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**Military orders: The Rise and Decline of this New
Type of Knighthood.**

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of a B.A. (Hons.) in Medieval Studies
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Abstract

This study investigates and assesses the factors which led to the Military orders gaining influence in the medieval period and then the subsequent decline which led to a number of the orders going into obscurity and in one case the total destruction. Not only this, but it assesses the First Crusade and how that led to the development of a new type of knighthood, through investigating the similarities and differences that they share with what is typically thought of when thinking about the term knighthood.

This dissertation adds to the current historiographical discussions on military orders but differs to many in that it is not a discussion of the entire history of the orders. Instead of this it focuses on the factors leading to their rise and then their decline. This allows for a concentrated discussion on these areas. Whilst there is much information on the Templars decline in particular, due to the nature of it, there is less so on the other orders. This dissertation has allowed for the gathering of this information of not just the Templars but the lesser documented orders as well and concentrates it into one place.

To achieve the goals of the dissertation the orders that are discussed are the Templars, Hospitallers and the Teutonic Knights. It was important to include the Templars as they are the military order that most people will have heard of, but also to ensure that the myths that originate from after their destruction are not discussed at any length. This is because the myths and legends that surround them are not pertinent to either their rise or decline, but yet in many historiographical works, they are still prevalent.

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Introduction

This dissertation will focus on several of the famous military holy orders that existed during the medieval period. The chosen orders range from the most famous in the Poor Fellow-soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon, more commonly known as the Templars, to the enduring Knights Hospitaller and the Teutonic Order. It aims to explore the factors resulting in the dramatic rise in popularity and influence of the orders and then what led to their eventual decline and in the Templars case, destruction. As well as this, the historiography around the orders will be looked at and will play a vital part in the exploration of this project. Not only this but the dissertation will discuss whether these military orders can be considered a new type of knighthood or if they are just an extension of what was in place originally. This will be done by assessing the differences between them but also the similarities that they had. Furthermore, it would be pertinent to discuss the events of the First Crusade through the use of a quick summary and how that participated in the creation of the military orders. This dissertation will be attempting to filter out the mythology that envelopes these orders in order to provide concrete facts about them without delving into the fabricated information that was created in order to provide them with mystique. Therefore, I will be wary of avoiding the myths and legends that surrounds the orders, specifically the Knights Templar.

Military orders have been heavily documented by historians; however, they are less discussed by their contemporaries. Many of the sources from the medieval period originate from the orders themselves or they are briefly mentioned in other unrelated works such as the Crusades. The aim for this project is to use these sources and their brief mentions of the orders which will allow me to develop my project and hopefully add to the existing historiography that have perhaps been overlooked or not really be expanded upon. Sources such as the accounts of the crusades will be vital towards the expansion of my work, as the orders themselves played a vital role in these wars. There are number of contemporary works that will be useful for this study such as *William of Tyre. A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, Vol. 1*.¹

¹ William of Tyre. *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, Vol. 1*. Trans. Emily Atwater Babcock and A.C. Kray (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).

Although this work is not specifically about the military orders, they will provide some context on the crusades and the time in which they operated.

Secondary scholarship will prove invaluable throughout this study. This will allow me to situate my study within the wider historiographical landscape as well as adding to the lesser documented Hospitallers and Teutonic Knights. The most important secondary scholarship that I believe will prove most useful to my study are works that detail the history of an order as this will allow me to selectively choose the information most pertinent to the rise and decline of the orders. Dan Jones's work on *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors* provides a good historical overview of the Templars and documents the journey from when they were founded to the eventual destruction.² Malcom Barber's *The Trial of the Templars*, will be valuable to my section on the decline of the order and as he has written numerous works on the Templars his sources will be extremely valuable to my research.³ In terms of the Hospitallers, Jonathan Riley Smith has written numerous works on the subject, one in particular that will be important in my study is *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John*.⁴ This book not only discusses the medieval facet of the Hospitallers but also the order into the modern age. This will prove valuable because although they are still around, they have taken a decline from the once powerful order they were in the middle ages and this will help me discuss that. *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders* by Desmond Seward provides details on all the religious orders that I will be discussing in my research, so this will prove valuable especially for the orders that have been less discussed in the historiography such as the Teutonic Knights, but it will also have some interesting thoughts on the Hospitallers as well.⁵

A summary of the First Crusade is important to understand how these orders evolved as well as the evolution of Knighthood and as such it is important in discussing whether the military orders were a new type of Knighthood. In 1095 Pope Urban II, after being persuaded by the ambassadors of the Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos for help against the Muslim push in the east, held a synod which

² Dan Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017).

³ Malcom Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

⁴ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John* (London: Hambledon Press, 1999).

⁵ Desmond Seward, *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders* (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

later became known as the Council of Clermont.⁶ Although there is not a completely accurate account of the sermon that he preached here, there is however a number of accounts that were written many years after the fact. Perhaps the most reliable account of the speech that was written was by Fulcher of Chartres who is considered to have been present when Urban II delivered the speech.⁷ Fulcher writes, that Urban II said

“Let those who have been accustomed unjustly to wage private warfare against the faithful now go against the infidels and end with victory this war which should have been begun long ago.”⁸

The message that he got across was clear, to take up an armed Pilgrimage against the Muslims in the east. This then started the first of many armed pilgrimages to the Holy Land and began the crusades.

⁶ Dan Jones, *Crusaders* (London: Head of Zeus, 2019), p.54.

⁷ ‘*Fulcher Of Chartres*’, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 3rd January 2020, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Fulcher-of-Chartres>> [accessed 20 March 2020].

⁸ Fulcher of Chartres in Paul Halsall, ‘Medieval Sourcebook: Urban II (1088-1099): Speech at Council of Clermont, 1095, Five versions of the Speech’, *Fordham University*, 2nd January 2020. <<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/urban2-5vers.asp>> [accessed 17 March 2020].

Chapter 1: The First Crusade, The orders, and a new type of Knighthood?

Without the success of the First Crusade, it is possible to posit that the military orders would not have had the success and the gain in influence that they did in the medieval period. Furthermore, it is possible that they would not have even existed at all. It is because of this, that this section will look at the events of the First Crusade and how that influenced the development of the orders as well as discussing the military orders as a new type of knighthood.

The First Crusade began in 1096 and roused by Urban II's speech many pledged to join the crusade to recapture the Holy Land.⁹ Thomas Asbridge writes that in modern times "the expedition has been all but stripped of its devotional context to become little more than a grand but greedy raid, presented as the first glorious flowering of western colonialism and exposed as conclusive evidence of medieval Europe's spectacular brutality".¹⁰ Indeed, it is possible to argue that Pope Urban II's motivations for calling the crusades were based not in the chivalrous defence of the holiest place in Christendom but rather for more nefarious means such as greed and glory. In any case it was enough to sway tens of thousands of people to embark "on an extraordinary 3,000 kilometre journey to the Holy Land, with aim to recapture Jerusalem from Islam in the name of the Christian God".¹¹ The Christian forces were led by five main commanders known as Bohemond of Taranto, Raymond of Toulouse, Tancred of Hauteville, Baldwin of Boulogne and Godfrey of Bouillon, it was these men that led the crusading army to victory.¹²

The ultimate success of the First Crusade meant that Christian fighting men from Europe were in high demand in order to keep the control of the area that they had obtained. As well as this there was a large influx of Christian pilgrims traveling to the holy sites in Outremer and they were regularly attacked by bandits on the dangerous

⁹ 'First Crusade (1096-1099)', *University of Michigan*,
<http://www.umich.edu/~marcons/Crusades/timeline/summaries/First_Crusade.htm> [accessed 22 March 2020].

¹⁰ Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History* (London: The Free Press, 2004), p. XIII.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. XIII.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.62.

roads throughout the area.¹³ This in turn led to a need for some sort of protection for these pilgrims. This need for protection resulted in the Knights Templar being formed to protect the people undertaking these pilgrimages.¹⁴

The Knights Templar can arguably be considered the most famous of all the military orders to come out of the medieval period and as such they have regularly been associated with the Holy Grail and other fanciful legends such as their continuation in secret societies such as the Freemasons.¹⁵ However, in reality they just grew to be extremely powerful and influential in the time span from their inception to their demise at the hands of Philip IV of France and Pope Clement V.¹⁶ Their formation took place in 1119 at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on Christmas day.¹⁷ Initially formed to protect the pilgrims traveling to the holy shrines and for the defence of the Holy Land, they were expected to take a vow of poverty, indeed the original masters seal depicted two knights riding a single horse.¹⁸ However, the order itself soon accrued a massive amount of wealth through their business-like operations such as the banking system that they developed, which will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

In contrast to the Templars the Hospitallers were not founded as a result of the First Crusade. They, however, were founded before the First Crusade in the 1070's in Jerusalem.¹⁹ Although this is the case they did benefit from the event greatly as it encouraged more donations, presumably due to the religious fervour as a result of the successful crusade. These donations came from the crusaders who had settled in the Holy Land, but also from those in Europe who wanted to "support the hospitals work and share in its spiritual benefits".²⁰ Due to the success of the First Crusade and the formation of the Templars the Hospitallers later became militarized.²¹

The Teutonic Knights were formed as a result of the Third Crusade and in March of 1198 the Pope officially recognised them as an independent military order known as

¹³ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors*, p.4.

¹⁴ Michael Haag, *The Templars: History & Myth* (London: Profile Books, 2009), p.11.

¹⁵ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors*, p.413.

¹⁶ 'Templar', *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 25th May 2018, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Templars>> [accessed 12 March 2020].

¹⁷ Haag, *The Templars: History & Myth*, p.11.

¹⁸ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors*, pp.1-2.

¹⁹ Helen Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2001). p.1

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

the Brethren of the German Hospital of St. Mary.²² Desmond Seward states that the order was “given statutes similar to the Templars but with provision for Hospitaller work” suggesting that they incorporated facets from both of these other orders.²³ The Teutonic knights were recognizable due to the fact that they wore a “white cloak with a black cross over a white tunic”.²⁴ The Teutons were organized into three classes or ranks, which were knights, priests and sergeants.²⁵ As well as this and similarly to the Hospitallers the Teutons had a fourth class made up of women called half-sisters whose role it was to act as nurses.²⁶

Knights had a pivotal role throughout the middle ages not just the First Crusade and the development of knighthood goes back to the time of Charlemagne.²⁷ So in order to understand how the military orders developed and if they can be considered a new type of knighthood it is important to understand how knights and knighthood developed. The development of horseback fighting began in earnest with the invention of the stirrup in the eighth century.²⁸ This allowed for the rider to have greater control and mobility over the horse which translated well to fighting from horseback as Michael Howard states that “speed could be converted to shock.”²⁹ As well as this lances evolved from spears to allow for greater shock value and distance of attack.³⁰ This of course, meant that men fighting from horseback had an advantage when fighting men on foot. Of course, because of this advantage the man on horseback became the elite soldier in the medieval period, and furthermore it became an almost exclusive privilege for the nobility.³¹ In addition to this, owning all the equipment needed to become a knight was expensive which meant that no ordinary man could become a knight so it was only the rich that could become this elite soldier.³² The accumulation of the cost of lances, the armour that they wore, and

²² David Nicolle, *Teutonic Knight 1190-1561* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2007). pp.4-5.

²³ Seward, *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders*, p.95.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.95.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.95.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.95.

²⁷ Michael Howard, *War in European History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press,2009), pp.2-3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.2-4.

³² *Ibid.*, p.3.

even the horses themselves added up.³³ The cost would even go further as Michael Howard states:

“At the very least he needed a shield-bearer, *escuyer*, esquire; probably a groom as well; a more lightly mounted horseman to scout and skirmish for him; and one or two foot soldiers to stand guard. So the single knight expanded into a ‘lance’, a team of half a dozen men, like the crew of some enormous battle tank. The whole apparatus came very expensive indeed.”³⁴

Thomas Asbridge supports the idea that this way of life grew to be expensive as he states that the horses at the time of the First Crusade were

“expensive to purchase and even more costly to maintain, requiring feed, horseshoes and quite probably the constant care of what would later be called a squire. Buying a warhorse was the equivalent of today taking out a mortgage on a house, with all the pain of the initial outlay, followed by a lifetime of upkeep payments. This was made all the worse by the fact that knights also had to keep at least one other, lighter mount upon which to travel”.³⁵

The fact that only the richest and the elite could be considered to be a part of this knighthood suggests that the military orders in some regards belong to at least a new type of knighthood. This is due to the fact that they can be considered to be the most skilled fighting men in the medieval period, which can be seen in the sense that their primary role was the defence of the Holy Land, and many of those that joined were the younger sons of lords.³⁶

As knights, knighthood and this style of warfare developed they began to be trained to fit this style from a young age.³⁷ This is where the feudal system comes into play as the knights held land as a vassal of their lord.³⁸ Howard states that this method of a “landholding warrior class developed free of all duties save that of rendering mounted service to their lord for a given number of days during the year.”³⁹

³³ Ibid., p.3.

³⁴ Ibid., p.3.

³⁵ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, p.51.

³⁶ David Nicolle, *Knight Hospitaller (1) 1100-1306*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2001), p.7.

³⁷ Howard, *War in European History* p.3.

³⁸ Elizabeth A.R. Brown, ‘Feudalism’, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 13th December 2019, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/feudalism>> [accessed 8 April 2020].

³⁹ Michael Howard, *War in European History*, p.4.

Incidentally these knights would also be very instrumental in the success of the First Crusade. As can be seen as Asbridge writes “By the time Urban preached the crusade at Clermont, the key characteristics of knighthood – a distinct range of equipment and a consequence style of warfare – were coalescing across Latin Christendom. What really marked out a knight was his ability to fight as a mounted warrior”⁴⁰ The feudal system in this regard sets apart the military orders from the general idea of knighthood because instead of owing fealty to a Lord, they are beholden to Christendom as a whole.

These knights were strongly influenced by the notion of chivalry which factors strongly in what is known as knighthood. Encyclopaedia Britannica states that the definition of Chivalry in “the primary sense of the term in Europe in the Middle Ages is “knights,” or “fully armed and mounted fighting men.” Thence the term came to mean the gallantry and honour expected of knights.”⁴¹ By this definition the knights of the military orders certainly fall under this bracket, but do the military orders relate to the more intricate details of the code of chivalry? Richard W. Kaeuper writes that the ideal chivalric knight is portrayed as “pious and fiercely martial”.⁴² Essentially these knights that acted in accordance with the code of chivalry were expected to act in a warlike but courteous and gallant way. In terms of the military orders there are examples of behaviour exacted in this way, that could show them to be chivalrous or following knightly ideals, and to a larger extent it is a piece of evidence that shows that they can indeed be considered a new type of knighthood.

In the 11th century pilgrimages to the Holy Land and Jerusalem began to increase which ultimately led to the need for pilgrim hospitals there.⁴³ The hospital of St John or the Hospitallers was founded in order to look after these sick and injured pilgrims, before the crusades even started.⁴⁴ Jonathan Riley Smith states that “their prime commitment was to the service of the ‘holy poor’” and interestingly the Hospitallers “foreshadowed the Franciscans” in the sense that they valued poverty and austerity

⁴⁰ Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, p.51.

⁴¹ 'Chivalry', *Encyclopædia Britannica*, (26th August 2019) <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/chivalry>> [accessed 22 March 2020].

⁴² Richard W. Kaeuper, *The First Crusade: A New History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p.4.

⁴³ Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John*, p.3

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.1.

as well.⁴⁵ This ultimately is typical of the religious orders from the middle ages and can be considered to be a very Christian value.⁴⁶ It should be noted that they looked after any one from any religion or nationality: “knowing that the Lord, who calls all to salvation, does not want anyone to perish, mercifully admits men of the pagan faith [Muslims] and Jews...because the Lord prayed for those afflicting him”.⁴⁷ All of these examples show the Hospitallers in such a way that can be considered to be chivalrous and in line with the chivalric ideals as they were created in effect in order to look after the poor and the pilgrims going on a pious pilgrimage, showing their gallant nature.

The Templars also show themselves to conform to some Chivalric ideals. They were initially formed as Dan Jones states, as an “permanent bodyguard for western pilgrims following in Christ’s footsteps on the dangerous roads of the Holy Land.”⁴⁸ This indeed gives the impression that they were founded with some chivalric ideals at the forefront of their being, as the main reason that they were created was to protect pilgrims from bandits. Not only does this show that they were chivalrous by protecting people but also it shows that they had the piety that is also necessary for a chivalric knight.

The Teutonic knights were different than the Hospitallers and Templars in the sense that although were originally founded in the Holy Land they predominantly operated in the Baltic area.⁴⁹ The work that they were performing in this area can be considered Chivalric as they were essentially protecting the faith from the eastern Pagans in the area. They were essentially crusading, a chivalric ideal in itself, in eastern Europe in order to convert these pagans to Christianity, thus showing their immense piety as were furthering the extent of their faith.⁵⁰

The crusades from which the military orders stemmed from heavily influenced the development of chivalry.⁵¹ It was considered to be a pious undertaking if you went on

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp.19-21.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.21.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.21.

⁴⁸ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God’s Holy Warriors*, p.4.

⁴⁹ Gary Dickson, Thomas F. Madden, ‘Crusades’ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 25th October 2019, <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Crusades/The-Childrens-Crusade#ref828469>> [accessed 10 April 2020].

⁵⁰ ‘Teutonic Order’, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 7th January 2018 <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Teutonic-Order>> [accessed 18 March 2020].

⁵¹ ‘Chivalry’, *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

crusade and as stated before the military orders had stemmed from the crusades themselves. Indeed, perhaps the most chivalric ideal that both the Hospitallers and the Templars exhibited was the fact that they were defending the Holy Land from the infidel thus showing their immense piety.⁵² Men would choose to join these orders to defend the Holy Land for God, an example of one of these men is William of Chartres who joined the Templar order, according to his brother “when he wanted to fight overseas for the highest creator”.⁵³ All of these examples from all the different military orders shows that they operated in a chivalric way based on those principles which suggests they did conform to a sense of knighthood which further adds to the idea that they are a new type of knighthood.

Knights under the feudal system and the knights of the military orders whilst both operating under some semblance of an idea of knighthood, differed in their primary goals. For example normal knights were expected to have a family, and look after the lands on which they lived through fighting for their lord but the knights belonging to the military orders were expected to work to defend their faith against infidels and pagans. As well as this a knight of the military order was essentially a fusion between a monk and a knight who took on aspects of both as they are first and foremost religious orders that became militarized.⁵⁴ This combination of a military but religious life is wholly different to the life ordinary knights lived, suggesting a new type of knighthood. One of the aspects that many of the military orders took from the monastic orders is taking a vow of poverty. The Hospitallers rule states: “because the poor of Our Lord, whose serfs we acknowledge ourselves to be, go about naked and meanly dressed. And it would be wrong and improper for the serf to be proud and his lord humble”.⁵⁵ However just because these military orders would renounce wealth and instead they would use it for the good of the whole order, it does not mean that this would prevent them from being part of a knighthood, instead it could be suggested that the incorporation of both monastic and knightly ideals gives greater evidence to class them as a new type of knighthood.

⁵² Seward, *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders*, p.152.

⁵³ Jochen Schenk, *Templar Families: Landowning Families and the Order of the Temple in France, c.1120–1307* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.223.

⁵⁴ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors*, p.51.

⁵⁵ Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John*, p.21.

William Urban compares knighthood to a guild and in a sense the military orders fall into this category as well.⁵⁶ The military orders were essentially guilds, due to the fact that they are a congregation of people that all worked towards one goal which was the defence of the Christian faith and the Holy Land. Kauper writes of Bernard of Clairvaux that he “was willing to recognize a role for the hermaphroditic fusion of monk and knight in a special body of the crusaders, the Order of the Knights Templar, for whom he wrote ‘Praise of the new knighthood’”.⁵⁷ This suggests that Bernard certainly sees the creation of the Knights Templar and by extension military orders in general to be a new type of knighthood. Indeed he said that the defence of the Holy Land was considered to be based upon chivalric ideals.⁵⁸ It can be said that Military orders in the medieval period were a new type of knighthood that had borrowed certain ideas that had already existed.

It should be said that one main reason why they can be considered a new knighthood is that even though they were comprised of knights, many other different types of men formed these military orders as well. As I stated earlier the Teutonic knights had a number of different ranks or classes in their organization.⁵⁹ The Hospitallers also various different people from different walks of life within their order, such as nuns and even children.⁶⁰ Indeed, the Hospitallers would take a child in if its mother could not care for it anymore, perhaps due to being in poverty, death or sickness, and then they would care for it.⁶¹ These children according to Jonathan Riley-Smith were known as the ‘children of St. John’ and would be cared for by the nuns of the order.⁶² This caring of the sick and the poor fell under the main goal of the order. Even some members of the Templar order were not just knights and military men, but there were many who were priests or clerks who helped pioneer the Templars banking system.⁶³ There were also the members who looked after the orders estates and diplomats who carried out diplomacy with the rulers of Western

⁵⁶ William Urban, 'The Teutonic Knights and Baltic Chivalry', *The Historian*, 56.3, (1994), 519-530, (p. 519)

⁵⁷ Kauper, *The First Crusade: A New History*, p. 70.

⁵⁸ Aryeh Grabois, 'Militia and Malitia: The Bernardine Vision of Chivalry' *Springer Link*, 25th October 2019, <https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-137-06864-4_5> [accessed 10 April 2020].

⁵⁹ Seward, *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders*, p.95

⁶⁰ Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John*, pp.22-29.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.29.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.29.

⁶³ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors*, p. 233.

Europe.⁶⁴ I believe that due to the military orders being comprised of not just knights but also all these various other people, it allows the military order to be considered a new type of knighthood, as it wholly different to what people would think of when thinking about the typical knighthood. Military orders were a new knighthood due to the encompassing of the basic foundation that comprises a knighthood but what separates this new knighthood from the other is the differences that are then built upon.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p, 233.

Chapter 2: The Rise of the Military orders.

To begin with, due to the fact that the Knights Templar experienced the most popularity and influence out of all the military orders and were the most widespread, they will be discussed first. Although the Templars were perhaps the most famous out of all the military orders their beginnings were relatively humble as it took them a long time to achieve the extent of their reputation and how we imagine them being in the medieval period today. As Dan Jones states “ The Templars did not arrive on a wave of popular demand, nor was their creation the product of some far-sighted planning between the nascent crusader states and religious authorities in western Christendom” suggesting that initially when they were first formed they were not as crucial to the medieval world as they would soon become.⁶⁵ This can be seen to a further extent as there are no references to the order from this time and it is only when they started to increase their influence and popularity that people started to write about them and their origins.⁶⁶ William of Tyre in the early 1180’s wrote about the orders foundation through the discussion of the king of Jerusalem allowing the founders of the order, Hugh of Payns and Godfrey of Saint-Omer, to settle their order in a “temporary home in his palace which was on the south side of the Temple of the Lord”.⁶⁷ William of Tyre agrees with, as I stated earlier, that the main focus of the Templars in their early years was to protect pilgrims, as he states “they should maintain the safety of the roads and the highways to the best of their ability, for the benefit of pilgrims... against attacks of bandits and marauders”.⁶⁸ It is interesting to note that as Michael Haag writes the “King and Patriarch probably saw the creation of a permanent guard for travellers as complementary to the work of the Hospitallers who were providing care for pilgrims arriving at Jerusalem”.⁶⁹ At this time it seems as if the Templars and Hospitallers, whether intentionally or not were working in tandem with one healing the sick and injured and the other protecting the pilgrims on the

⁶⁵ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God’s Holy Warriors*, p.28.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.28.

⁶⁷ *The Templars: Selected Sources*, Trans. Malcom Barber and Keith Bate (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002). p.25.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.25.

⁶⁹ Haag, *The Templars: History & Myth*, p.96.

road. This would have possibly worked to increase both of the orders influence as they were each providing a different service which complemented each other well.

The catalyst that began the Templars rise, was arguably from a visit to the Holy Land by the count of Anjou Fulk V, who granted the Templars an annual revenue which may have been added too by other French nobles.⁷⁰ Not only this but later in 1127 Hugh of Payns, who was at this time the first Grand Master of the Templars was sent to western Europe on a mission to recruit fighting men to the order as well as gathering donations.⁷¹ This was aided as the king of Jerusalem had written a letter to Bernard of Clairvaux that said they were hoping to get the Pope's approval.⁷² This was a clever move that contributed directly to the increase in influence due to the fact that Bernard of Clairvaux, who was a Cistercian Abbot, was extremely well connected throughout Christendom and had even already written a letter to the pope rejecting a proposal for a Cistercian mission to the Holy Land by saying that "what the Holy Land really needed was "fighting knights not singing and wailing monks".⁷³ This gives the impression that Bernard would have wanted to endorse the order himself as it would provide a role that the Cistercians could not do themselves. As well as this Haag states that "his opinion was regularly sought by papal legates" and that he was "one of the most influential and charismatic figures of the medieval church".⁷⁴ Without a doubt having Bernard of Clairvaux essentially endorsing the order and promoting them to the rulers of Western Europe would have definitely increased the rise of the Templars popularity and influence due to the fact that having someone that influential endorsing your order would have caused people to take notice. Bernard's influence can be seen not just through his work with the Templars, but also with his own Cistercian order with whom he gave a platform to expand their influence as well.⁷⁵ Of course he was not the only one responsible for the Cistercians rise to power but he played a large part in it, and he did this too with the Templars. Bernard seems to have some personal affinity with the Templars which can be seen as he took it upon himself to help with the writing of their first rule

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.96.

⁷¹ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors*, pp.46-47.

⁷² Haag, *The Templars: History & Myth*, p.99.

⁷³ Ibid., p.99.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp.99-100.

⁷⁵ John Richard Meyer, 'St. Bernard of Clairvaux', *Encyclopædia Britannica* 5th February 2020, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Bernard-of-Clairvaux>> [accessed 2 March 2020].

as well as a work titled "In praise of a new Knighthood".⁷⁶ It has been suggested that Bernard also had some involvement with the Templars famous habit of a white robe with a red cross, as the robe is of the same colour as the Cistercians habit, however this is purely speculation.⁷⁷

One of the main factors in the Templars rise in influence and power and which was in stark contrast to their martial prowess, was the establishment of their system of banking, which allowed them to accrue not only a large powerbase but large amounts of money which eventually allowed them to make loans to counts and kings. Indeed, when most people think about the Templars, they immediately associate them with wealth, as they are synonymous with treasure.⁷⁸ Eleanor Ferris states that "the soldiers of the temple, for over a century, handled much of the capital of Western Europe, becoming expert accountants, judicious administrators, and pioneers in that development of credit and its instruments, which was destined to revolutionise the methods of commerce and finance".⁷⁹ To add to this their organization has been described as growing so rich that "it became more powerful than some governments" which explains why they were able to loan to many of the rulers of Western Europe.⁸⁰ Their banking system was developed in line with the reason that they were initially created, to protect pilgrims travelling. Carrying money and wealth on you whether you were travelling within Europe itself or all the way to the Holy Land would have proved perilous as you can have been easily robbed and your wealth stolen, especially if you did not carry any sort of weapon or protection on you. To combat this the Templars created a system that allowed a pilgrim to deposit an amount of money they wished at one temple preceptory for a fee taken by the order, which then allowed them on showing the parchment receipt to receive the same amount that they had originally deposited at the destination preceptory.⁸¹ This allowed them to increase their powerbase and influence as they were seen to be protecting many travellers whilst at the same time gaining wealth through this

⁷⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, trans. by M. Conrad Greenia (Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2000).

⁷⁷ Seward, *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders*, p. 32.

⁷⁸ William N. Goetzmann, *Money Changes Everything: How Finance Made Civilization Possible* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), p.214.

⁷⁹ Eleanor Ferris 'The Financial Relations of the Knights Templars to the English Crown', *The American Historical Review*, 8(1), (1902) 1-17, p.1.

⁸⁰ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors*, p.3.

⁸¹ Haag, *The Templars: History & Myth*, pp. 140-141.

method. As well as this they were providing what could be described as a vital service that many would choose to use.

In the Templar's rule there are references to those brothers who join the order but only temporarily, which may have helped in some way for the increase in their power and influence.⁸² This could have been due to people joining who could not necessarily commit to a full lifetime in the order but still wanted to be involved somehow and could spare a limited amount of time. This possibly would have increased the number of people joining the order as they would only have to join for a fixed time. An example of this is Stephan Raynald who joined the order on a temporary basis whilst he decided whether to join permanently or not.⁸³

The Hospitallers at the time of their inception and afterwards struggled to gain influence and reputation. Helen Nicholson writes that they struggled in "trying to persuade western Europeans to give money and land to the Hospital rather than to an order such as the Cistercians".⁸⁴ This was further increased because they could not identify their original founder by name.⁸⁵ However they did manage to combat this as they used fabricated origin documents which said that the order had existed since the time of the apostles, and later the Anglo-Norman version of the rule states that they had been founded 200 or 300 years before Christ.⁸⁶ Obviously, these are myths, but they were created to and had the desired effect in enticing people to donate to the order. As well as this they gained further prominence after the First Crusade, as Nicholson states "they received many donations from the crusaders who settled in the newly conquered lands of the east as well as from donors in Europe who wanted to support the hospitals work and share in this spiritual belief."⁸⁷ As well as this Pope Paschal II granted papal protection and privileges to the Hospitallers which meant that they were given more recognition which would have encouraged more wealth to come their way.⁸⁸

⁸² *The Templars: Selected Sources*, p.36.

⁸³ Schenk, *Templar Families: Landowning Families and the Order of the Temple in France, c.1120–1307*, p.223.

⁸⁴ Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller*, p.3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.4.

The rise of the Hospitallers would have been increased by their adoption of martial aspects leading to their militarization. The Templars are the first of the main military orders to adopt militarization which could have paved the way for the other orders, such as the Hospitallers as they only became militarized after the Templar Order's inception. There are no records of knights in the Hospitallers until 1160 when "a class of brothers-at-arms under its own officer, The marshal makes its appearance ...and it was not until the 1160s that their dual functions of caring for the poor when they were sick and defending them by force of arms were defined by Master Gilbert of Assailly".⁸⁹ Despite this however there are records of the order having control of various castles throughout the Holy Land before this such as Behtgibelin which they received from King Fulk in 1136 which suggests convincingly they were militarized earlier in the 12th century than we already realized.⁹⁰ This militarization that the order experienced, whether it was earlier than we originally thought or not would have undoubtedly increased their influence, as there were many knights that were willing to join the military orders in order to defend the Holy Land.⁹¹ Many people would have been willing to fight for the cause so it makes sense that the order would have seen an increase in popularity after their militarization. As well as this the renown that the order gained through their martial prowess and the battles that they fought would have been a catalyst in increasing their reputation and influence.

One interesting aspect of the Hospitallers rise came at the detriment of another. Although it will be discussed in more depth later the Templars existence as the arguably the most popular of all the military orders in the middle ages came to an end in 1307 when they were arrested and to a complete destruction in 1312 when the last Grandmaster Jacques de Molay perished at the hands of Pope Clement V and King Phillip IV of France.⁹² There was an obvious problem after this as the lands and holdings that the Templars occupied were vast. They could not be left unattended and many of these holdings were castles that occupied strategic areas so obviously they needed to be manned. Of course in France most of the wealth that the Templars enjoyed were taken by the King, as was his plan, but in other countries in Western Europe they were handed to the other military orders such as the

⁸⁹ Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John*, p.34.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.34.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.34

⁹² 'Templar', *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Hospitallers.⁹³ Dan Jones states that “in May 1312 it was decided that Templar property would be granted to the Hospitallers, to support their mission in the east” as well as “in the Spanish Peninsula the Templars’ lands were to be carved up between the secular rulers, the Hospitallers and the new military order based at Montesa in Aragon.”⁹⁴ In England, Clarence Perkins states “when the king formally ordered his keepers to give up the Temple lands to the Hospitallers, he had all the larger animals and the movables delivered to various royal appointees, who sold them for what they would bring or gave them away at the king's order”.⁹⁵ Even though this says that the king took all the moveable goods for himself, the Hospitallers still received the Templars lands and presumably at the same time their holdings and castles. With this being the case, this would have increased the influence of the Hospitallers throughout Europe as they were receiving lands, holdings and wealth at the detriment of the Templars, thus increasing in both physical and material power. This in turn would have led them to having more sway in the lands that they inhabited, because they were more powerful, but as well as this this would have helped them in other regards such as their efforts in the Holy Land as they had many of the Templars assets that could allow for increased focus in this area.

The Teutonic Knights were founded in 1190 after the siege of Acre by a small number of the German remnants from Frederick Barbarossa's army.⁹⁶ They were not as rich or as influential as the Templars or Hospitallers, however they still managed to acquire land in the Holy Land.⁹⁷ The rule that these knights adopted proved to be very similar to the rules of these other orders.⁹⁸ The main focus of the Teutonic knights geographically was eastern Europe as they had transferred their main focus from the middle east to this area after the fall of Acre in 1291.⁹⁹ This meant that their recruitment and to a further extent their popularity and influence would have increased as they were the main order operating in the Baltic crusades. This would have meant that if people were wanting to help Christendom expand in this area, they would have been more likely to join the Teutonic knights over the Templars or

⁹³ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors*, p.389.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.394

⁹⁵ Clarence Perkins, 'The Wealth of the Knights Templars in England and the Disposition of it after their Dissolution', *The American Historical Review*, 15(2), (1910), 252-263, p.257.

⁹⁶ Seward, *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders*, p.95.

⁹⁷ Nicolle, *Teutonic Knight 1190-1561*, p.5.

⁹⁸ Seward, *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders*, p.95.

⁹⁹ Nicolle, *Teutonic Knight 1190-1561*, p.13.

Hospitallers. As well as this, by transferring their power base and their crusade focus from the Holy Land to Europe this allowed them to re-enforce and resupply a lot quicker than if they had to travel all the way to the Holy Land. This proved fruitful for the Teutonic knights as this change of direction meant that their influence increased as the land in which they now occupied could be deforested and their farming allowing for a greater increase in financial revenues and as well as this “an imperial bull of 1226 and a ducal ‘deed of gift’ four years later gave the Teutonic knights much greater freedom across Prussia”.¹⁰⁰ However even in the middle east the Teutonic knights proved to be somewhat popular as David Nicolle suggests that “the Teutonic order had continued to play a significant role in Cilicia, where their presence may have been encouraged by the Armenian rulers as a counterweight to the Templars, who were powerful in neighbouring Antioch.”¹⁰¹ Suggesting that people would have seen them as an alternative to the Templar order and joined them instead.

The Teutonic knights also managed to increase their influence through absorbing other orders and other orders properties. In 1238 they absorbed a smaller German military order into their ranks known as the Order of the Sword Brethren who according to Nicolle consisted of “110 knights, 400 to 500 mounted sergeants, about 700 mercenaries, 400 or so German vassals from its territories in Estonia, up to 5,000 native auxiliaries, six castles and numerous smaller outposts in Livonia” before a defeat in battle to the Lithuanians two years before.¹⁰² This order then became a branch of the Teutonic order and carried on its conquest of Livonia.¹⁰³ Through the absorbing of this order it allowed the Teutonic knights to increase the number of men that they could call upon in battle but also increase the wealth through the properties they owned.

Hochmeister Hermann von Salza is regarded as one of the greatest leaders in the Teutonic orders history as they achieved the greatest influx of wealth during his time in charge, which allowed the order to organize their own military campaigns towards

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.16.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.4.

¹⁰² Ibid., p.16

¹⁰³ ‘Order of the Brothers of the Sword’ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 25th October 2011

<<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Order-of-the-Brothers-of-the-Sword>> [accessed 14 April 2020].

the Baltic.¹⁰⁴ Hermann himself was a very influential figure during his time as can be seen as he reconciled Pope Gregory IX and the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire Frederick II as well as between once again Frederick II and his unruly son.¹⁰⁵ As was discussed with the Templars and the endorsement of Bernard of Clairvaux it helps the order massively to have an influential figure such as these and Hermann von Salza is no different. As the order had this figure in von Salza it allowed the order to become more popular and influential as Jeffrey Sullebarger states “Hermann’s politicking indubitably helped the Order make the transition from a minor house to one of the three great military Orders of the Latin East”.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Nicolle, *Teutonic Knight 1190-1561*, p.13.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Hermann Von Salza’, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 16th March 2020, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hermann-von-Salza>>, (Accessed: 26th March 2020).

¹⁰⁶ Jeffrey Sullebarger, ‘*The Teutonic Order in Outremer*’ Fordham University <<https://frenchofoutremer.ace.fordham.edu/thematic-essays/the-teutonic-order-in-outremer/>> [accessed 22 April 2020].

Chapter 3: The Decline of the Military Orders

The most dramatic of all the military orders declines is the Templars. Indeed, the events surrounding the orders demise have given rise to many fantastical yet fictitious stories which add to the mystique surrounding them. There are many examples of these fantastical stories that have originated from the Templars demise such as them still existing today and running the world in secret.¹⁰⁷ Not only this but there are other myths such as the Templars looking after the fabled Holy Grail, and that they are the protectors of Christ's secret bloodline.¹⁰⁸ All of this originated from their destruction which began in 1305 when the college of cardinals elected the Frenchman Clement V as pope who knew in order to achieve his aspirations he would be beholden to king Phillip the IV due to his nationality.¹⁰⁹ Phillip himself, was the main reason for the destruction of the Templars and even before these events transpired he had proposed a merger between the Hospitallers and the Templars. Michael Haag states that Phillip proposed this because he wanted control over the two orders and to use them as a weapon for France.¹¹⁰ From this it can be suggested that he wanted to have control over their wealth and to use their martial abilities for his own means. This makes it easy to understand how he later came to the decision to destroy the Templars for good.

King Phillip IV in his attempt to reduce the support given to the Templars, came up with a number of crimes that would attempt to show the Templars in an unfavourable light. One of the crimes that Phillip accused the Templars of was denying Christ, an extreme crime in the middle ages, but even more so as it was directed against the Templars who fought for the defence of the Christian faith.¹¹¹ If this was true, this would have been extremely serious especially in such a pious time, and due to the nature of the crime it would mean that it would not just be a select number of individuals participating in this, but instead the entire order. This can be seen in

¹⁰⁷ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors*, p.3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.3.

¹⁰⁹ Michael Haag, *The Tragedy of the Templars: The Rise and Fall of the Crusader states* (London: Profile Books, 2012). pp.339-340.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.340.

¹¹¹ Barber, *The Trial of the Templars*, p.45.

Phillips letter to John of Tourville in which he admonishes the Templars supposed actions as he writes:

“there has recently echoed in our ears, to our not inconsiderable astonishment and vehement horror, vouched for by many people worthy to be believed, a bitter thing, a lamentable thing, a thing horrible to contemplate, terrible to hear, a heinous crime, an execrable evil, a abominable deed, a hateful disgrace, a completely inhuman thing, indeed remote from all humanity”.¹¹²

“It is comparable to stupid beasts or rather in its stupendous bestiality it transcends the very stupidity of those beasts and exposes itself to the most nefarious of crimes which the sensuality of those very beasts themselves abhors and rejects. It has forsaken God its maker, It has departed from God its saviour...Some time ago indeed, we received insistent reports...that brothers of the Order of the knights off the Temple, wolves in sheep’s clothing...are again crucifying our Lord Jesus Christ in these days...When they enter the order and make their profession they are confronted with his image and their miserable or rather pitiful blindness makes them deny him three times and spit in his face three times”.¹¹³

Phillip in this letter makes It clear that the rumours originate from people who are to be believed in order to make these outlandish claims seem more legitimate. He also is keen to extrapolate the fact that the crime is a terrible one by repeating it in a number of different ways, perhaps in order to drive home the shock factor of what they have been doing is so extreme and terrible.

The reason that many believed these accusations, could have possibly been because of the secrecy that the Templars exhibited. A lot of the intricate details of the order such as the initiation process, that Phillip talks about here were kept secret which meant that no one outside of the order knew what was really happening there.¹¹⁴ As a result, these claims would have been more likely to be believed as no one really knew what was actually happening. Despite this however, the fact remains that the accusations were not truly believed outside of France. Dan Jones states that Edward II of England’s reaction to Phillip IV’s accusation was that of ridicule, even though he was betrothed to Philip’s daughter Isabella, which makes this surprising

¹¹² *The Templars: Selected Sources*, p. 244.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.245

¹¹⁴ Maurice Keen, *The Penguin History of Medieval Europe* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 217.

that he initially took this view.¹¹⁵ He wrote to the “kings of Aragon, Navarre, Castile, Portugal and Naples telling them that the allegations were absurd and that they should be careful what they believed.”¹¹⁶ However, despite this he complied with “*Pastoralis praeeminentiae* only reluctantly and when 144 English Templars were arrested in January 1308, the sheriffs who made the arrests were warned not to put the brothers into ‘hard and vile’ prisons” and the “English master William of la More was allowed good rooms in Canterbury, a daily spending allowance and several servants, and he could wander the town as he pleased”.¹¹⁷ If this statement is true it shows that although the English king complied with the order from the Pope he clearly held the Templars in high regard and clearly did not believe the accusations and so let them have the benefit of the doubt. However, it shows the sway that Phillip IV had over Clement and to larger extent that he was able to influence the realms outside of his control to arrest the Templars to further his own goals even if they did not wholly believe it.

One factor that contributed to Phillip IV causing the Templars demise was their accumulation of immense wealth and their practice of loaning this wealth out to various rulers in western Europe including Phillip. King Phillip IV of France had accumulated massive debts in his time as king and just one year before the arrest of the Templar order in 1307, he persecuted the Jewish population of France by driving them from their lands and confiscating their properties in order to take their wealth to alleviate some of the debts that he had accumulated.¹¹⁸ This fact alone suggests that the absurd accusations that he made against the Templars were probably not true as he had a history of confiscating other people’s wealth. As well as this In England Edward II also used the Templars wealth and holdings for his own use such as sending the grain found in the Templar holdings to his forces in Scotland.¹¹⁹ According to Clarence Perkins, Edward also used the orders wealth to “pay arrears of salary due to his clerks, to give alms to religious houses, and to provide for Scotch refugees.”¹²⁰ In addition “In 1312 he increased his income by cutting and selling

¹¹⁵ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God’s Holy Warriors*, pp.386-387

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p.387.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.387.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp.349-350.

¹¹⁹ Perkins ‘The Wealth of the Knights Templars in England and the Disposition of it after their Dissolution’, p.256.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p.257.

considerable amounts of timber from the estates.”¹²¹ Even though Edward did not fully believe the accusations he ultimately could not resist the wealth that the Templars had.

The fall of Acre in 1291 and the subsequent loss of the Holy Land contributed to the decline of many of the military orders, especially those whose focus was on the Holy Land. Once this last stronghold fell, it essentially spelled the end for the Christian holdings there which meant that the military orders would need to move their headquarters elsewhere. The Hospitallers along with the Templars chose Cyprus as a temporary base of operations, partly due to the proximity of the Holy Land and because they believed that they would soon return.¹²² Instead of following them the Teutonic order chose to move their base to Venice and then later in 1309 to Prussia where their focus shifted to the Baltic.¹²³ After the fall of Acre in 1291 attitudes to the crusading movement began to wane and propagandists began to write negatively of the military orders as Nicolle writes that they “identified the Biblical ‘Four Horsemen of the apocalypse’ with the military orders of Templars, Hospitallers, Teutonic Knights and also the Militia Christi founded by St. Dominic”.¹²⁴ Once the Holy Land was lost there was less of a need for these military orders because their influence and manpower were not concentrated in the east but they were instead based mainly in Europe which resulted in the enthusiasm for crusading as a whole diminish.¹²⁵ A lot of the blame was put on the military orders as they were responsible for the defence of the Holy Land which led to ridicule and there were many questions asked of them.¹²⁶ As well as this there were ideas proposed to combine all the military orders into one single institution in order to improve their effectiveness.¹²⁷ The fact that there were propositions for a merger shows that many at the time were dissatisfied with the job that the military orders were doing which undoubtedly meant that there was increasing doubt about the orders and it is easy to see that they started to decline because of this. Nicholson states that “as defenders of the Holy Land, they were first in line to be blamed for its loss” which further

¹²¹ Ibid., p.257.

¹²² Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller*, p.43.

¹²³ Seward, *The Monks of War*, p.221.

¹²⁴ Nicolle, *Teutonic Knight: 1190 -1561*, p.29.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.29.

¹²⁶ Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John*, p.51.

¹²⁷ Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller*, p.44.

suggests that because of this momentous loss of Christian influence in the Holy Land people began to become dissatisfied with them.¹²⁸ Indeed, soon after this the Templars ceased to exist and the others soon faded into the background losing the influence that they had held before, and although they still exist, they are not as influential. As well as the fact there was no Christian control in the Holy Land it meant that the Crusading movement started to decline as there was less interest in the area.¹²⁹ Despite this however there were proposals put forward by the Templars and Hospitallers for the retaking of the Holy Land. Indeed the master of the Hospitallers Fulk of Villaret, goes into great detail about how he believes the Holy land can be retaken and in his invasion plans he details every aspect of this.¹³⁰ However this never came to fruition perhaps due to the interesting in the crusading movement diminishing.

After the loss of Acre and the Holy Land The Hospitallers Grand master who participated in the evacuation of Acre, John de Villiers had died and according to Helen Nicholson Odo de Pins who became the successor was not well liked that “in 1295 a group of senior Hospitallers presented the Pope with a plan for reforming the order.”¹³¹ Although this did not come to fruition it shows that even members within the order were becoming dissatisfied with what happened and how the order was being run which resulted in them trying to reform it. Not only was this the case but there was also distrust from outside the order as James II of Aragon did not trust the Hospitallers from outside his kingdom coming in. As well as this James had been attempting to hinder the transferring of the Hospitallers resources from Aragon to the east.¹³² These facts show the beginning of the decline as they were started to become distrusted by those outside and even within the order.

Arguably the biggest factor in the Hospitallers decline was the loss of Malta and the events leading up to this. The order was granted the island of Malta in 1530 by Emperor Charles V after a period of wandering and the island became the order's

¹²⁸ Ibid., p.43.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p.29.

¹³⁰ Fulk of Villaret Available at, 'A Plan to regain the Holy Land from the Master of the Hospitallers', *De Re Militari*, 4th February 2014, <<https://deremilitari.org/2014/02/a-plan-to-regain-the-holy-land-from-the-master-of-the-hospitallers-c-1305/>> [accessed 20 April 2020].

¹³¹ Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller*, p.44

¹³² Karl Borchardt, Nikolas Jaspert, Helen J. Nicholson, *The Hospitallers, the Mediterranean and Europe: Festschrift for Anthony Luttrell* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd, 2007), p. 81
Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller* p.46.

main headquarters.¹³³ According to Riley-Smith the order began to decline in revenues and lose its ability to defend itself due to the French Revolution and the loss of all its French assets in 1792 and “by 1797 it had lost all its estates west of the Rhine, in Switzerland and in northern Italy.”¹³⁴ The French, who were under Napoleon, then decided to attack the Hospitallers on Malta as they were on their way to Egypt.¹³⁵ The French soon defeated them and took control of the island, which resulted in not only the loss of their headquarters but accusations of treachery from inside the order and as a military order they were bound not to fight fellow Christians.¹³⁶ After this, the order was dispersed until it came under the protection of Tsar Alexander I of Russia, but this ultimately meant that they did not exist under their own accord and that they were essentially subordinates to the Russian crown.¹³⁷ Nicholson writes that “the order’s subordination to a secular prince, who was unchaste and did not recognise the pope, had brought it into disrepute as a religious order and reduced it to the level of one of the new pseudo-religious Orders of nobility of the enlightenment”.¹³⁸ Here it is possible to see that the loss of Malta resulted in the order’s dramatic decline as they essentially went from being self-governed and very influential to being the puppet or subordinate of a king that did not even recognise the pope.¹³⁹

However, the Hospitallers still exist in various forms today. They are survived for example by St John’s Ambulance in England, and perhaps more directly in the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.¹⁴⁰ The Sovereign Military Order of Malta is considerably smaller than its Medieval counterpart as according to Jonathan Riley-Smith at the time of his writing in 1999 there were around forty members who could claim to be a brother knight and “some 10,000 lay men and women, who are made knights and dames in various categories by the grand master by virtue of his sovereignty”.¹⁴¹ This order now engages in numerous charity work across the globe, the projects include “a maternity hospital in Bethlehem; hospitals in France, Italy and

¹³³ Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John*, p.106.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.122.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.122.

¹³⁶ Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller*, p.136.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.140.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.140.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.140.

¹⁴⁰ Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John*, p.vii.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.126.

Latin America; ambulance corps in Austria, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Poland and Slovakia; and clinics, orphanages and health centres around the world.¹⁴² St John's ambulance with around 60,000 members in forty-six counties is "the countries leading first-aid training organization, instructing up to half a million people a year in England Wales and Northern Ireland".¹⁴³ Although perhaps not as prestigious or as influential as they were in the medieval period this shows that despite their decline, they are still prevalent and are still carrying on the charitable work that the order has done, throughout their long history.

In the case of the Teutonic knights the Black Death had a direct result in their decline. In the Prussian lands in the 15th century the number of inhabited settlements had greatly diminished due to the Bubonic plague that had ravished most of Western Europe the century before, estimates suggest that they had fallen from 170,000 before the plague to under 40,000 in 1450.¹⁴⁴ The depopulation of the lands of Europe meant that the need for wheat started to diminish which was the source of the Teutonic knights prosperity, coupled with this the lack of manpower and labour there was not enough people to cultivate the orders estates.¹⁴⁵ This left the order with a lack of money and they could not afford to pay the polish demands of the peace of Thorun which worsened their relations with the Polish Kingdom.¹⁴⁶

Before this the Teutonic knights fought the Polish at the battle of Grunwald, also known as the battle of Tannenberg, a battle that the order arguably never fully recovered from. This battle is generally believed to be the main catalyst in the decline of the order, as it proved to be a massive defeat for the Teutons.¹⁴⁷ As well as this battle being the death of their Hochmeister it also resulted in around 18,000 casualties and around 14,000 more were taken prisoner, of which many were knights of the order.¹⁴⁸ A defeat this heavy as well as one including the death of their grand master meant they struggled to overcome this, and in the aftermath Poland began to

¹⁴² Ibid., p.127

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 145

¹⁴⁴ Richard Wunderli, *Peasant Fires: The Drummer of Niklashausen* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 52.

¹⁴⁵ Seward, *The Monks of War*, p.126.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp.126-127.

¹⁴⁷ Charles Phillips, Encyclopædia Britannica, *Battle of Grunwald* (8th July 2019) <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Grunwald-1410>> [accessed 8 April 2020].

¹⁴⁸ Seward, *The Monks of War*, p.125.

emerge as a dominant force in the area.¹⁴⁹ This ultimately led the order to be effectively bankrupt, and although the conflict would continue into the late 15th century they never managed to regain the influence they had lost after the battle of Tannenberg in 1410 resulting in a decline of their influence and power.¹⁵⁰

There were many at the time who were mistrusting of the Teutonic knights as can be seen in this statement cited by David Nicolle from Roger Bacon as he writes:

“The Christian princes who labour for their conversion [the pagans], and especially the brothers of the Teutonic Order, desire to reduce them to servitude...For this reason they offer opposition, hence they are resisting oppression, not the arguments of a superior religion.”¹⁵¹

Bacon here is dealing a serious accusation towards the Teutons in that he is suggesting that the knights are not looking to convert the pagans in the Baltic to Christianity as is their goal but instead are looking to conquer them and to keep them as slaves. Bacon here is perhaps defending the actions of the pagans to resist and to fight back as he writes they are resisting oppression, painting the Teutonic Knights as those that are in the wrong. Coming from a well-known and influential person this type of propaganda writing would have been than believed by many people and as a result would have meant that the enthusiasm for the Teutonic Knights and their cause would have been lessened. Perhaps this feeling of lessened enthusiasm for the Teutonic cause resulted from the fact that in the German lands the pagan warriors, although they were enemies, were seen as “honourable but misguided” and due to the Christian knights slaughtering these enemies it was seen as a sin as they were supposed to “emulate the mercy shown by God to his enemies.”¹⁵² Not only this but they are believed to have looked down upon these pagans, even those that had undertaken the conversion to Christianity.¹⁵³ The fact that many held this view of the Teutonic knights meant that their popularity and influence started to decline as they now had a reputation that was not conducive to popularity. The fact that many of their enemies had converted to Christianity also meant that they had no reason to

¹⁴⁹ Charles Phillips, *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

¹⁵⁰ Seward, *The Monks of War*, pp.126-133.

¹⁵¹ Nicolle, *Teutonic Knight: 1190 -1561*, p.29.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p.29.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.28.

attack these people as their goal of increasing the extent of the Christian faith had been reached which resulted in less of a need for them.

Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to assess the factors that caused the rise in influence of the military orders and the eventual decline as well as assessing whether they can be considered a new type of knighthood or if they just borrow from what was already there. This dissertation has shown that there were numerous factors that caused the rise and decline of each military order and some of these have are common to numerous orders. It has also shown that the military orders can be considered a new type of knighthood due to the similarities but also the differences between them. Whilst what we generally think of as knighthood are knights that are in the feudal system who are beholden to the lord above them, what sets apart the military orders is that they are only beholden to the Order, and to a larger extent the Pope and Christendom as a whole. As well as this these knights in the military orders do not just serve a martial purpose but they are also more beholden to God and as a result prayers were an important part of their lifestyle and they also took on various duties that monks would have performed.¹⁵⁴

I think that the dissertation has also done well to filter out the fact from the fiction and not get drawn into the myths that surround the order. It would have been easy to talk about the various stories that dominate our popular culture, especially of the Templars. However, this dissertation, although mentioning them, did not go into any great detail about them in order to keep the dissertation based in reality.

Through research this dissertation found the crusades played a pivotal part in the development of the popularity and influence of these military orders and even in some cases the creation of them. The Templars it could be argued were created as a result of the First Crusade, and the Hospitallers benefited from this greatly as it meant that it increased the donations that they received and an influx of men ready to fight for their cause.¹⁵⁵ In the case of the Teutonic knights they were founded due to the Third Crusade and later were the main contributors in the Baltic crusades.¹⁵⁶

This dissertation came to the conclusion that the fall of Acre in 1291 and the loss of the Holy land was a shared factor in causing the decline of all the military orders

¹⁵⁴ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors*, p.51.

¹⁵⁵ Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller*, p.4.

¹⁵⁶ Nicolle, *Teutonic Knight 1190-1561*, pp.4-5.

discussed in this dissertation. A conclusion can be reached that could attribute this loss as the main cause for each of the orders decline. In the Templars case it certainly would have contributed to their downfall as they would have come under criticism as they were meant to be defending the Holy Land resulting in peoples opinion of the Templars decreasing which is why they were vulnerable to Phillip IV. The Hospitallers and the Teutonic knights certainly did well to adapt to the new circumstances after the loss of the Holy Land and the fact that they still exist today shows this.

There are lots of reasons that could be seen as factors causing the rise and decline of these orders and I had to carefully choose what to include in this dissertation and what to omit. As well as this there were a lot of information surrounding the Templars which was to be expected as there is far more material on them than the other orders. Further research into this subject would allow for a deeper analysis of the factors omitted as well as the use of more primary sources and secondary sources that could not be included in this study. Unfortunately, the Spanish orders had to also be omitted from the dissertation as the inclusion of them would have resulted in the dissertation not going into greater detail in other aspects. This means that further research would allow for more widespread discussion on these other orders.

Military orders are widely used in popular culture in the modern period which is testament to their important status throughout the middle ages and beyond. Indeed, they are regularly seen in novels and in movies, as well as video games, and have featured heavily in fiction throughout the recent past. The Templars have featured in many fictional stories, some just after or in their own lifetime, which is testament to the important role that they and to a further extent, all the military orders played throughout the medieval period.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Jones, *The Templars: The Rise and Fall of God's Holy Warriors*, p.1.

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