

# [Monks](https://assignbuster.com/monks/)

The Knights Templar, a military order
of monks answerable only to the Pope himself, were
founded in 1118. Their primary responsibility, at least
initially, was to provide protection to Christians making
pilgrimages to the Holy Land. They rose in power, both
religious and secular, to become one of the richest and
most powerful entities in Christendom. By the time of their
disbandment in 1307, this highly secretive organization
controlled vastwealth, a fleet of merchant ships, and castles
and estates spanning the entire Mediterranean area. When
the crusaders captured Jerusalem from the Muslims in
1099, the Church encouraged all faithful Christians to visit
that holy city in order to affirm their faith. The area,
however, was still subject to sporadic attacks from various
non-Christian factions. A small group of knights, led by
Hughde Payens, vowed to protect the pilgrims. The group
was grantedquasi-official status by King Baldwin II of
Jerusalem, who allowed themquarters in a wing of the royal
palace near the Temple of Solomon. It isfrom this initial
posting that the order derived its name. They took
thestandard vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and
were bound to the rulesof the Augustinian order.

Upton-Ward 1 The order languished in near-anonimity
for several years, despite generouscontributions from
various European personages. In 1126, Count Hugh
ofChampagne, having donated his estates to Bernard of
Clairvaux for use in building a monestary for the Cistercian
order, arrived in Jerusalem to jointhe Templars. This action
indirectly obligated Bernard to support the newly chosen
advocacy of his benefactor. He wrote to the count, " If, for
God's work, you have changed yourself from count to
knight and from rich to poor, I congratulate you." Howarth
49 In the year 1126, King Baldwin found two reasons for
wanting officialrecognition of the order. First, he had,
perhaps prematurely, bestowed uponHugh de Payens the
title of Master of the Temple. Second, the king had
theopportunity to launch an attack on the city of Damascus,
but he needed moreknights. Papal recognition would allow
open recruiting in Europe for theorder. King Baldwin sent a
letter to Bernard of Clairvaux, the order'sprimary patron,
later known as Saint Bernard, asking him to petition the
Pope for official recognition of the order. Howarth 50-51
The King'sletter was hand-carried to Bernard by two loyal
and trusted knights, Andrewde Montbard, maternally
related to Bernard, and Gondemare. Upon theirarrival at
Clairvaux, the two knights presented Bernard with
Baldwin'sletter, which came right to the point.

Upton-Ward 3 " The brothers Templar, whom God has
raised up for the defence of our province and to whom he
hasaccorded special protection, desire to receive apostolic
approval and alsotheir own Rule of life ... Since we know
well the weight of yourintercession with God and also with
His Vicar and with the other princes ofEurope, we give into
your care this two-fold mission, whose success will bevery
welcome to us. Let the constitution of the Templars be such
as issuitable for men who live in the clash and tumult of
war, and yet of a kind which will be acceptable to the
Christian princes, of whom they have beenthe valuable
auxiliaries. So far as in you lies and if God pleases, striveto
bring this matter to a speedy and successful issue." qtd. in
Howarth 50-51 Bernard realized at once the genius of the
proposal to combine religiousand military endeavors.

Through such organizations, the borders ofChristendom
could be extended and fortified. He immediately granted
hisapproval of the plan and pledged his full support. He
petitioned PopeHonorius II for a special council to
consider the matter, and he notifiedHugh of his actions.

Howarth 51 The Council of Troyes convened on January
13, 1128, a bitterly cold SaintHilary's Day, for the primary
purpose of considering the request of theKnights Templar.

Despite the delays of written communications, Hugh
dePayens, accompanied by several brother knights, arrived
from the Holy Landin time to attend the meetings of the
Council. Howarth 51 William of Tyre wrote an account
of the events: " Nine years after thefounding of this order,
the knights were still in secular garb. They woresuch
garments as the people, for salvation of their souls,
bestowed uponthem. During this ninth year, a council was
held at Troyes in France. Therewere present the
archbishops of Rheims and Sens, with their suffragans;
thebishop of Albano, the Pope's legate; the abbotts of
Citeaux, Clairvaux, Potigny; and many others. At this
council, by order of Pope Honorious and ofStephen,
patriarch of Jerusalem, a rule was drawn up for this order
and ahabit of white assigned them." qtd. in
Burman/Templars 27 Although referred to in William's
account by the generic title Abbott of Clairvaux, Bernard,
in actuality controlled the proceedings of the council. There
was little doubt Bernard's request would be met with
approval; he waswell known for his successes in reforming
monastic life. He was held in theutmost respect by religious
and lay leaders alike; in many circles he wasreferred to as
the second pope. In fact, many of the popes were supplied
bythe mendicant orders. Robinson 66-67 At a time when
monks were more highly regarded than priests, and
consideredcloser to God because of their ascetic life-styles,
Benard said, " The peoplecannot look up to the priests,
because the people are better than priests." Robinson 67
Bernard's offer to personally assist in the formulation of the
Rules of theorder was gratefully accepted by all. Bernard
based his Rule of the Templarson that of his own Cistercian
order, which was itself based on the olderBenedictine Rule.

Robinson 67 The Rule of the Templars was a strict and
complex system of 686 writtenlaws, meant to cover every
possible aspect of daily life. As an example, Rule 25, On
Bowls and Drinking Vessels, states: Because of the
shortage ofbowls, the brothers will eat in pairs, so that one
may study the other moreclosely, and so that neither
austerity nor secret abstinence is introducedinto the
communal meal. And it seems just to us that each brother
shouldhave the same ration of wine in his cup. qtd. in
Upton-Ward 26 In 1139, Pope Innocent II issued a Bull,
titled Omne Datum Optimum, declaring that the Knights
Templar were under the direct and sole control ofthe Pope.

This freed the Knights to operate throughout Christendom
and theLevant unencumbered by local ecclesiastical and
secular rulers. Thisunprecedented autonomy was due, in no
small part, to the personal petitionsof the new Grand
Master, Robert the Burgundian. While Hugh had been an
excellent warrior, Robert was an ideal administrator who
understoodpolitics. Howarth 80 The Order was
authorized to have chaplain brothers, who were authorized
tohear the confessions of their fellow brothers, and thereby
absolve them oftheir sins. There were, however, five
specific crimes for which granting ofabsolution was
reserved by the Pope. These were: " the killing of a
Christianman or woman,; violently attacking another
brother; attacking a member ofanother order or a priest;
renouncing holy orders in order to be received asa brother;
and entering the order by simony." Upton-Ward 5 It was
also during the mastership of Robert that the Rules were
translatedfrom Latin into French. Church documents were
normally in Latin only, butsince most of the Knights were
soldiers rather than educated clerics, theywere unable to
read Latin. In 1147, the Knights were authorized to wear
ared cross upon their white mantles, despite rule 18, which
forbade anydecorations on their clothing. Upton-Ward
12 As the Knights Templar gained political and economic
strength, they foundthemselves involved in many aspects of
secular life. They established thefirst truly international
banking service; travelers not wanting to travelwith large
sums could deposit their monies at any Temple and collect
a likeamount at their destination. Burman/Templars 85
The Templars were the primary bankers for the Holy See.

Since the order was a papal creation whichwas
administered directly by the Pope himself, their significance
as papalbankers is understandable. Less obvious is the
Templars' function as royalbankers for several of Europe's
royal houses. The two greatest Templesoutside the Levant
were located in Paris and London. These two
Templesoffered a full range of financial services to the royal
houses, includingcollecting taxes, controlling debts and
administering pension funds. Burman/Templars 87-88 The
treasury of the King of France was kept safelywithin the
vault of the Temple of Paris. Sinclair 36 The Templars
owned a great fleet of merchant ships with which to convey
allmanner of goods, e. g., pepper and cotton, as well as
pilgrims, betweenEurope and the Holy Land. People
wanting to make a pilgrimage to the HolyLand, but lacking
the resources to do so, were allowed to assign rights totheir
houses and property, upon their death, to the Templars in
exchange forpassage on a Templar ship. To avoid
accusations of usury, this procedure waslegitimized by the
papal bull Quantum Praedecessores, issued by
PopeEugenius II in 1145. Burman/Templars 75-78 The
Holy Land was divided into four Crusader States:
Jerusalem, Antioch, Tripoli and Edessa. Shifting alliances,
complicated by the plotting ofindependent Arab emirates,
posed a complicated and often confusing backdropfor the
Knights' military operations. Their first action was in the
northernsector of the Principality of Antioch. They captured
the March of Amanus, which formed a natural barrier
between the city of Amanus and Asia
Minor. Burman/Templars 50 The Knights Templar
frequently fought side-by-side with their counter-parts, the
Knights Hospitaller, another military order, founded to
provideshelter to sick, wounded or destitute pilgrims.

Together, these two warriororders afforded the Holy Land
a formidable fighting force. Although somehistories allude
to a deep and bitter rivalry between the two, it is morelikely
that they cooperated well during the battles, keeping any
suchpettiness for the monotonous weeks between actions.

Upton-Ward 6-7 The first military action of the Templars
was in the northern sector of theHoly Land. In 1131, they
captured the March of Amanus in Antioch. It was anatural
barrier between the city and Asia Minor, which afforded
control oftwo roads into Antioch. The same year, King
Fulk, Baldwins successor, travelled to the site and granted
ownership to the Templars. Burman/Templars 52 Control
of the various areas of the Holy Land see-sawed back and
forthbetween the Crusaders and the Arabs, with neither
side enjoying a decisivevictory. Then the balance of power
began to change with the rise of thegreat Arab leader
Salah-ad-Din Yusuf ibn-Aiyub, known to westerners
asSaladin. Descended from a long line of military heroes,
he was born in 1138in Baalbek, Syria, where his father
was military governor. He began todevelop his warrior
skills by accompanying his father and uncles on
variouscampaigns. Burman/Templars 98 Saladin's rise to
power was rapid and successful. His adherance to
theorthodox Sunni faith caused him to initiate dramatic
changes in his Shi-itearmy. Upon his ultimate rise to the
position of Sultan, he declared a'jihad', or holy war, against
the Crusaders. This intense re-focusing of theMoslem effort
began a gradual shift in power. Christian strongholds fell
inincreasing numbers, creating a domino effect. By the
middle of 1187, Saladin had captured Acre, Nablus, Jaffa,
Toron, Sidon, Beirut and Ascalon. Jerusalem fell on 2
October, 1187. Burman/Templars 108 The fall of
Jerusalem was a disaster from which the Crusades
neverrecovered. Among Saladin's prisoners were the King
of Jerusalem and Raynaldde Chatillon, commander of the
fortress at Moab. After entertaining the twoin his tent,
Saladin had Raynald killed. The King saw his fellow
prisonerexecuted and thought he was surely next, but
Saladin had him brought back into his tent and told him, " It
is not the habit of kings to kill kings." Saladin's victory was
complete. Payne 223-4 In the disarray that followed, the
orders began to disperse. TheHospitallers removed their
headquarters, first to Rhodes and then to Malta; and, with
the ultimate fall of Acre in 1291, the Templars lost their
base ofoperations and relocated to Cyprus. In effect, the
orders had lost theiroriginal reason for existence.

Upton-Ward 9 As the Knights had their policital patrons,
so had their enemies. In 1305, Philip IV of France, known
as Philip the Fair, seized control of the HolySee and
relocated the papacy to Avignon. From there, he initiated a
seriesof papal decrees, ostensibly issues by Pope Clement
V, a puppet pope underhis absolute control. Eyeing the
vast fortunes and resources of theTemplars, he conceived a
plot of treachery against them. Since he also controlled the
Inquisition in France, he had no difficulty leveling a whole
laundry list of horrible, but adsurd and largely
unsupportable, crimesagainst the Knights.

Burman/Inquisition 95 The role of the Inquisition, under
the auspices of Chief InquisitorGuillaume of Paris, was to
obtain confessions and conduct trials. On Fridaythe 13th of
September, 1307, the warrant was issued for the arrest of
theKnights and seizure of their property. Many of the
Temples were 'tipped off'by the local sheriffs about the
impending sweep, but Grand Master Jacques deMolay and
his associates were arrested in their bed clothes.

Theinterrogations, aimed at soliciting evidence of any
wrongdoing with which to prove the allegations against the
order, dragged on for years. Ultimately, the Grand Master,
along with other high-ranking Templars, were executed
byburning in March, 1314, on an island in the Seine.

Howarth 17 The years between the arrest of Templars
and the order's final dissolutionafforded plenty of time for
knights on the lam to become absorbed by
theunderground. Knights in England were never pursued,
due largely to a riftbetween the King and the Church, and
many were thought to have participatedin the war between
Scotland and England, on the side of Robert the
Bruce. Robinson 150-51 The vast fleet of Templar
merchant ships was never found. There is norecord of the
18 Templar ships which had been based at La Rochelle on
theFrench coast, nor any of the various Templar ships
normally anchored in theThames or other English seaports.

There is some speculation that the BarbaryPirates, who
gained worldwide noteriety by plundering European
shipping wellinto the 19th century, were founded by
seagoing Templars with revenge ontheir minds. Many of the
order's ships were galleys, which were particularlysuited for
piracy. Robinson 165 One of the more mysterious tenets
of the Freemasons can be found in the initiation of a Master
Mason. The initiate is told his degree " will make youa
brother to pirates and corsairs." Robinson 165-66 In
1813, a merchant ship, captained by a Freemason, was
captured andboarded by pirates. In desperation, the
captain rendered the Grand HailingSign of Distress of a
Master Mason. The pirate captain apparently
recognizedthe secret sign and allowed the merchant ship to
proceed unharmed. Robinson166 The destruction of the
Knights Templar by Philip the Fair was due to whathe saw
as wealth, arrogance, greed and secrecy on the part of the
order. Even Philip's lawyer admitted " perhaps not all of
them had sinned." It tookmore than suspicion of guilt to
bring about the downfall of such a powerfulentity as the
Knights Templar. The final blow, however, was
probablythree-fold: a general unpopularity of the order
among the Europeanaristocracy, due in part to jealousy; a
chronic shortage in the Frenchtreasury, despite heavy
taxation; and Master de Molay's refusal to considera
merger of the Templars with the Hospitallers, as suggested
by the Pope. The fact remains, however, that no evidence
of heresy was ever found. Burman/Templars 180 An
order founded by nine knights in Jerusalem came to amass
great wealthand power, which speaks well of their integrity
and discretion. They becamethe " shock troops" of the Holy
See. When they lost their original mission ofprotecting
pilgrims upon the fall of Jerusalem, their downfall
becameinevitable. Sinclair 37Works Cited: Burman,
Edward. The Inquisition. New York: Dorset, 1984.--. The
Templars. Rochester, VT: Destiny, 1986.« Howarth,
Stephen. The Knights Templar. New York: Dorset,
1982. Payne, Robert. The History of Islam. New York:
Dorset, 1987. Robinson, John J. Born in Blood. New
York: Evans, 1989. Sinclair, Andrew. The Sword and the
Grail. New York: Crown, 1992. Upton-Ward, J. M. The
Rule of the Templars. Suffolk: Boydell, 1992.
History