

The Forgotten Templar

Old World Knights Templars were men of legend. In their quest to defend truth and justice, these men used their swords and unwavering dedication to secure victories in epic battles burned into the pages of our history books. As modern day Knights, we pride ourselves on presenting the Order, not with a sword, but as a benevolent and brotherly house whose ultimate goals are charity and the never-ending search for light. We still have swords but without the edge. We revel in legends which depict old world Templars being ferocious as the proverbial lions. And they were, indeed. However, there was a duality to their personalities which often goes unmentioned. They had a very complex, self-reflecting and gentile side to them- they could be as meek as a lamb.

History repeats itself. The world of the early Templars was in many ways very different from our own modern world; but, as we are witnessing more and more, our worlds are once again becoming eerily similar. Religious extremism, the diluting of Christian morals and unprovoked violence was inflicted upon humanity by radical groups then, just as today where modern day religious extremists, atheism, and “politically correct” bureaucrats are seeking to destroy our world. Sometimes I ponder that perhaps the evil ones are once again testing the resolve of the Templar- with an ancient question. Are we still as meek as a lamb and ferocious as a lion or have we become lamb chops only? The following article is about a sickly Cistercian Monk who would ultimately design and shape a machine capable of unthinkable violence and yet display equal kindness. The results of his work would define a Knight Templar and allow the Templar Order to serve as the amour of Christ.

In the beginning, there were the **Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon**, a small



and underfunded group of nine Knights led by Templar legend Hugh de Payens. (Portrait of Hugh de Payens) History, as well as legends, tell us these Knights were contracted by King Baldwin of Jerusalem to protect Christian travelers seeking passage to and from the Holy Land. This small group of nine Knights were given permission by Baldwin to create the first Temple Order stationed at the ruins of what is believed to be the Temple of Solomon. The area had been previously occupied by Muslim and was known to them as the [Al-Aqsa Mosque](#). The Mosque had been recaptured by the Christians during the First Crusade. We are told these early Temple Knights spent years protecting travelers by day and excavating the ruins of the Temple by night. Perhaps- though concrete evidence of either has yet to be revealed. With this information in mind, it is no surprise that many believe it was actually the excavation, not protection, that motivated the Knights. If this is true, did the Templars find something remarkable at Solomon’s Temple? Perhaps some artifact that was responsible for the rise of the mighty Templar? It seems to be a definite possibility.

By 1098, many within the Roman Catholic Church had become fed up with what they viewed as an abandonment of the principals of St. Benedict of Nursia (480-547). The **Rule of Saint Benedict** is a book of precepts written

by Benedict of Nursia (c.480–550) for monks living communally under the authority of an Abbott. The spirit of St. Benedict's Rule can be summed up in their motto which is a reflection of the Benedictine Confederation: *pax* ("peace") and the traditional *ora et labora* ("pray and work"). This ancient methodology of existence was a far cry from the lavish lifestyles enjoyed by many church officials and clergy at the beginning of the Templar age.

Robert of Molesme was one such monk who sought to re-invoke that which he felt the Church had lost. Robert and his followers believed their true purpose could only be fulfilled by the Church re-emphasizing their core loyalties to poverty, prayer, work, chastity, humility and obedience. Robert, as well as many members of the common class, believed that Church lavishness, political corruptness and its distancing from the core beliefs of St Benedict were enabling the many evils of man. Robert, a popular and affluently connected Benedictine Monk, believed he could no longer justify the Church's direction. So he took action.

In 1098, Robert started a new abbey at Citeaux, a region south of Dijon France, and he named his new group the Cistercian Order.

Robert would be Abbot. A former hermit named Alberic, sometimes called Aubrey of Citeaux and later honored with the title of Saint, would serve as Prior along with English born Stephen Harding. They



would eagerly dedicate this new Order to the true teachings of St. Benedict. (The Painting at Citeaux shown here depicts Robert, Alberic and Harding along with the Virgin Mary) They would re-emphasize ancient teachings that stressed the necessity of work, study, self-reliance and they insisted on a strict absence of all impurities of the flesh, particularly women. The Cistercian Order was designed to be a machine that was totally self-sufficient. They grew their own food and tended their own land- specializing in producing new varieties of grain and vegetables. They developed new techniques for brewing Ale to fund their needs and they became a legitimate Order. Indeed, today the Cistercian monks (Trappist's) are famous for their outstanding ales. It was Alberic who attained the Cistercian's

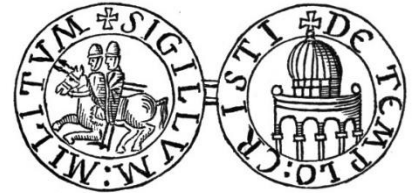
legal status after Pope Pascal II granted this legitimacy with his Bull *Desiderium quod* (around 1100). (Wikipedia-Alberic of Citeaux)

To the hard working people of the day, the Cistercian Monks lifestyle must have been like a breath of fresh air. As a result the Cistercian Order would grow at a phenomenal rate. Under Robert's guidance the order would adopt a family structure- the Abbot as the father and the monks as all equal brothers. (The same structure the Templars would so famously utilize) Life in the Order was well organized and rigid, the day being segmented into regular periods of communal and private prayer, sleep, spiritual reading and manual labor. It was a far cry from the rich and sometimes vulgar lifestyles of the city Clergy. In what most consider a brilliant move, the Cistercian's adopted a new look. Robert ordered a change in dress- the Cistercians would abandon the black cuculla of the Benedictine Order and now dress in white cuculla or what we would today describe as choir robes. The people embraced this change. They would distinguish and honor them by calling them the "white monks". So, the beginnings

of the Templar white surcoat, famously worn by the Knights Templar, was created here at Citeaux! I imagine the Cistercian's image change from black to white was immortalized on the Templar battle flag? Modern writers assume that the flag colors symbolize good vs. evil. Perhaps so. But, could it also symbolize the Cistercians and Templars as dual orders, actually portraying evidence of their first battle to separate the dual order of Cistercians and Templars from the Roman Catholic Church? It is also interesting that the Templar official seal shows two men riding the same horse. (Seal shown here)



Robert's efforts of course would not go unnoticed by church officials. In 1100, in what may have been hopes of squashing the surging Cistercians, Robert was ordered back to Molesme under the pretense that the Church would re-establish itself and adhere to the strict rules of St. Benedict. However, Robert was not naïve or stupid and was surely skeptical of the Church's promise. As a result, he never terminated his newly formed Order. Instead, he left it in the very capable hands of Saint Alberic who would continue the work of Robert and would manage and promote the growth the Cistercian Order until his death in 1109.



With the death of Alberic on January 26th 1109, the youngest of the three founders English born Stephen Harding would take the reins and lead the Cistercian Order for 25 years. Harding was a brilliant scholar, who spoke fluent English, French, Norman and Latin. He was an exceptional organizer who would develop "general chapters" for the Cistercian houses. In his treatise "Carta Cartialis" he would advance the Cistercian Order by developing an efficient structure for further organizing Cistercian life and business which would, in time, become the basic rules for the Knights Templar Order. Harding would initiate a movement within the order to promote and organize advanced research and study of the Scriptures. He also made these study groups available to others outside the Cistercian Order. Harding would lead the Cistercians into new territory and do the unthinkable! His intellectual curiosity would lead him to break religious barriers by organizing study groups with Jewish Rabbis who reviled the



secrets of the Talmud that were unknown to any Christian Cleric before him. Combining the knowledge of Christian and Hebrew in those days was an unthinkable act. Harding no doubt learned Hebrew from his new study partners and with his new skills he would make a startling discovery, one which may have rocked the Catholic Church. There were passages in the Vulgate Bible (Latin version) that were not in the older Aramaic or Hebrew versions of the Old Testament! (The Templar Treasure: Tobias Daniel Wabbel) Harding's corrections of the Vulgate (Latin version of the Old Testament written by St. Jerome in 382) would produce what would become known as the "Harding Bible". Harding's work did not go unnoticed. After the return of Count Hughes I of Champagne (his seal is pictured here) from the Holy Land, where he

was accompanied by Hugh de Payens on at least two trips, was so taken with Cistercian efforts that the Count, who was the richest man in France and whose wealth was said to eclipse the King of France, suggested to Abbot Stephen Harding that he needed to schedule more precise Bible studies with Hebrew sources. The Count was so impressed with Harding and the Cistercians' intellectual efforts that he agreed to fund Harding's educational efforts with the proceeds from his vast wine making empire. Interestingly enough, Count Hughes was most likely a relative of Hugh de Payens, the Knights Templar

founder. (Source: The Templar Treasure: by Wabbel) It would be the Count himself just a few years later who would surrender his titles and his vast wealth to join the Knight Templar Order. It was as if a well scripted plan was in action. The relationships that now existed between the Count and the Templar's/ Cistercians would set in motion a mighty power which Europe had never seen before, one that would take the world by storm. Before he relinquished his wealth and title he would donate a portion of his vast land holdings to build the Clairvaux Abbey in 1115, which would become the religious home of the Knights Templars and home to the most important Templar supporter.

Enter into the picture the subject of my article, Bernard (St. Bernard of Clairvaux). He was a sickly and frail young man barely in his 20s who, along with a small following of about 30 friends and relatives, entered the Cistercian Order under the tutelage of Stephen Harding. Bernard was well connected and



he was the nephew of Andre' de Montbard, who after the [Siege of Ascalon](#) on August 22, 1153, was elected Grand Master of the Knights Templar, replacing Commander [Bernard de Tremelay](#), who had been killed in the battle. (Wikipedia Andre' de Montbard. (The de Montbard seal pictured here) Bernard may also have been related to Hugh de Payens on his mother's side of the family (The Templar Treasure: Wabbel pp 10). Regardless of this familiar relationship, it is clear that Bernard was acquainted with the founding fathers of the Templars. Young Bernard was at least brilliant, if not genius. He was a gifted communicator, charismatic and a fantastic writer. During his lifetime time he would become known as the "patron Saint of the Knights Templar" and for good

reason. Bernard would study and train under Abbot Stephen Harding for several years before initiating his own house raised on land which was donated by Count Hughes I. Bernard would found a new monastery in the forest of Bu-sur-Aube, which he named Claire Vallee, later be known as Clairvaux on June 25th 1115. (Templar Treasure: Wabbel pp15-16) Bernard, who was barely 25 years old, was steadily building a reputation as the boy wonder of the Cistercians. Bernard, whose genius was in many ways limited by extremisms, adamantly believed in the strict rule of St. Benedict and the sacrifices of the body it required, but he was also unquestionably devoted to the Virgin Mary, who he wrote extensively about in several works known as "The Queen of Heaven". Bernard required each member of the Cistercians to swear an oath to the fealty of the Virgin Mary. (The Templar Treasure pp 31) This is devotion to Mary was no doubt a practice promoted by Bernard that carried over to the Templar Order, as the Templar were staunch believers in the Virgin Mary.

Bernard would quickly rise to leadership of the Cistercian order. After the death of Stephen Harding in 1134, he would lead and advance the Cistercian Order to unprecedented membership and power. It is said that in the 12th century Bernard was more powerful than the Pope! During his lifetime Bernard would found 340 monasteries throughout Europe. He would also make the Knights Templar the most powerful force in Europe. How did he accomplish this?

The man whom was said to be counselor to Popes, Kings and Templar alike was certainly not without enemies. He was denounced in Rome as a monk who meddled with matters which did not concern him. He would, indeed, meddle in matters that would cause quarrels pitting the "White Monks against the Black Monks" for 20 years.

Life for the fledgling Knights of Hugh de Payens was difficult. They are believed to have labored for at least nine years in the Holy Land before beginning their rapid ascent to legend. Little if any evidence has been found showing they added any new members during their years spent at Solomon's Temple. In 1129, at the repeated requests of Hugh de Payens, Bernard graciously accepted the roll of spokesman for the Templar. In 1128 at the Council of Troyes, accompanied by Hugh de Payens, Andre de Montbard and Stephen Harding, Bernard was assigned the task of drafting the charter rules of the Knights Templar. It was the perfect time and place for the wise and cunning Bernard to prove his pen was mightier than the sword. Recall that Troyes was the home of the very influential Hughes I of Champagne, who was a study partner of Stephen Harding and the wealthy friend and relative of Templar founder Hugh de Payens. Like a chess game Bernard arranged his pieces, Bernard was a man who did not make a habit of missing out on opportunities and he would utilize his vast abilities and wealthy connections as the new Templar spokesman to capture the King for a Templar win. Bernard would use his considerable influence with Pope Honorius II to grant the Pope's approval to Bernard's Templar treatise. Pope Honorius was known to be suspicious of the direction of the Church and especially the Benedictine orders. Pope Honorius was known to favor the new orders, especially the newly formed Cistercians over the Benedictines. Bernard no doubt seized the moment and, according to his master plan, Pope Honorius II approved the 72 paragraph Templar rule (Latin Rule) giving the Templars new life. Interestingly, in the 72 paragraph treatise not a single word was mentioned about protecting pilgrim routes in the Holy Land.

With Bernard's successful pen and the blessing of the Pope, Templars rapidly became the most successful Christian charity of the day, bringing relief to the Knights money problems and validation to their purpose. But most importantly it delivered much needed recruits from many of the noblest families.



Bernard, the skinny and sickly man who could never be a Knight, was now one of the greatest Knights. In 1130, Pope Honorius died, causing a schism in the Roman Catholic Church. Shortly before his death Honorius handpicked his replacement without going through what some considered the proper channels. On February 14th 1130, Innocent II would be named Pope. However, a power struggle was just beginning. Antipope Anacletus II was considered by many in Rome to be the real Pope. Bernard was assigned the daunting task of judging between the two rival Popes and determining the true Pope! A decision was

apparently made easily and quickly. Bernard traveled hundreds of miles, mostly on foot, to promote his choice, Innocent II. His efforts, along with perhaps some military persuasion by the Knights were successful and Innocent II was accepted as the legitimate Pope. Bernard had become Innocent's strongest advocate and as a result, Bernard would continue to be Pope Innocent's number one adviser. Bernard would certainly use his influence over the new Pope to pave the way for his Cistercian army the Knights Templar to become a world power. Regardless of his methods, Bernard would utilize his power over the Pope to enhance the strength of the Templar Knights. This influence would become obvious with many of the decisions Innocent would make. It was Innocent II who would formally accept The Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon. In 1139, he would issue the Papal Bull *Omne Datum Optimum*, Latin for "Every Perfect Gift", which provided the Knights Templars with unprecedented power making the Order answerable to no one other than the Pope- himself who in all reality answered to Bernard. This Papal Bull also allowed the Templars to keep the spoils of war for themselves! So, early

Templar victories provided countless treasures and wealth to the Templars as well as the Cistercian order. It was said that Clairvaux was wealthy beyond all others with ancient treasures. The questions now asked by many is what treasures did they have? Did Bernard possess a treasure that the Church feared? Perhaps, but the decisions by Innocent II were significant beyond all measure, in that it allowed the Templars to travel across borders without question! They were not subject to any local or state laws or taxes. The Templars were now the armor of the Cistercian Order and were unstoppable! (The Sword and the Grail by Andrew Sinclair)

In 1143 Pope Innocent II issued another Papal Bull, *Milites Templi* which allowed the Chaplains of the Templars to perform Mass once per year. The *Omne Datum Optimum* and the *Milites Templi* together allowed the Templars the power of secrecy. Templar internal workings could now be controlled by Templar Priests and the Papal Bull's allowed Templar priests the authority to take Templar confessions, making the Templars self-reliant. It also allowed Templar priests the ability to comfort and absolve Knights of all the impurities of war and of their life before joining the Templar Order. But most importantly it would justify killing. Bernard would teach that Templars do not kill men, they kill evil and thus have not committed any sin! Bernard created the ultimate fighting machine that was not subject to guilt! Bernard's actual words, written in the letter "In Praise of the New Chivalry", would accurately describe the Templar mentality. "But the soldiers of Christ indeed securely fight the battles of their Lord, in no wise fearing sin either from the slaughter of the enemy or danger from their own death. When indeed death is to be given or received for Christ, it has naught of crime in it, but much glory." (The Sword and the Grail: Andrew Sinclair pp. 29)

With the death of Pope Innocent II, Bernard achieved his greatest coup. He paved the path to elect the Cistercian Eugenius III as Pope. Eugenius was the first Cistercian to become Pope and Bernard was like a father figure to him. Eugenius was said to be "Bernard's own Pope". On April 7th, 1145 Pope Eugenius III drafted the Papal Bull *Milite Dei*, which allowed the Templars to build their own churches and cemeteries allowing them to administer last rights. It was also Eugenius III who on April 7th, 1145 issued the order commanding that the Templars always wear the Red Cross, adding the final touch to the Templar uniform making it a symbol that would strike fear in the hearts of the enemies of Christ forever.

With the rise of Eugenius, the Cistercian Order and Bernard enjoyed and implemented regulations needed to make the Templars literally untouchable. Bernard, the skinny and sickly youngster looking for a home just a few years earlier, was now leader of the powerful Cistercian Order and indirectly the Roman Catholic Church. He controlled the Pope and if the need raised, he protected the Cistercian Order with his own world class private army, the Templars. These events and the cunning decisions made by the brilliant minds of the Cistercian Order would make the dual order of the Cistercians and the Knights Templar easily the most powerful force in Europe.

In his lifetime Bernard would:

- A) Serve as spokesman for the Templars
- B) Draft the original rules for the Knights Templars
- C) Mediate the Church's acceptance for the Knights Templars
- D) Provide the pathway for the Templars to be the Number One Charity of the day
- E) Provide a model of Cistercian life for Templars to follow
- F) Teach the Templars to break religious boundary's to provide further light
- G) Use his influence to free the Templar of boundaries and taxes.

- H) He would influence the Church to provide Templars with the power to create their own churches and cemeteries
- I) He would influence the Church to allow the Templars to hold Mass, collect tithes and take confessions.
- J) He would influence the Church to allow the Templars to administer Last Rights.
- K) He would justify war as the killing of evil.
- L) Bernard's "own Pope" Eugenius III would issue the command that the Red Cross be added to the Templar Uniform.

More from Bernard to come in future editions of the Scribe.

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