to place them in the context of medieval civilization. As we previously saw, these types of apparently sacrilegious, if not heretical acts were, for a long period, well tolerated in the medieval church, witness the *Fêtes des Fous* already mentioned. The tenacity, however, with which these “ceremonies” kept up through centuries in spite of the efforts of the Church as time went on to try to eliminate them, shows how deeply rooted they

3.5.2 Arrests and Trial

The Templars being under the direct authority of the pope were therefore subject to canon, (i.e. Church) law, not royal authority. Canon law traditionally was such that, in cases of heresy, the Church made the arrests, then proceeded with the trials and, in case of a culpability verdict, released the convict to the secular authority for execution of the sentence. However, in the early part of the thirteenth century, at the height of the frenetic campaign against Catharism in the south of France and northern Italy, the Inquisitor for France was given extraordinary powers by Pope Honorius III. This amounted to giving him proxy for papal power to investigate, arrest, and try on suspicion of heresy members of certain religious orders⁷⁰ normally exempt from such procedures. This proxy was left dormant and forgotten in the course of some eighty years following the crisis and Philip IV's lawyers, headed by Guillaume de Nogaret,⁷¹ were to take full advantage of it to achieve their ends.

Based on a selection of the information gathered by the royal spies relating particularly to the initiation ceremonies and slanting its presentation for their purpose, these lawyers built a case of heresy and crime against religion which they presented to the French Inquisitor, the Franciscan Guillaume de Paris. The Franciscans, not always following the example of universal brotherhood of their founder, had no great love for the Templars and Guillaume, shocked by the specific revelations, was in agreement with the king to act immediately without delaying the procedure as authorized by the proxy thereby bypassing the pope.

The royal propaganda machine under the direction of Guillaume de Nogaret then went in high gear, spreading rumors of heresy, sodomy, blasphemy, idol worship against

tend to become in popular consciousness. It may be appropriate to reconsider here the quote of Bakhtin previously referenced to see how apposite it is to this case, emphasizing that these two lives in the experience of "medieval man"—the official, serious, gloomy, hierarchical, etc. and the other, free, vulgar, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemies, profanations, obscenities—are both legitimized, but divided by strict temporal borders. These borders here are very clear and distinct, marked by the receiving of the mantle on the one hand and being sent to confession on the other. What is interesting and illuminating to notice is the apparent understanding of this process on the part of the pope Clement V, who absolved the Templars and the deliberate ignorance of it by the king and his men who are obviously using this intentional ignorance as a tool in their effort at conviction.

⁷⁰ These so-called exempt orders were the Templars, the Hospitallers, and the Cistercians.

⁷¹ Guillaume de Nogaret was the king's "Keeper of the Seals" i.e. his top lawyer or justice minister. He had led an attempt to kidnap Pope Boniface VIII in 1303 on the orders of Philip IV and had been excommunicated since. Known for his cleverness and cynicism, he was the king's chief advisor and henchman.

the Order. Nogaret himself and French cardinals of the royal party made public announcements to stunned crowds. Franciscans under the instruction of Guillaume de Paris denounced the Templars in their sermons. On September 14, 1307, a top secret royal edict was sent to all police authorities in France to arrest all Templars⁷² on Friday, October 13, 1307 and have them immediately interrogated.

Interrogation under “ecclesiastical procedure” meant being subject to a type of physical torture where no limb was broken or blood drawn⁷³ as might be the case in secular procedures. On October 13, as ordered, bewildered Templars were arrested throughout France. As Templars were arrested, Clement V, himself a fine canon lawyer, realized but too late that he had overlooked the proxy.

Confessions were soon obtained, since, indeed, the accusations, slanted as they had been by the royal lawyers, rested on some factual evidence gathered at the initiation ceremonies. In less than two weeks enough confessions had been recorded, including that of Jacques de Molay, the Grand Master, to be sent to the pope as proof of heresy.

The pope and his curia were gathered at Poitiers and thus vulnerable to the king who had already attempted, through the agency of Nogaret, to kidnap Boniface VIII,⁷⁴ one of Clement V’s predecessors. To regain control, the pope issued a bull⁷⁵ requesting “Kings and princes of Christendom to arrest Templars in their lands and hold their property in safe keeping for the Church.”⁷⁶ Applying to Christendom as a whole, it necessarily applied to France. The implication was that the case against the Order was put under the authority of the papacy and removed from the king’s. Then the pope sent two cardinals to Paris with power to excommunicate the king and place the whole country under interdict. The pope suspended the French Inquisition. Philip IV consented to

⁷² The writ of arrestation began with the sentence: “Dieu n’est pas content, nous avons des ennemis de la foi dans le royaume...” (“God is not happy, we have enemies of the faith within the kingdom.”) Thus put, heresy, the most potent inculcation could be anchored firmly in the mind of the Inquisition as well as the public.

⁷³ These, routinely included, being kept chained in isolation and fed on bread and water; being drawn on the rack until the joints were dislocated; being raised over a beam by a rope tied to the wrists that had been bound behind the victim’s back; having fat rubbed into the soles of the feet which were then placed before a fire—one tortured Templar priest being so badly burned that the bones fell out of his feet. (Haag 2009, 223).

⁷⁴ The incident took place at Anagni, the pope’s summer palace and his birth place. The attempt failed because the townspeople came to his rescue and drove Nogaret and his men out (Haag 2009, 213).

⁷⁵ *Pastoralis preeminantiae*, Nov. 22, 1307.

⁷⁶ Haag 2009, 275.

release to the pope seventy-two Templars, including the Grand Master, Jacques de Molay and four other high officers.⁷⁷ However, before they reached Poitiers the Grand Master and his officers were diverted to Chinon, a fortress on the Loire River, where they were imprisoned by the king. The pope interviewed those who reached Poitiers and determined that these were not heretics though they were not innocent either. Even if their apparent apostasy was for pretend only as they denied Christ, spat on the cross, and exchanged kisses with the initiator, they could be forgiven but had to repent and submit to punishment. The king, however, refused to release the officers held at Chinon. In the summer of 1308, the pope then sent secretly three of his most trusted cardinals to Chinon as a special apostolic commission with full papal authority. They manage to see these officers and question them. The record of this interview has only recently been unearthed⁷⁸ and throws a whole different light on the end of the Knights Templar.

As Michael Haag⁷⁹ writes:

The document reveals that the pope found no heresy among the Templars and granted absolution to its leaders. .. Fatally, however, the pope delayed making his absolution public owing to the extreme passions of the time.

Worried that the Templars would fight back, Philip IV used one of his nominees, the Archbishop of Sens to reopen his Episcopal inquiry against individual Templars in his diocese. The archbishop dutifully found fifty-four Templars to be relapsed heretics and handed them over to civil authority. On May 12, 1310 they were burned at the stake. This burning had a chilling effect on the rest of the Templars.

⁷⁷ Raimbald of Craon, Master of Cyprus; Geoffrey of Charney, Master of Normandy; Geoffrey of Gonneville, Master of Poitou and Aquitaine; and Hugh de Pairaud, Visitor.

⁷⁸ Frale 2004.

⁷⁹ Haag 2009, 232.



Fig. 7 Burning of the Temple in Paris

3.5.3 The End of the Order

On March 22, 1312 by the bull *Vox in Excelso* the pope declared that the Order was being suppressed because of being too defamed to keep operating effectively. Templars though, themselves, were not condemned. On May 2 the new bull, *Ad Providam*, deeded all Templars' properties to the Order of the Hospitallers. Thus the Templars were, in fact, absolved of heresy and Philip IV deprived of the object of his greed, namely the wealth of the Templars.

The Chinon papal judgment having remained secret, the case of the leaders of the Order who had remained in royal custody were brought before a small commission of French cardinals and churchmen devoted to the king's cause. On the basis of their earlier confession and in the absence of the knowledge of the pope's bull, they were condemned to prison for life. Both the Grand Master and the Master of Normandy then claimed their innocence and denied everything they had confessed under duress. The king immediately had them condemned as relapsed heretics and on the same evening their bodies were but a puff of smoke and a handful of ashes.

That both the pope Clement V died barely a month later on April 20 of a long illness and the king, Philip IV, on November 29th of the same year, from a fall from his horse startled by a wild boar has been seen by many as an effect of immanent justice.

Mannier concludes that "the true cause that brought such a tragic dénouement has to be found less in the crimes imputed to the Templars than in the fear and cupidity of Philip IV who wanted to be free from an Order that overshadowed him and of which he mainly coveted the wealth.

3.6 *The Templars and the Shroud of Turin*⁸⁰

⁸⁰ The Turin Shroud is a piece of linen said to have been used to wrap the body of Christ when he was taken down from the cross. It bears the brownish, reddish imprint of a man who suffered crucifixion. Since 1578 it has been kept in the royal chapel of the Cathedral of Turin, Italy. The first scientific study of the shroud goes back to 1902 when Yves Delage, a French professor of anatomy working at the Station Biologique de Roscoff in Brittany, found the image consistent with being formed by direct contact with the corpse of a crucified. Subsequent anatomical studies have confirmed these findings. Further chemical analysis of the cloth itself, including radiocarbon dating, tests for pigments, dirt particles, blood stains, pollen, etc. are not entirely conclusive and have been subject to critiques by experts. Recent Carbon 14 testing ("Le Rouleau de la Disgrâce," in *Sciences et Avenir*, No 759, May 2010, 50-61) have pushed its probable date to the sixth century, but again this is disputed. Certain experts continue to see it as a medieval forgery, a position already taken in 1390 by Bishop Pierre D'Arcis.

The recent work of Barbara Frale⁸¹ on a little known record of interrogation of the Templars by the Inquisition has brought considerable new light on the trials and particularly on the Templars themselves, their practices, and their dismal end. As we previously saw, one of these practices had reference to “the worship of an ‘idol’ in the form of a ‘head’ called “Baphomet” according to the charges against them.” Frale, as well as numerous other scholars, now think that they can identify that head with the face shown on the Shroud of Turin. The origin of this line of inquiry apparently started with the suggestion by the Oxford scholar Ian Wilson⁸² in 1978 that the Shroud might have been in the possession of the Templars.

Based on this suggestion, Frale, who was then a graduate student in history at the University Ca’Foscari of Venice working on a thesis relating to the Templars, picked up the thread in 1998. Her later association with the Vatican secret archives facilitated and expanded her research. What follow is, in large part, based on her work.

Though the authenticity of the Shroud may be in doubt, its ancient existence is not. A letter dated 1205⁸³ from a Byzantine aristocrat to Pope Innocent III complained of the fact that the Franks who sacked Byzantium in 1204 during the fourth crusade had taken as booty the relics of saints and, with them, “the linen in which our Lord Jesus

Barbara Frale, however, who studied the shroud meticulously following traditional historical methods, has come to the conclusion that “the Shroud dates from the first century of our era. In actual fact...the first thirty years of that century.” (“New Light on the Shroud” in *Messenger of St. Anthony*, 2011, an Interview by Renzo Allegri).

Dr. Frale claims that, with the help of other scholars, she has deciphered on the Shroud itself the faint outlines of letters in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew which amount to the death certificate of Jesus the Nazarene. However, as she points out, “on the Shroud we have found the words ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ so we are authorized, from the historical point of view to conclude that this is the shroud of Jesus of Nazareth. Now to determine if the Jesus of Nazareth that was enveloped in that shroud is the same individual of whom the Gospels speak is beyond my task and competence as a historical scientist.”

In March 2013 a new book by Guillio Fanti of the University of Padua and journalist Saverio Gaeta: *The Mystery of the Shroud*, dates the cloth to the first century, based on chemical and mechanical tests on fibers of material extracted for the carbon-dating research (*The Bergen Record*, March 31, 2013, A5).

In an article titled, “The Secret Tradition,” retrieved 8/17/2013 from the internet, Margaret Barker (1993, 18) points out that “Jerome quotes the lost *Gospel of the Hebrews* which says that Jesus gave his linen shroud to the high priest’s servant after the Resurrection and then appeared to James the Righteous, who was one of Jesus’ family and another of the three associated with the secret tradition. He was also the first bishop of the Jerusalem church.”

Would this be the shroud that will be later known as the “Shroud of Turin”?

In any case, whether the Shroud is authentic or not is a question left open by the Vatican where the Shroud is regarded as an icon of Christ and as far as the Templars are concerned, what matters is what they believed about it, not its actual authenticity.

⁸¹ Frale 2011, 14.

⁸² Wilson 1984.

⁸³ Haag 2009, 238.

Christ was wrapped after his death and before his resurrection.” This shroud would have then been in the possession of the emperor of Constantinople at the time.

In April 2009, in a document containing the record of the interrogation of some Knights Templar from a commanderie located in Roussillon,⁸⁴ Frale found the testimony of a young French man, Arnaut Sabbatier, who entered the Order in 1287.⁸⁵ According to the record he indicated that

during his initiation, he was taken to a ‘secret place to which only the brothers of the temple had access’ where he was shown ‘a long linen cloth on which was imprinted the figure of a man’s body and he was told to venerate the image by kissing its feet three times.’

His description is quite compatible with that of the Shroud of Turin as it appears to us. Another Templar, Guillaume Bos, who was received in the commanderie of Pérouse, near Narbonne, in 1297 was also shown a similar image of a cloth.⁸⁶

To Frale this is a strong suggestion that what is known today as the Shroud of Turin was in the possession of the Templars probably since 1204 and that it served in initiation ceremonies for a century afterwards in some of the commanderies.⁸⁷

Another Templar, Jean Taylafer, interrogated in the diocese of Langres,⁸⁸ speaks of “a kind of drawing with an ill-defined shape, and he could only distinguish the image of a human face.” Ask about its color, he answered that “it seemed reddish to him.”

Furthermore, a discovery made during World War II at the former commanderie of Templecombe⁸⁹ in England of a thirteenth century wood panel bearing the representation of a “Christic” face similar to that of the Shroud would suggest, according to Simonetta Cerrini,⁹⁰ another Italian historian of the Templars, that “the use of the same iconographic traditions for producing this face is proof that whoever painted this portrait at the time was inspired by a model to which they had had access somewhere.”

⁸⁴ An ancient French province close to Languedoc in the eastern Pyrénées.

⁸⁵ The article “Les derniers jours des Templiers” in *Science et Avenir*, Juillet 2010, p. 58 indicates the date of 1297, which seems more realistic if Arnaut was still to be considered a “young man” in 1307 by medieval standards.

⁸⁶ Frale 2011, 99.

⁸⁷ As Frale points out (2009, 65-66) “Only a small tiny minority of the Templars who appeared in the trial were able to say anything at all on this phantom object... Out of 1114 testimonies recorded during the trial only 130 included even a hint of the idol... Only 52 statements give any information at all about it, i.e. 4.6% of the total.

⁸⁸ A city some 150 miles southeast of Paris.

⁸⁹ Ralls 2007, 199-202.

⁹⁰ Cerrini 2007.

This may explain in part the nature and origin of the mysterious “head of Baphomet” allegedly worshipped by the Templars⁹¹ according to the Inquisition’s indictment. However, some researchers look also for clues in other directions to try to understand what these heads were about. Cerrini adds “[It is also known that] Templars had in their possession “cephalothèques”—reliquaries containing craniums and they may have held the bust of their founder, Hugh of Payens.”

It would therefore appear that if the actual shroud was shown to some new recruits, others were only shown a partial copy of it,⁹² simply the head, or even perhaps just a reliquary that may have contained it. It is obvious that the relic of the Shroud would have been kept in a very secure place and not allowed to travel very frequently whenever an initiation occurred somewhere. That its likely presence should be mentioned in Rousillon and near Narbonne, i.e. the region around Carcassonne where the Cathar heresy was rife and where the Inquisition held court, is of course of great interest. One of the Cathar beliefs was that Jesus didn’t have a true human body but only the appearance of a man and neither died on the cross nor was resurrected. The Shroud therefore would be a physical evidence to counter that belief. Consequently it might be a useful relic to present to recruits who might have had contacts with the heresy. However, from the documents— answers by Templars to questions from the inquisitors—it doesn’t appear that recruits were told at initiation, or even after, the nature of what they were shown.⁹³

Nothing seems to be known of the whereabouts of the Shroud after the dissolution of the Order in 1312.⁹⁴ It makes its public appearance in either 1353 or 1357 in the village of Lirey,⁹⁵ where it was displayed in the parochial church by the widow of

⁹¹ This was one of the specific charges against them (Haag 2009, 222). When Templars interrogated by the Inquisition spoke of a three-dimensional head, they probably were referring to a reliquary that may have contained the Shroud or an image of it that would have been put in contact with it in order to gain some of the force of its virtue as a relic.

⁹² In fact, three or four churches claim to hold the relic of the shroud.

⁹³ As Frale (2011, 102) remarks: “Most monks [Templars] were ignorant, but among the dignitaries there were some educated persons.” It is also probable that the more educated among the Templars held the belief that it was unnecessary to mention the nature of the relic, since its virtue would operate on the initiate irrespective of what he knew about it.

⁹⁴ The following is based on material found on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/shroud_of_Turin.

⁹⁵ Situated near Troyes, the capital of Champagne, in a region from which Hugh of Payens, founder of the Order, originated, Lirey is a small village that numbers today 90 inhabitants, probably about the same number as in the fourteenth century.

Geoffrey of Charney, nephew of his namesake, the Master of the Order in Normandy, who was burned at the stake, together with Jacques de Molay, the Grand Master.

In 1390, the local bishop, Pierre D'Arcy, in a letter to the antipope Clement VII declared it a forgery and said that the artist had confessed. In 1453 Margaret of Charny deeded the Shroud to the House of Savoy, who kept it until 1983 when, in turn, the latter deeded it to the Vatican.

What are the implications of all this diversion regarding the Templars and the Shroud as far as we are concerned in this study? First, the new information that has recently emerged continues to demythologize the Templars and to exonerate them from the charge of heresy on which they were brought to trial. Second, it confirms their belief in the power of relics,⁹⁶ one of their reputations being their expertise in identifying relics. By not disclosing to their recruits the nature of the Shroud they appeared to be confident that its power would naturally, or supernaturally, flow from the relic to the recruit without his knowing intellectually what he was contemplating and venerating. In a sense it was another test of their obedience, their beliefs and attachment to traditional orthodoxy. Finally, apart from their possible contribution to the Western Portals of Chartres previously mentioned, it makes their direct involvement with the design and construction of the Cathedral an unlikely event.

Whether the Templars at Chartres saw this relic known as the Shroud of Turin or a replica that might have been in contact with it is not known and, in itself, does not seem to matter in relation to the cathedral design and construction. However, it leads us to consider its connection to the Grail with which Templars have also and often been involved.

3.7 The Templars and the Grail

There is an abundant, imaginative, late literature linking the Templars to the Grail but less than scant evidence that any such connection ever existed. The mysterious Grail is a mythical object that springs from ancient Celtic legends. These legends form the raw

⁹⁶ Templars originally wore a thread around the waist as a reminder of their vow of chastity. Later that thread was considered as a protection having been put in contact before being given to them, with a potent relic. This practice of wearing a piece of clothing that had been in contact with a relic was something that was commonly done at Chartres, where secular knights would have one of their vestments made to touch the pallium of the Virgin kept in the Cathedral before setting out for Outremer.

material at the basis of the medieval romances known as *Matière de Bretagne*, which include the Arthurian cycle. Here they were given a Christian theme. Chrétien de Troyes appears to have been one of the first writers to work with this material in his *Perceval* or *Le Conte du Graal*, beginning around 1181. Chrétien died in 1190 before completing his poem and this unhappy circumstance gave rise to a happy literary proliferation throughout the ages and on to our own— numerous stories invented by imaginative writers competing to complete Chrétien's work. Among them, and probably the first, one must count Robert de Boron, who composed a verse romance, *Joseph d'Arimathie*, around the turn of the thirteenth century. Here the Grail is identified with the chalice Christ used at the Last Supper. This chalice, it is said, came into the hands of Joseph of Arimathea, who used it to collect blood from the wounds of Christ.

Whereas in Chrétien's story, the Grail is but a grail (un graal), i.e. in Old French a serving dish which, in the story, carries a single communion wafer, in other accounts the Grail turns out to be all sorts of other things. Thus it may be a silver platter, a bleeding white lance, a sword, a secret book, manna from heaven, a blinding light, a severed head, a table, a luminous, pure stone, the goal of a spiritual search, on and on, yet always and ultimately a mystery.⁹⁷

As the Grail is different things in different circumstances and to different people, and as the stories are most diverse, one cannot speak of *a* legend of the Grail. There are many.

The first writer to associate the Grail with the Templars is Wolfram von Eschenbach in *Parzifal* about 1220. Yet he does it indirectly rather than directly, since the knights guarding the Grail are not called Knights Templar (*Tempelherren* in German) but the evocative *Templeisen* (i.e. something like Templists).⁹⁸ For him, the castle where the Grail is kept is Jerusalem. As Nicholson points out:⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Nicholson 2004, 243.

⁹⁸ A medieval illustration for Eschenbach's *Perzifal*, published by Nicholson (2004, 39) and also Plate II in Barber (2005, 208-209) *The Holy Grail*, shows *Templeisen* in the bottom part of the picture. These figures do not look like real Templars, comments Nicholson. Indeed Templars sported beards and were clad in a white mantle or cape with a red cross over the upper left arm and the mantle covered a tunic of dark material. Here the personages are clean shaven and they wear colored robes, respectively brown and blue. They have long hair like secular knights. They also are decorated on the cheeks, across the lips, and on the palm of their hands with double red lines. Indeed all figures throughout the illustration carry the same markings, some on their forehead, even the participants in the Grail feast which appears to be a reenactment of the Last Supper in the upper part of the picture as well as in the reunion of Parzifal and Kondwiramurs in

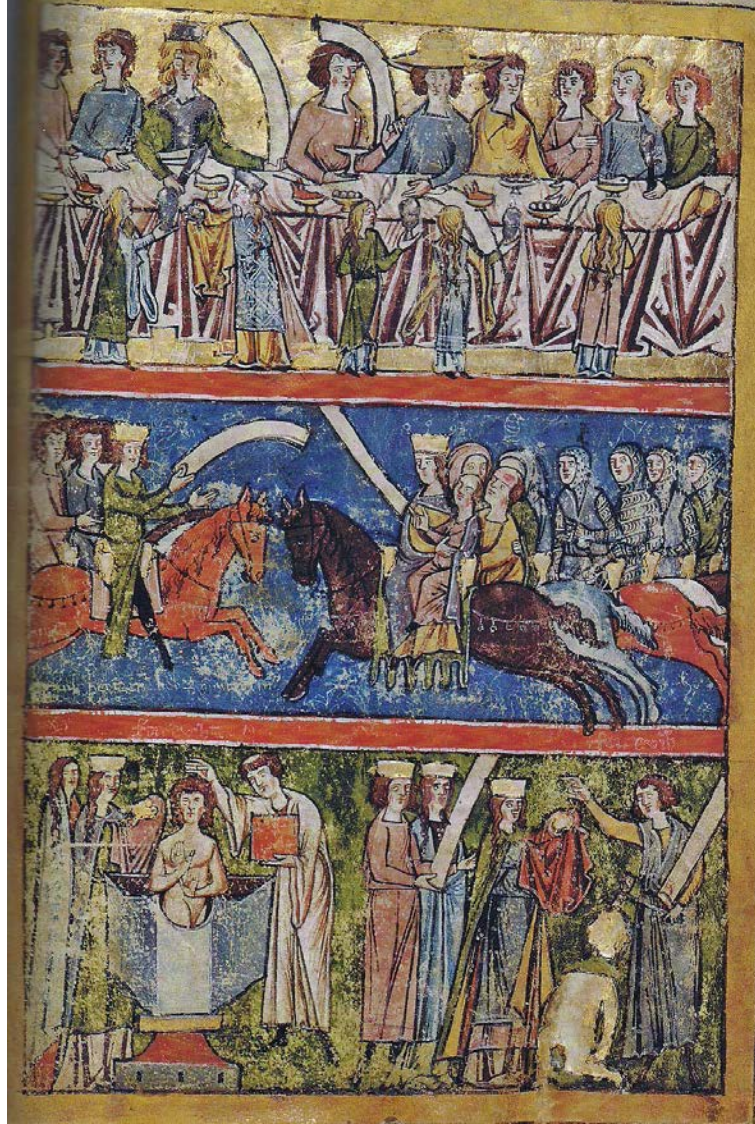


Fig. 8 Illustrations for Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*

There has been some speculation that the Templars were involved in the development of the Legend of the Holy Grail, but careful reading [of the so-called 'Templar of Tyre's' *Itinerarium Peregrinorum*] reveals that this couldn't have been the case. The concept of knighthood in the Grail legends is different from the Templar ideal: the Grail knight acts

the middle section of the picture and the baptism of Feirefiz in the lower section. The meaning of these markings is not clear.

In the later part of the fourteenth century, perhaps stimulated by Wolfram's concept, Otto von Habsburg, Duke of Austria, formed a society of knights called *Templaist* or *Templois*. These were, of course, unconnected with the Templars, dissolved more than three quarters of a century before. Any connection, in any case, would have incurred the anathema of the Church. (See Barber 2005, 179).

⁹⁹ Nicholson (2004, 152) points out, the "Templar of Tyre," in fact, was not a Templar but had been secretary to the Grand Master, Guillaume de Beaujeu.

alone, not as part of a community.

She concludes,¹⁰⁰ and this shall also be our conclusion, that:

there is no direct connection between the Grail legends and the Templars...The Grail stories set out the way in which knights can reach God, by themselves, with little help from the institutionalized church... through their own personal quest and by acting as knights should...The Order of the Temple offered knights a completely different way of finding God.

However, though Templars and Grail may have no connection¹⁰¹ there may be a relation between the Cathedral and the Grail as the geometry of the Cathedral seems to reveal to us.¹⁰² In the elite of a society saturated with chivalric literature as the thirteenth century was, where the deeds of the knights and search for the Grail are followed as movie characters in Star Trek today, or the adventures of Harry Potter for a younger generation, one cannot discount its influence on the fancy of clerics and architects and its concomitant effect on architectural design.

3.8. *Esoterism and the Templars*

That a whole tissue of legends has been weaved involving the Templars has already been mentioned. Its beginning may perhaps be found in the *Parzival* of Wolfram von Eschenbach, who was probably the first to associate the Templars with the Grail. Other medieval legends of the Grail, though they may involve knights, do not mention the Templars.¹⁰³ It is essentially since the Reformation and particularly from the

¹⁰⁰ Nicholson 2004, 243.

¹⁰¹ This absence of historical evidence has certainly not prevented the imagination of generations of writers from the Middle Ages to our own time to manufacture countless stories. But it is particularly from the eighteenth century on, that imaginings have grown wilder and wilder. Some have them digging for the Ark of the Covenant, believed to have been buried under the temple when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem and burned the Temple in 587 B.C. and discovering undisclosed revelations worthy of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Others, less well intentioned, have the Templars part of innumerable politico-religious conspiracies. There is, for instance, (Nicholson 2004, 243) Charles Cadet de Canicour (1796) who portrayed¹⁰¹ them behind the French Revolution of 1789 and the execution of King Louis XVI in revenge for the death of Jacques de Molay in 1314. Then Joseph von Hammer (1818) turns them into Gnostics. Jumping to post World War II, we find a story that makes them owners of a vast fleet, discovering the New World and bringing back enough silver to pay for the building of Chartres Cathedral. The list could go on—a fertile field for the Dan Browns of this world. Note that Nicholson includes the hypothesis of the Shroud of Turin connection with the Templars, part of the same “parallel universe.” However, her writing predates the publication of Dr. Frale. In addition, as we pointed out (supra, n.80) “as far as the Templars are concerned, what matters is what they believed about the shroud, not its actual authenticity.”

¹⁰² See chapter in the present study devoted to the geometries of the plan.

¹⁰³ Nicholson 2004, 238. The Templars continued to appear in fictional literature throughout the Middle Ages although usually in peaceful roles rather than fighting Muslims... [They appear as] defenders of the

seventeenth century even to our own days that Templars, Grail, conspiracies and other fantastic tales have come together into an imaginary universe of their own devoid of contact with reality. These tales appear to have coincided with the rise of secret or semi-secret societies such as the Freemasons in search of authentic roots. This development occurred apparently first in Scotland and England and spread to France and Germany in the wake of the Romantic Movement. It eventually came to the United States, where it continues, as in Europe, to feed popular imagination and conspiracy theorists, entertainers and cranks.

The Templars were a fighting Order, not particularly known for their architectural or artistic skills.¹⁰⁴ They were fighting men *Outremer* but at home they rather fulfilled the functions of administrators, fund raisers, financiers, bankers, and logisticians. In spite of many accusations they appear to have been generally well disciplined, faithful Catholics devoted to Christ, the Virgin, the Church and the papacy. As a chivalric order, they joined military discipline to monastic rule. This double obedience had made them, in the mind of many, likely to have had some sort of initiatory or esoteric knowledge—monks are taught to pray within the particular tradition of their order and knights are ceremoniously dubbed, again following the tradition of their chivalric order. These initiations, followed by subsequent teaching and training, may be considered as esoteric, since they are destined only to them and not to be dispensed to the multitudes but it certainly does not vouch for the excess of legend.

Historians, who see no indication of any written document or any other form of record on this score, are dismissive of the idea. However, as has often been said, “Absence of record is no record of absence” and the discoveries of the last decade or so have confirmed to a degree the existence of such practices.

This being said, the analogies previously mentioned between the al Aqsa porch and the Royal Portal at Chartres and their conformity with Islamic canon of architecture would be an element showing a probable filiation between esoteric Islamic and Christian

Grail castle in German works...but not in other Grail romances... Their image... [is] almost invariably good.

¹⁰⁴ The Templars’ style, if one may speak of one, might perhaps be best assimilated to the Cistercians’, their spiritual guides, and simply individualized through the presence of a few symbols such as their typical cross. They certainly sponsored the building of churches, chapels, houses, castles and fortresses, as we just saw.

architectural practice.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the recognized preeminence of the “[School] of Chartres in the diffusion of Arabic science in the West until well into the twelfth century—and not diffusion only but for the most successful absorption of this science into the body of Christian learning which was achieved at any time before the thirteenth century” according to Southern,¹⁰⁶ would make plausible the hypothesized argument of Strachan previously mentioned, namely that “the first Templars had found the source of much of the learning which had long been taught in cathedral schools.” Again, the knowledge of the origin of that knowledge itself could easily remain secret, since it involved a circle of “educated and aristocratic few” and though it may not be considered “esoteric or occult” in the strict sense, it certainly may appear so “to the uneducated and ignorant.” Such a knowledge might have been passed on at the time to only a small band of scholars such as those of the School of Chartres, probably, then, the best qualified to receive it. That nothing of that surfaces at the trial nearly two centuries later is therefore understandable, particularly even the additional qualification that it didn’t impinge on heresy, a chief point of indictment.

That the rule of the Order was “a public document, far from secret” as Nicholson states¹⁰⁷ does not mean that some practices in the Order could not be strictly reserved for its full members and not unveiled to outsiders at all, i.e. reserved for the professed knights as opposed to the *homines templi* (*Les hommes de métier*) serving in the commanderies or the congregations of the Templar churches attended by the locals. Indeed, we saw that, if the recruits were “shown” the rule, they did not read it; that they were orally taught only the portion that applied to their duties and that, besides the “official rule,” there existed a secret tradition of hazing whose practices were not recorded except in the memory of the participants and presumably their confessors.

The Christian presence was well established and diverse in the Holy Land in the early centuries of the present era. Christianity, contrary to what is generally and commonly thought, did not start with a single Church that then spread itself out into a multiplicity. On the contrary, right from the start, various churches developed in different locations, each with its own tradition, liturgy, rite, and often its own language and its own

¹⁰⁵ This filiation is discussed in our chapter on the geometries of the building.

¹⁰⁶ Southern 1962, 202.

¹⁰⁷ Nicholson 2004, 27. But as we saw, few among the Templars themselves were fully cognizant of it.

gospel. Thus one finds before the fourth century vibrant communities of Armenian, Maronite, Coptic, Syriac, and Ethiopian Christians. These churches, however, were not isolated, entirely cut off from each other in spite of the geographical distance. As early on the travels of St. Paul testify they maintained communication and contact and were conscious of being part of the one Church of Christ.

The implication is that this Christian diversity added to the need for contact with the local Moslem leaders lived for decades and up to two centuries by Outremer Templars would have rubbed on them and made them, to a degree, familiar with other doctrines that might have been considered “heretical” to Roman canon lawyers. Heer¹⁰⁸ writes:

The Templars were famed and respected for their amicable relations with their Islamic compeers. Personal contacts between Frankish knights and Turco-Arab emirs could lead to genuine friendships, as for example, between Fulk of Anjou, King of Jerusalem and the Regent of Damascus, and between Richard Coeur de Lion and the brother of Saladin, which imprinted themselves deeply on the memory of the West; their resplendent image has been immortalized in courtly epic poetry.

Furthermore, a powerful organization such as a military order with vast financial operations and, of necessity, participating in local politics involving other religious orders, secular authorities both civil and religious surrounded in the hostile environment of an occupied land cannot but lead to tricky alliances in an ever-moving politico-religious context. Again, Heer¹⁰⁹ writes:

Their willful practice of power politics (sometimes in alliance with Islamic leaders) and the cheerful arrogance of their members, all combined to give them a double-edged reputation: If they were respected, admired, and renowned, they were also feared, hated, and envied... Against [their good work: medical care to pilgrims, their chivalry, charitable works, their bravery] must be set the record of their grand and petty political intrigues, their odious personal quarrels, and their collective egoism in these military corporations which turned them into competitive rather than cooperative brotherhoods with no compunction about the betrayal of a brother of a different cloth and allegiance. The growth of these characteristics in that alien country was rapid; by the second generation the members of the orders had often become so very much acclimatized in dress, manners, and customs (both good and bad) that they struck new comers from Europe as half-pagan at the very least.¹¹⁰

This, indeed, was held against them at their trial.

The period we are considering—the second half of the twelfth and the beginning

¹⁰⁸ Heer 1962, 145.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid 134.

¹¹⁰ Note that the very traits previously mentioned (n. 33) are what would make it likely that they were able to gain access to a deeper knowledge of the Islamic tradition of learning.

of the thirteenth century—saw the famous twelfth century Renaissance at its height. We also saw it as a time of strife in society, of instability, wars, and contentions. But, as in the Renaissance that will take place a few centuries hence, it was also a period of transformation and creativity. It is the time when courtly civilization develops.

The tapestry of courtly civilization was created from the interweaving of many strands, Celtic, Moorish, Spanish, and Oriental, together with material of magical, archaic, pre-Christian and anti-Christian (that is, Gnostic and Oriental) origin... Dissimulation and concealment now gained wide currency as artistic devices, since lovers and religious sects had their secret languages and members of small esoteric cliques were made known to each other by signs and symbols, colors and passwords. This art found its master-practitioner in Dante.¹¹¹

This is the period within which the Templars flourished. It should not therefore require a stretch of the imagination to see that in such a cultural climate, not only a certain degree of esoterism could be attributed to the Templars by people outside their orbit, but that the Templars themselves, forming a close-knit and powerful organization within Christendom would naturally be inclined toward similar practices.

Dante (1265-1321) who lived through the Templars' trial and is reputed to have been a tertiary or lay member of the Templars¹¹² takes up their defense as he inveighs, though in veiled terms,¹¹³ against both the King of France and what Dante considers his

¹¹¹ Heer 1962, 158.

¹¹² Based on a medallion in the Vienna Museum representing Dante with, on its back, the letters F.S.K.I.P.F.T interpreted by Eugène Arroux (1793-1859) to mean *Frater, Sacrae Kadosch, Imperialis Principatus, Frater Templarius*. According to Guénon (2004, 5) this interpretation of the first three letters is incorrect. He thinks it should read *Fidei Sanctae Kadosch*. The association of the *Fede Santa*, of which Dante seems to have been a leader, was a tertiary order of Templar filiation, justifying the name *Frater Templarius*; and its dignitaries bore the title of *Kadosch*, a Hebrew word meaning "holy" or "consecrated"... It is not then without reason that Dante takes St. Bernard, who established the rule of the Order of the Temple, as his guide for the completion of his own celestial journey (Paradiso XXXI). Dante has also been made to be a tertiary of the Franciscans.

Both orders were at that time in conflict with the Popes of Avignon—the Templars, because of their wealth and the Franciscans because they clung to their ideal of poverty (Heer, 1962, 366).

¹¹³ Inferno ix, 61-63

O you, who have sanity of intellect,
Look for the doctrine which hides
Under the veil of these strange verses!

And in Convivio t. II, chapter I, speaking of the levels of meaning in his writings, Dante writes, "They may be understood, and they may be explained in four senses."

The traditional senses in which scriptures in the Middle Ages were considered were the literal or historical, the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogical.

tool, Pope Clement V¹¹⁴ whose combined efforts resulted in the suppression of the Order.

If Dante's esoterism was the acme of the genre, the same intellectual approach may be seen at work more than a century before his time in the *littérature courtoise*. From Chrétien de Troyes and his *Tristan* (ca 1170) to the Grail legends in the first third of the thirteenth century, as well as the prose story of Lancelot and Tristan or the *Roman de la Rose* of Guillaume de Lorris, layers upon layers of meanings are to be discovered by the attentive reader.

4. CHARTRES AND THE TEMPLARS

The first three commanderies founded in France by the Templars in the second quarter of the twelfth century were those of Payens, Fontaine, and Sylpe. They were established on the properties deeded by the three most prominent members of the group of nine—Hugh of Payens, who gave his land of Payens near Troyes in Champagne; Payen of Montdidier, who gave his land at Fontaine near the village of Montdidier, while Godefroy of St. Omer had his father, a lord of St. Omer who owned churches in Flanders at Sylpe and Leffinghe, grant those and all their considerable revenues to the nascent Order.¹¹⁵

4.1 Implantation of the Templars' Order in the Region of Chartres

¹¹⁴ In *Inferno*, Canto XIX: 82-87 (Singleton translation), Dante refers implicitly to both Pope Clement V (formerly Bertrand de Got, Archbishop of Bordeaux) and to Philippe le Bel (Philippe IV, King of France) respectively as "a lawless shepherd from the west, of uglier deeds...[who] to his king was pliant...[a king] who governs France."

In *Purgatorio VII: 109-110*, again implicitly, Philippe IV is referred to as "the Plague of France; they [his father and father-in-law] know his wicked and foul life, and hence comes the grief that pierces them so." Philippe was the grandson of Saint Louis.

In *Purgatorio XX: 91*, referring to the King: "I see the *fleur-de-lys* enter Alagua [i.e. Anagni, the birthplace of Pope Boniface VIII and the scene of his imprisonment by Philippe IV. The pope would eventually be tried on grounds of heresy and deposed to be replaced by Benedict XI, who died within a year and was replaced by Clement V] and in his vicar, Christ made captive... Him slain between living thieves... I see the new Pilate [Philippe again], so cruel that this does not sate him, but without decree he directs his greedy sails [i.e. like those of a pirate ship] against the temple. O my Lord, when shall I rejoice to see the vengeance which, concealed, makes sweet Thine anger in Thy secrecy."

Further in Canto XXXII: 148-160 Dante sees "an ungirt harlot [i.e. the papacy] and... standing at her side a giant, [Philippe IV, who drew her] through the wood so far... that he made a shield from me for the harlot."

Finally in Canto XXXIII: 43, Dante speaks of a time when a mysterious 515 (DXV in Roman numerals) will slay both harlot and giant (Emperor Henry VII of Luxembourg?) ["whose seat in the highest part of heaven Beatrice had shown to Dante by way of anticipation"]. (Guénon 1996.)

¹¹⁵ Mannier 1872, xiii-xiv.

Templars' jurisdictions and dioceses did not coincide. In the case of Chartres, the Templars' jurisdiction extended south beyond the diocese to include the areas of Vendôme and Blois¹¹⁶ to form the Bailiwick of Chartres. The existence of Templar foundations is attested there in the second half of the twelfth century (La Villedieu en Dreugesin in 1165, Saint-Marc d'Orléans in 1171 and Sours, near Chartres, in 1195).¹¹⁷ Orléans, however, is considered outside the limits of the Bailiwick and mentioned here only because of its proximity. These dates, however, refer to the *existence*, not the *foundation* of the commanderies. Folliot¹¹⁸ mentions that the implantation began in the area of Vendôme, Châteaudun, and then Dreux, i.e. from south to north, eventually ending with that of Sours, which became the major commanderie of the Bailiwick. Close to the town of Chartres, it unified the jurisdiction of Chartres. In this, the development of the commanderies closely followed the mobilization movement of the Crusaders into the army of their suzerains while geographically, it followed the movement of economic development of the region.¹¹⁹

According to Chédeville¹²⁰ many of the Chartrian aristocracy participated in the various crusading expeditions. More than one hundred names can be culled from the documents of the period. Before the end of the eleventh century some of these nobles were in southern Italy with the Normans, others went to Spain towards the beginning of the twelfth century with the intention of settling there when the count of Perche (Rotrou III) became Lord of Tudela. Typically crusaders to the Holy Land did not generally

¹¹⁶ Folliot 1983, 3.

¹¹⁷ Mannier 1872, 119, 157, and 137 respectively.

¹¹⁸ Folliot 1983, 4. These commanderies will number up to six. However, Templar houses were also established in towns. In Chartres, in particular, such a house is attested in 1183 in the Rue du Muret, north of the Cathedral. Other houses were dispersed throughout the Bailiwick.

¹¹⁹ This is interesting to note, for going on an expedition to the Holy Land was a very expensive proposition. Many not having the needed liquid funds had to mortgage or sell their properties or borrow the sum required for equipment and travel expenses. Bishop Renaud de Mousson, returning home from crusading, had to give the cathedral chapter the chapel of St. Serges and St. Bache in the cloister to get enough money to celebrate his anniversary. Some, however, brought back not just relics but also part of their booty (Chédeville 1978, 328).

¹²⁰ Chédeville 1978, 327-328.

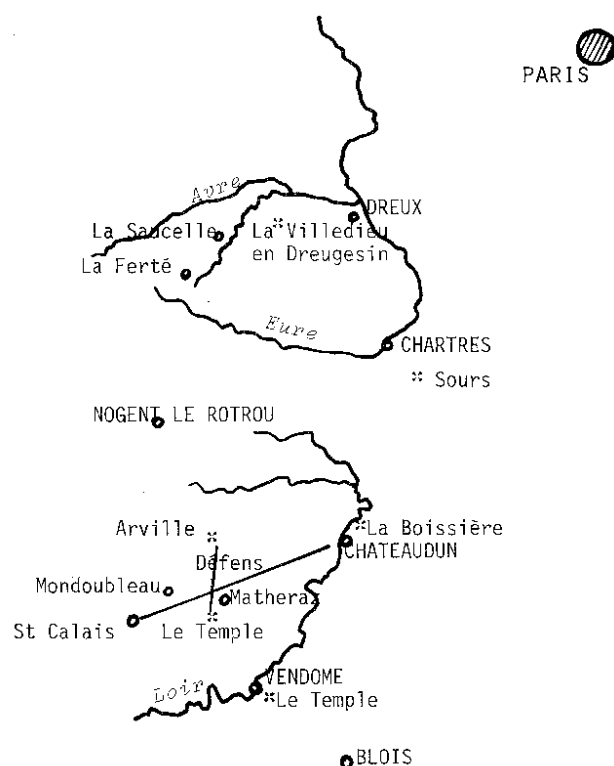


Fig. 9 Templars implantation in the Chartrain

intend to settle *outremer*¹²¹ though many did not make it back. Three counts of Chartres fell on the battlefields of the Orient. The numbers and enthusiasm for these ventures, however, dissipated progressively in the course of time. The first crusade saw a peak but the flow of volunteers, though continuous through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, where more than forty names are mentioned, tapered off and became more and more an occasion for young knights to participate as a kind of initiation to the *métier des armes* (soldiering). Even the crusade against the Albigensians in the south of France, at the beginning of the thirteenth century (1209-1229), did not prove very attractive to Chartrians in spite of the participation of the Bishop of Chartres in person—Renaud de Mousson—and of the infamous Simon de Montfort. Only four lords are mentioned, one of them, however, going in expiation of his previous crimes!

¹²¹ This is generally true of the high aristocracy, but one of the first crusading Chartrians to go over, Fulcher de Chartres, of more humble origin and, being a priest, less tied to family and possessions in Chartres, settled in the Holy Land towards the turn of the twelfth century. That is where he wrote his famous *Chronicle of the First Crusade*.

Geographically, the possessions of the Templars in the Chartrain developed according to the generosity of donors. Little by little these possessions would be found throughout the whole territory from Blois in the south, on the Loire River, to Dreux in the north, close to Normandy and Ile de France.¹²² When and where conditions became favorable, particularly in economic terms, houses or even commanderies were founded. This happened early in the region.

At the Council of Troyes in 1128, under the aegis of Saint Bernard, when the Order of Templars was legally founded and its rule approved, the high aristocracy and clergy of Chartres were present in the persons of Thibaud-le-Grand,¹²³ Count of Blois and Chartres, and Goeffroy de Lèves, Bishop of Chartres. This double protection of the temporal and spiritual powers will facilitate the local implantation and development of the Order in the area.¹²⁴ As early as 1128, in fact, the commanderie of the Temple-près-Mondoubleau, the Order's mother house in the Chartrain, was founded on an already developed property with cleared cultivable land and houses.

It is interesting to note that it is in the local aristocracy, vassals of the counts of Blois and Chartres, that Knights Templar in the region were recruited. Templars were therefore part of the local society from the start and integrated into the local spiritual and secular power structures.

Notwithstanding their integration, Templars were not welcome everywhere. The complex feudal system of obligations and taxation often created contention and friction with neighbors either feudal lords and, not infrequently, other religious orders, potentially leading to legal disputes.

The region of Châteaudun¹²⁵ at the time, as well as that of the Paris basin, were being reclaimed on the forest and new towns (Villeneuves) were being built. With the commanderie of Arville, west of Châteaudun we see such a new town develop, the only one that will be in the Bailiwick of Chartres. Many projects of land clearing never took place due to the lack of a sufficient labor force. However, a common defense system

¹²² Folliot 1983, 3.

¹²³ Thibaud's uncle, Hugh of Champagne, was St. Bernard's nephew and Hugh joined the Templars around 1125. Thibaud-le-Grand's son, Thibaud-le-Bon, founded the commanderie of La Boissière at Chateaudun while Alix de France, Thibaut-le-Grand's daughter-in-law founded that of Sours

¹²⁴ Folliot 1983, 14.

¹²⁵ Châteaudun is 44 kilometers, i.e. 27.5 miles south of Chartres

rather than parochial churches¹²⁶ served as a pole of attraction forcing people to group their habitats around Temple houses.¹²⁷ Their social origin and formation oriented the Templars more toward their military vocation rather than towards land clearing and town planning and development.¹²⁸



Fig. 10 Commanderie of Arville: Entrance and western church façade

At the time of the construction of the cathedral, the Templars were at the apogee of their influence and well-established in the area. Though, through their assigned

¹²⁶ As mentioned in the chapter on orientation of the Cathedral, the distribution pattern of parochial churches in the region of Chartres presents some interesting peculiarities reminiscent of similar patterns in the south west of France. Linking this to the Templars is not an obvious matter and is in need of study. Dedication of these churches, their dates and the history of their sites should be ascertained.

¹²⁷ Folliot 1983, 84.

¹²⁸ Folliot 1983, 86.

mission, their focus of attention was *Outremer*, their presence throughout Europe and, in our case, the Chartrain region, had a lasting impact. This direct influence lasted during a good fraction of the twelfth century and the whole thirteenth century. It came to an abrupt end early in the fourteenth with the suppression of the Order, as we have seen.

4.2 *Legacy of the Templars in the Chartrain*

Many tokens of the Templars' presence in the Chartrain remain to these days, particularly in the regional toponymy. The names of locations and villages such as Le Temple, La Villedieu, La Templerie, etc.¹²⁹ are evident throughout, confirming that the Templars were firmly rooted in the region and formed an integral part of the local society. It is difficult to untangle the heritage of the Templars from that of the crusades in general. If one relies on the written documents and archeological evidence nothing much out of the ordinary seems to emerge. In the region of Chartres, it may be noted that all the Templar commanderies were built, not precisely as fortresses, but nevertheless as strongholds able to withstand armed bands and irascible neighbors in the troubled times

¹²⁹ Tourniac (2008, 122) mentions many other place names in the region dating from the crusades. Besides the Valley of Josaphat and the Abbey of Josaphat near Chartres, to which we shall return, one finds, for example, between the villages of Bouville and Maisse, another "Vallon de Josaphat" surrounded by curious names such as La Grotte, La Fosse aux Prêtres (the Priests' grave), Le Prieuré, Le Couvent, Les Enfers (hells), Le Paradis, Les Trois Coups d'Épée (the Three Sword Strokes). Though the origin in time of all these names links them to the crusades, it doesn't automatically link them to the Templars except perhaps for the Valley of Josaphat and the abbey of Josaphat. This abbey, in the Eure valley, was founded in 1117 by Godfrey of Lèves, Bishop of Chartres, and his brother Goslen. The tradition says that Godfrey was on his way to Jerusalem in 1116, having made a vow of pilgrimage, when word reached him in Rome that the then bishop of Chartres, Ivo, had just died and that he had been elected his successor. The pope freed him from his pilgrim vow on condition that he found an abbey with the funds he would have spent on his pilgrimage. The new Benedictine Abbey was named *Sainte Marie de Josaphat* in honor of the Virgin Mary, patroness of the Templars, and in memory of this aborted pilgrimage, because the valley of the Eure at that place was said to resemble the Valley of *Jeshoshaphat*, below the site of Solomon's Temple where a Benedictine abbey also dedicated to Sainte Marie existed in the twelfth century. This last abbey was said to have been built on the site of the Virgin's tomb.

Since, contrary to practice in other dioceses, no tombs could exist within the cathedral of Chartres, the Abbey of Josaphat served as a necropolis for a number of Chartres bishops. The abbey was destroyed during the French Revolution of 1789.

This abbey was the object of processions originating in the cathedral. The procession of the holy relic of the Virgin's Pallium from the cathedral to the abbey would take place in cases of public calamities. Rare in the beginning, they became more numerous toward the end of the fourteenth century (de Lépinos 1854, 550). A similar procession would take place regularly for the Feast of the Holy Innocents, December 28th, and on other occasions. A particular one known as The *Chevauchée*, according to Hedlam (1908, 98) took place "in the vintage season." It was "a strange kind of equestrian promenade... probably the survival of some feudal obligation. The *chevaucheurs* (horsemen) started in a rather dignified fashion singing the Office before leaving the cathedral" ... "But once *en route* the cavalcade became as noisy and riotous a scene of carnival as the Feast of Fools." (See I. n. 66).

that we have previously mentioned.¹³⁰ Thus, in the course of the twelfth century, before they were able to build in stone, the Templars defended their commanderies by means of motes.¹³¹ A good example is the commanderie of Arville, built from scratch, which is located in a winding loop of the river Couétron serving as a natural mote. The same applies to the houses of the *homines templi* (the skilled men serving the commanderie) particularly in the areas bordering the large forest of the Perche. These commanderies and houses, however, were built in the style prevalent in the area at the time. One cannot speak here of a “Templar architecture.”¹³² In these local, utilitarian constructions, how many skilled men (*homines templi*) were directly involved in the work? No doubt local labor was abundantly tapped. Possibly through it, some different ways of doing things or just simply some different things might have been done. There is no doubt that many ideas and items were imported from the East and the Templars may have, to a certain extent, been involved in this. But many besides the Templars went *Outremer* and came back bearing something besides relics, be it the seed of the carnation¹³³ or of a rose,¹³⁴ of

¹³⁰ This seems to contrast with England (Nicholson 2004, 123-124).

¹³¹ Folliot 1983, 141.

¹³² Ibid. Some, however, e.g. Tourniac (2008), see that certain chapels and churches of round or octagonal design to be found among some of the Templar settlements, though not in the Chartrain, but in other areas of northern France, are the result of Armenian or Coptic influences. One could point out other constructions of that type in the West, notably the lawyers’ 12th century Temple Church in London. However, many others are predating the crusades (e.g. baptisteries and Palatine chapels of the eighth century). The point to be made here by Tourniac is that Armenian and Coptic churches’ doctrines may have influenced or been even taken up by the Templars and introduced by them into the Latin Church, this being used as a count in their indictment among accusations of heresies. (MacCullough 2010, 393-395.) To some others this round or octagonal form may also simply be an evocation of the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem... itself representing the city of Jerusalem (Coldstream, 2002, 151-154 and 160)

In any case, the fact is, as Walter Horn (1982, 720-722) remarks, that “buildings of circular plan were not in the mainstream of medieval architectural development in western Europe... The reason is simple: by the nature of its design, a building of circular plan is a non-directional structure... It doesn’t guide the eye or... the entering worshipper... It does not lend itself... [to] hierarchically ordered spaces.

All this, however, can perhaps be better explained and more simply, according to MacCullough, by the Templars’ ignorance and wishful thinking. Puzzlingly ignorant of the fact that Herod’s temple had been destroyed by the Romans, the building they were imitating when they were constructing their churches in the round was in fact the Muslim Dome of the Rock and they thought the Al-Aqsa Mosque to be Solomon’s Temple (MacCullough 2010, 386). However, if one takes seriously Strachan’s hypothesis (supra, n. 37) it is not so much blind imitation of the Dome of the Rock that may perhaps be involved, but a truly creative application of the principles of sacred Islamic architecture. One would be inclined to think that the simplicity, clarity of architectural thought, joined to the slender elegance and integrity to be found in Cistercian architecture at its best were reflected in the Templars’ when the latter at least were not just limited by the utilitarian as in our case.

¹³³ Supposedly brought into the West in 1279, during the seventh crusade (Tourniac 2008, 123).

¹³⁴ *Gallica Damaseena*, said to have been brought by the minstrel and count Thibaut IV of Brie and Champagne after the fourth crusade (ibid).

an artichoke or a taste for coffee, sugar, and spices. Some among the “skilled men” may have been sensitive to the grace of Moslem architecture or, indeed, to that of other types of Christian architecture, from that of the Orthodox Santa Sophia in Constantinople to that of the Armenian or Coptic churches already established in the Holy Land since the dawn of Christianity in the second and third century and that the crusaders discovered in the wake of their invasion.

4.3 Chartres in the Aftermath of the Templars’ Debacle

As far as the repercussions in the Chartrain of what de Lépinois¹³⁵ calls “*Le lugubre drame des Templiers*” (The dismal Drama of the Templars), one doesn’t see it as having created much agitation in Chartres. Presumably Templars present on that fateful day of October 13th 1307 were arrested as everywhere else in France and taken to Paris. “All we know,” says de Lépinois,

“is that the cathedral chapter was represented by deputies at the provincial council of Paris. Summoned by the Archbishop of Sens in May 1310. This council condemned the Order in the ecclesiastical province. Furthermore the Count of Chartres, Charles, took part in 1311, together with his advisors and the Bishop of Chartres, Jean II Garlande, and some canons to the general council of Vienne when the appeal by the Templars was rejected. All Templar properties at Chartres and in the county were passed on to the Hospitallers according to the agreement between the king and the pope.”

Charles Métais¹³⁶ let us know that the properties of the Templars were joined to the hospitalliers’ and consolidated in the two commanderies of Sours and Arville in the Chartrain and that of La Villedieu in the Dreugesin. At the dissolution of the Temple Order, their archives were taken to Paris at the seat of the Grand Priory of the Hospitallers where they went untouched by the “revolutionary storm” [of 1789]. Métais notes that previous local historians (de Lépinois, Souchet, Merlet) were unaware of their existence and that Mannier summarized them too rapidly. Métais studied them in detail and published his findings. He describes them meticulously with drawing illustrations of the architectural heritage of the Templars in the region of Chartres—manor houses, large farms, and country chapels blend in the countryside inconspicuously, confirming that, indeed, “compared to the Benedictines and the canons of the Cathedral chapter, the

¹³⁵ De Lépinois 1854, 172-173.

¹³⁶ Métais 1902, v.

Templars and the Hospitallers have only had a very secondary role in the region of Chartres,” as Métais¹³⁷ informs us. This, as we have already mentioned, is partly due to their commitment to wealth production and fund raising for the purpose of sustaining the war effort Outremer. With the loss of the Latin Kingdoms in the Orient, particularly after the fall of Acre and the retreat to Cyprus, it became difficult for charity givers to support an institution whose original goal had been eliminated, so to speak, though a new crusade for the reconquest was much in the mind of both the Grand Master of the Order and King Philip IV. But, as we know, Philip had also other more immediate and pressing plans.

However, during the glory days of the Order, in spite of the high participation in the crusades of the Chartrian nobility and their close ties with the Templars, the monumental implantation of the Order—churches and priories—“do not reveal anything grandiose and majestic.”¹³⁸ The relatively high manpower and blood contribution to the crusading effort by the Chartrian nobility is probably the very cause of the comparatively low contribution to the Templars, particularly after 1291. It is also probably the cause of the lack of emphasis on local, low-yield development such as land clearing in the Perche region. As noted before a number of such projects were left undone or never attempted through lack of manpower.

Going from architecture to the religious plastic arts, one may find affinities between the Ethiopian and Occidental arts, particularly in terms of the bestiary decorating Romanesque capitals and to be also found in Ethiopian buildings, as Tourniac affirms.¹³⁹ There is no indication, however, that these similarities are due in any way to some direct influence transmitted through crusaders, let alone through Templars. If material items passed from East to West, however, there can be little doubt that ideas followed the same path: from the biological rose to the mystical rose—symbol of the Virgin—to the rose windows that then blossomed on the façades of cathedrals dedicated to the Mother of

¹³⁷ Métais 1902, iii.

¹³⁸ As mentioned earlier (n. 49), there does not appear to be any documentation attesting to any contribution, financial or otherwise, to the construction of the Cathedral by the Templars. Apart from the design of the Royal Portal, which might have been inspired in some degree by the porch of the Aksa mosque, the Templars’ influence on the Cathedral design would seem to belong to the “parallel universe of Templarism.” However, as we established in another part of this overall study of the Cathedral, the designer(s) of Chartres had a thorough understanding of Solomon’s Temple. That, however, doesn’t make him (them) members of the Templars’ Order, only close readers of the relevant passages in the Old Testament.

¹³⁹ Tourniac 2008, 129.

God throughout northern France. One can see concepts emerging and maturing whose seed may have seen the light in the Orient but whose growth and development in western soil yielded something apparently entirely new. It could be said that these ideas may have been the spark of inspiration that contributed to activate and shape the famous twelfth century Renaissance as well as keep up and renew the Gnostic spirit among Cathars, Vaudois, and other sects in southern France and northern Italy.



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