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Contributions of the Military Orders

Pope Urban II called upon all the remnants of the Holy Roman Empire to save their Christian brethren in the east. Urban II carefully chose a quote from the Gospel reading, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."¹ Such a statement resonated with the Christian people. Secondly, lay religious zeal was on the rise. Coupled with the fear of fellow Christians perishing, the crusades erupted. At the end of the Popular Crusade, or First Crusade, a new order of business was encouraged. A new structure of knights was to be created. These knights made up militarized orders that incorporated spirituality and warring. Such a contrast may appear unattainable. Yet, those of the new orders incorporated aspects of monastic life into the crusading movement.

Military orders arose in defense of the Crusader states of the Near East. This was a gradual development that sought to combine those with military power with the spiritual realm, that had coincided for years. Crusaders were deeply burdened by lack of proper sustenance.² For this reason, one can contend that a powerful faith would lead to higher morals. James W. Brodman contended that all the crusader military orders came from a common origin. That he argued, was monasticism, which was later transformed and paired with military life. Not every military order exemplified monastic teachings. The Order of St. John, for instance, was much

¹ August. C. Krey, *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants*, (Princeton: 1921), 28-30.

²Tyerman, Christopher, ed., *Chronicles of the First Crusade* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004), 269.

more secular than other orders Hospitaller functions attracted these military orders because they incorporated a monk's inclination to help the poor; and, because of the pope's statement on this, a new type of knighthood developed. The Orders of the Temple, in contrast, had guidelines that related to monastic tradition and life. Additionally, some orders arose combining both prayer and battle into one.³ The Teutonic Knights and the Knights of the Templar are ideal examples of this juxtaposition. Those military orders in the Iberian peninsula are powerful examples of the crusading movement. In addition to this, some historians contend

Hospital's played an important role in the creation of these military orders. Hospitallers grew into prominence at the end of the eleventh century. Their original goals were to assist those suffering in the Holy Land. They did not focus only on Christians, and sought to help ameliorate the pain of Jews and Muslims that were injured as well.⁴ The Order of the Holy Spirit, for instance, took special care of children and women. Networks of hospitals sprung up throughout France, and provided both shelter and care. This inclination to aid the needy is attributed largely in part to the Gregorian Reform movement. Religious orders formed because of this movement. These orders had three main goals, which included: service, poverty, and spirituality.⁵ Many of these aims were adopted by the military orders of the Crusade States. Brodman argues that the militarization of such monastic groups was a result of two entities that gradually became one. The militarization of these orders can, to some degree, also be attributed to the pope's opposition

³ Brodman, James W. "Rule and Identity: The Case of the Military Orders." *The Catholic Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (2001): 383-400. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25025970>.

⁴ Brundage, James A. *The Catholic Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (2011): 121-22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23052762>.

⁵ Brodman, James W. "Rule and Identity: The Case of the Military Orders." *The Catholic Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (2001): 383-400. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25025970>.

to Hospitallers fighting. Because of the pope's opposition to this, orders such as the Knights Templar and Teutonic Knights were able to flourish.⁶

After the loss of Edessa, Pope Eugenius III called for a second crusade. In response, Bernard of Clairvaux wrote a letter to promote this mission. This is a particularly important source, as it is in regard to the formation of military orders. Bernard, a monk, wrote about matters "which concerns the service of Christ." He noted the importance of religious zeal, as well as the significance of military prowess for the service of God. He encouraged crusaders to be both religious and continue to hold their warlike skill.⁷ Faced with the juxtaposition of prayer and battle, the Templars combined both actions into a military order.⁸

At the Cistercian abbot, Bernard of Clairvaux actively promoted the new military order. The Knights Templar, under the leadership of Hugh de Payens, is believed to have been founded around the year 1119, and was officially recognized by the pope in 1128.⁹ This military order lasted about 200 years, and changed very little once it was formed.¹⁰ This order was to be called the Knights Templar.¹¹ He called them, "knights of Christ," and spoke highly of their importance to the crusading goals. He concluded that the Knights of the Temple should be obedient. Additionally, they should not have wives or children. Furthermore, these knights were to have very few possessions, and should help one another. Similarly, those in Holy orders, such as monks, were required to take similar vows. Specifically, those of: poverty, chastity, and

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt, ed., *The Crusades: A Reader* (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 128-129.

⁸ Dawson, Ian. *Teaching History*, no. 86 (1997): 37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43260227>.

⁹ S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt, ed., *The Crusades: A Reader* (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 132.

¹⁰ Brundage, James A. *The Catholic Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (2011): 121-22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23052762>.

¹¹ S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt, ed., *The Crusades: A Reader* (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 129-130.

obedience. In addition to their encouraged vows, these men would also “charge the enemy” for God. Similar to other orders, the Templars followed monastic Rules.¹² Their rhetoric not only incorporated prayer, but also militarization. The brothers were to incorporate monastic guidelines, like feeding a poor person after the death of a brother, similar to monks.¹³ Because of the similarities between the Knights Templar and monks, Bernard of Clairvaux did not know how to specifically categorize these men. He thought it best to classify them as both knight and monk. Bernard of Clairvaux stressed that these men were hand-picked by God, and would have the capability to succeed and aid the Crusading States.¹⁴

In the Iberian Peninsula, the Order of Santiago is vital in understanding the role of military orders in the crusades. At about the middle of the twelfth century, military orders began to play a role in Spanish endeavors.¹⁵ Christian, Spanish rulers hastily attempted to have military help from the Temple. Ramón Berenguer IV, and others, appear to have been trying for years to persuade the military order to assist them in founding a convent in Grañena. After almost a decade of struggle, the Templars agreed to battle the Muslims in Aragon and Catalonia.¹⁶ During the later part of the twelfth century, new orders sprung up throughout Spain. These were brought about in order to ameliorate the limitations of the other orders, the Hospitallers and Templars. The order of Santiago was founded in 1170. The order of Santiago was prominent in the Valencia region of Spain and was preferred by Jaime. For this reason, the order was gifted

¹² Brodman, James W. "Rule and Identity: The Case of the Military Orders." *The Catholic Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (2001): 383-400. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25025970>.

¹³ Brodman, James W. "Rule and Identity: The Case of the Military Orders." *The Catholic Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (2001): 383-400. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25025970>.

¹⁴ S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt, ed., *The Crusades: A Reader* (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 129-131.

¹⁵ Forey, A.J. "The Military Orders and the Spanish Reconquest in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries." *Traditio* 40 (1884): 198.

¹⁶ Forey, A.J. "The Military Orders and the Spanish Reconquest in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries." *Traditio* 40 (1884): 199.

castles of Anna and Enguera.¹⁷ As the order grew strength, it became one of the favored orders in Iberia. Because of this, the order was given a lot of land and eastern parts of the frontier.¹⁸ As time went on, however, the bombardment of the castles took a toll on the order. Resources became more and more limited, and recruitment dropped.¹⁹ This led largely in part to the failures of the crusades.

During the Third Crusade, another group of military orders formed. The Teutonic Knights, were called “brothers of the sword,” by Nikolaus Von Jeroschin. He wrote about the Teutonic Knights during the Prussian Crusade during the 1330s.²⁰ This military order lasted roughly three centuries.²¹ This crusade fought to save Christians from the Prussian heathens. Also known as the order of the Hospital of St. Mary of German House of Jerusalem, this order came about in order to avenge the disgracing of God. Like every military order, they sought to rid the Holy Land of infidels.²²

The Teutonic Knights were to follow very similar rules to those of monks. The master was supposed to make sure that all were abiding by such regulations. These included: chastity, living without property, and obedience. Very strict guidelines were emplaced in order to prevent these rules from being broken. For instance, women were permitted to aid in services; yet, they were only allowed to be received by special permission by the provincial commander. This was because the leaders of the order had fears that close relations with women would tempt the men

¹⁷ Forey, A.J. “The Military Orders and the Spanish Reconquest in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries.” *Traditio* 40 (1884): 201-203.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

²⁰ S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt, ed., *The Crusades: A Reader* (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 270- 272.

²¹ Bachrach, David S. *The Journal of Military History* 70, no. 4 (2006): 1114-1115.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4138204>.

²² *Ibid.*, 267.

into breaking their vow. In addition, those in this order could accept only boys of fourteen years of age, or older. Special exemptions occurred for boys willingly brought to the compound. However, these boys were not to fight until they reached their fourteenth year.²³ Peter de Roches, was placed under the Teutonic Order by a bishop in England. This was because he believed this order encompassed millenarianism and good deeds, like those that monks would follow.²⁴ The Teutonic Knights were very important in the Prussian Crusade. Although they eventually ceased to exist in the year 1268, they made considerable advancements in Eastern Europe. Countries like Hungary, Prussia, and Livonia were greatly affected by this order. The Teutonic Knights played a very important role in the crusading movement. They affected the cultural, economic, and political development predominantly in northeastern Europe.²⁵ On the other hand, they did not make as many lasting and successful strives in Middle East. Although they were originally based out of the Holy Land, they were captured in western Galilee.²⁶

The military orders were founded in predominantly non-Christian lands. They had the purpose of defending Christian land in accordance to Christian war doctrines.²⁷ These military orders were small communities. Sometimes ranging from three to fifteen brethren. Given that these orders had both spiritual and warring needs, not only were there chaplains but also sergeants. These sergeants often took roles outside of fighting, such as agriculture and domestic responsibilities.²⁸ These were very aggressive initiatives. Raids by the Teutonic Order were

²³ Ibid., 268-269.

²⁴ Brodman, James W. "Rule and Identity: The Case of the Military Orders." *The Catholic Historical Review* 87, no. 3 (2001): 383-400. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25025970>.

²⁵ Bachrach, David S. *The Journal of Military History* 70, no. 4 (2006): 1114-1115. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4138204>.

²⁶ S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt, ed., *The Crusades: A Reader* (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 267.

²⁷ Riley-Smith, Johnathan, *The Crusades: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 257-258.

²⁸ Forey, A.J. "The Military Orders and the Spanish Reconquest in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries." *Traditio* 40 (1884): 210.

incredibly brutal on the Crusading States. The Hospitallers used their nautical advantages to authorize piracy. This piracy was viewed as a component of a holy war.²⁹

Attempts to regain Christian land were very powerful, they were not all successful. For instance, there are only a few fortified locations around the Muslim boundaries. This suggests that the orders were not able to establish as many Christian advances as they had wanted. While there were unified orders, the fact that some orders had troops that were so small could have made them less successful. Moreover, readings on this topic have not shown anything about the training that these men in the military orders went through. This suggests that very little practice was out in before warring, causing them to be less efficient than they could have been if they had been prepared.

The military orders arose for several reasons. First, lay piety and religious zeal promoted by Pope Urban II. Next, the independent development of religious and warring groups. These groups eventually joined together because the military aims were congruent with Christianity. This is because crusaders believed that they were doing God's will by killing the heathens and evil worshipers. One may contend that the lack of provisions on the Crusades led to a heightened need for a rise in morale. This rise may be a result of religious zeal put into practice by monk-like warriors. This new knighthood developed across the Crusade states and were very powerful forces. The Hospitaller, for instance, incorporated almsgiving and charity to those they encountered. They helped not only Christians they came upon, but also Muslims and Jews. Although this order was militarized to some degree, the Knights Templar was much more mobilized. The "knights of Christ," felt like a formidable group because they were backed by

²⁹ Riley-Smith, Johnathan, *The Crusades: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 257-258.

Christ. For this reason, they fought as hard as they could. Their efforts, like many, were not sufficient.

The Crusades were ultimately an attempt at something the military orders could not “fix.” The Second Crusade, much like the one before it can be described as a “dismal failure.”³⁰ As Crusaders became more aggravated at one another and their conditions, a loss of morale among the groups increased.³¹ The failure of the Third Crusade can be attributed, in some way, to the military orders disorganization and lack of autonomy of these orders. For this reason, it is very apparent that the Crusades and militarization efforts in the Near East can be attributed to the military orders. Even during the Fourth and Fifth Crusade these groups existed. The failure of the Crusades was a result of numerous factors. The military orders, however best they tried, were not able to succeed much in the Near East. Nonetheless, they still had an impact in the Crusades and should be noted.

³⁰ S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt, ed., *The Crusades: A Reader* (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 139.

³¹ S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt, ed., *The Crusades: A Reader* (Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 169.

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