BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX AND THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR:
THE NEW KNIGHTHOOD AS A SOLUTION TO VIOLENCE IN CHRISTIANITY

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The duty of a knight was to kill his enemies and fight in the name of his lord. The duty of a Christian was to love his neighbor as himself, and to turn the other cheek when confronted with aggression. This basic contradiction was a conflict that the people of medieval Europe had a very difficult time resolving, be they men in arms or intellectuals. Over the centuries, there were many attempts to justify either the way of the knight, or to condemn this manner of living as sinful and evil. When Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux (1090-1153) in the Cistercian order and noted scholar, was asked to write about the newly formed knights Templar, he went out of his way to condemn the normal life of the knightly class of his time, while exalting the idea of knights who fought for God alone. In this new order, Bernard saw a way of escaping the evils of the military life, and a worthy aim that would not only further the cause of the Church and of God, but would also serve as a way of redemption for the many sinful soldiers that would enter the order.

In looking at the writings of Bernard on the new knighthood, as well as the writings of Pope Urban II and other ecclesiastical leaders in the period of the First Crusade, it becomes apparent that the Knights Templar are the culmination of a wholly new approach to the dilemma, brought about by the Pope’s call for defense of the pilgrims in the Holy Land. In the massive church of Clermont, in March of 1095, Pope
Urban gave an impassioned speech, asking for the men of Europe to put aside worldly concerns and focus on the work of God. His words as recorded by Baldric of Dol, “Listen and learn! You, girt about with the badge of knighthood, are arrogant with pride. You rage against your brothers and cut each other to pieces. This is not the true soldiery of Christ which rends asunder the sheep-fold of the Redeemer.”¹ The Pope is in no way exhorting the actions of the violent men of Europe, but is instead railing against their actions and attempting to save them from their own folly. This speech seeks to reconcile the evils of violence in knighthood by aiming this violence toward God’s purpose. This new knighthood would become the basis for future orders of crusader knights, such as their contemporaries the Hospitallers, which were likewise dedicated to God and to battle.

As this essay will illustrate, Bernard’s primary motivation behind aiding in the forming of the Knights Templar is that he sees this new form of monastic knighthood as a solution to the inherent sins of pride, vanity, and thirst for glory in the current state of European knighthood. By dedicating themselves to the defense of pilgrims as an act of penance laid out by Pope Urban in his famed speech at Clermont,² and built upon by Bernard, these holy knights could bypass the usually sinful motivations of a knight and

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¹ Edward Peters, The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Material (Philadelphia, Penn: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 31. This is one of three accepted accounts of the speech given by Urban II at Clermont. All three examples give wildly different wording to the speech, but this example is commonly accepted as the closest to the original. The wording itself is not of the utmost importance, as all three share the same tone and intention, and use similar phrases to convey Urban’s message to the masses.

² Peters, 31.
fight for the kingdom of God. This was seen by Bernard and other writers of the time as the best possible solution to the defense of pilgrims, and a way for the knighthood of Europe to redeem itself.

The goal of this essay will be to show that Bernard endorsed the Templar order and aided in its creation because he saw it as the ultimate answer to the conflict between Christianity and the military way of life. The separation between the Christian ideal and the violence inherent to the European culture was a wall that had existed for too long and had withstood any argument previously used. As such, a new idea had to emerge to attempt to reconcile these knights and nobles who claimed to be Christians yet lived to kill one another.

This idea started in the letters and speeches of Popes Alexander II (1061-73), Gregory VII (1073-85), and particularly Urban II (1088-99) as they led toward the crusades. Bernard took the idea that the crusades could be used to rehabilitate the knighthood to its logical conclusion, a knighthood entirely devoted to God and the defense of Christians. This idea was wholly new to Europe, as all previous religious conflicts there had centered on reclaiming land lost centuries earlier, not the purity of the crusaders. Only in the time of the crusades did the idea of salvation through a military pilgrimage enter the ideology of some of the clerical elite. This sets Bernard’s vision apart from the conflicts with Islam that had occurred in Spain for over four centuries by the time of his birth, and also makes his vision the forerunner of future military orders like the Hospitalers and the German Teutonic knights. This vision, solidified in Bernard’s writings but begun by the words of Urban II and his support of the crusade, define the crusade as an idea new to Europe, one that did not develop out of ubiquitous
European violence, but was created with the express intention of breaking from the European ideas of violence with the hopes of channeling that violence into a power for good.

When examining the historiography of this subject, a variety of fields of medieval studies become involved. Most importantly to the subject are the crusades and the ideas of religious warfare that emerged during the crusader period. This stems from the early writings of men like St Augustine of Hippo, and leads all the way to examinations of the Ottoman conflicts and even to the present day wars in the Middle East. Establishing a clear view of this period is key to understanding where Bernard’s vision originated, and why it is different from other religious thought of the period. The historiography of the Knights Templar themselves is also important in this area, though it is surprisingly silent when it comes to their origin. Most scholars direct their attention to the later period of the order’s existence, and few aim their analysis on their origin.

To understand the origins of theology aimed at religion and warfare, it is also important to look at the Muslim invasion of Spain and the constant warfare that continued until the eventual fall of Grenada in 1492. This conflict is distinct from the crusades because, from its outset, it was viewed in terms of land occupation and recovery in addition to any religious goals, something that was not explicitly stated in the original call for soldiers for the First Crusade. Though the *reconquista* might be the origin of military and religious doctrine put forth by the Popes, it is not a direct predecessor to the crusades. This is a small but crucial difference, as the Pope is using the basic tenets of motivation for the *reconquista* but eliminating the concepts of land and political conflict. This focuses the crusade completely on the spiritual aspects of the event. The difference
lies in the shift in motivation of the *reconquista*, a conscious attempt to reclaim fallen Christian lands, to a military endeavor aimed at the soldiers on it, not on any pre-set military or political accomplishment.

Also important for understanding this situation is to understand how a medieval person viewed the combination of religious and secular events. This area has been greatly enhanced in recent years, with works focusing on the medieval view of religion, miracles, and the idea of God actively at work in the world. Though some view this as a secondary aspect to the actual events of the crusade, it is crucial to understanding how a medieval man could connect a military endeavor with a religious goal without any hesitation or hypocrisy.

Ultimately this thesis will argue the originality of the stance taken by Bernard of Clairvaux in his writings, building on the teachings of the Popes before the crusades, and how Bernard used the ideology he saw in the crusades to help form the Knights Templar as an answer to the endemic violence of Christian Europe. In doing this, he created a new branch of Christian theology and society, as the Knights Templar were set forth as an example of what a Christian knight should be. In the eyes of Bernard, the crusade was a God given mechanism to take the violent men of Europe and turn them toward a righteous goal without destroying everything they had become. The Knights Templar would be warriors harnessed to God’s will, not the will of man, taking the evil of their intentions away and leaving only a way in which these battle hardened men could still find purpose in God.

The first chapter will lay out the basic historiographical background of this topic, showing how previous scholars have viewed the crusades, the conflicts in Spain,
Bernard’s teachings, and the mental outlook of the men and women at this period. Then, I will examine the origins of the crusader ideal and the impact of the call to crusade on the people of Europe. Next I will explore the impact of Bernard’s ideology on the formation of the Knights Templar, and how their rule parallel’s Bernard’s view of their unique role. Lastly, I will show other views of the Knights Templar, and their successor order the Hospitallers, and how these orders attempted to fill the niche in European society that Bernard sought to fill. Time would eventually change the military orders into more politically and militarily dominant structures, but by looking at the motivations of their originators, it is possible to learn much of the internal conflicts of the nobility and clergy of Europe, and the steps Bernard deemed necessary to take to resolve these dilemmas.
CHAPTER II
HISTORIOGRAPHY

The Crusades and the European Church

The historiography of the Crusades is a complicated issue, one that is influenced by modern ideas and often viewed with current political situations in mind. While the events of the crusades do have some legitimate ties to conflicts between the European countries and the Middle East, it is important for historians to view the events, and the actions and words of individuals from those events, in their own time, without any preconceived notions about the motivations of either side.

The First Crusade is heavily studied, and recent scholarship continues to delve into the strategic, social, and political aspects of the expedition to Jerusalem. But the strategic and political realities of the First Crusade have very little to do with the motivation for their beginning, and indeed the political, social, and military ramifications of the crusade are where most historians tend to focus their attention. Examining the actual events that follow Pope Urban’s speech at Clermont in 1095 does not shed light on the intentions of why Urban spoke those famous words, or what he intended them to start. Most historians agree that militarily the First Crusade was far more successful than anyone would have expected it to be. An army of half starved knights conquering one of
the world’s greatest cities in the heart of a militarily and socially superior Islamic community seems effectively impossible, but that was indeed the outcome. This outcome would have influenced Bernard’s ideology, as he lived after the creation of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, but it would not have impacted the words spoken by Pope Urban, or the words written in the papal edicts of his predecessors toward Spain. As such, examinations of the Pope’s speech to start the crusade and his original intentions should not include any study of the ultimate outcome.

Steven Runciman’s three volume work the *History of the Crusades* is an extremely influential set of works for modern crusade scholars, laying out the events of the crusade in detail throughout the centuries. The first volume, that which deals with the First Crusade and its aftermath, is the most critical for this discussion, but the subsequent volumes likewise discuss the events that led to the Second Crusade and how its failure impacted the west. In particular, Runciman examines the political and military realities of eleventh-century Greece and Anatolia, showing how the encroaching Turkish forces would have threatened the unstable Byzantine Empire enough for them to ask aid from a European church that they had split with centuries earlier.

Runciman’s works are well respected in the field, but they delve only into the political and social interactions that led up to the crusades and resulted from them. His discussion of the origins of the crusades discusses the military ideology of Europe and the political and economic benefits that the crusade eventually would bring to Europe, but it
does not delve into why the pope would call for the crusade.³ This gives an impression of the crusades simply being the next logical step in the progression of a militant Christianity, or at least a logical next step in the eyes of the European leaders.

More recent scholars seem to look at the same origins for the crusade, while expanding these to include the religious and racial context of the conflict. Like Runciman, historians such as Tyerman look to the political and social conditions prior to the crusade for answers as to why the crusade was launched. Tyerman includes an in-depth analysis of the social contrasts between the Muslim forces and the European invaders, drawing a sharp contrast between the more intellectual society of the Holy Land and that of Europe.⁴ Tyerman’s intention is to show how dramatic an event the crusade was, and how it was an interaction between two cultures that had developed largely independent of one another, and thus did not know how to relate or understand one another. In this way, Tyerman shows how the crusades drastically changed the face of international history.

Tyerman does not only focus on the effects of the crusade, however. His discussion of the religious motivations of the crusade delves into how the men and women of the crusade could act in such a way, yet still be driven by genuine piety. This examination exposes how complex the faith of the period was, and how the men and women of Europe could take many actions that seem to be against the understanding of


the church, yet claim to be motivated by God. As will be discussed later, this understanding of the medieval outlook is crucial for any in depth analysis of the motivations of the crusades, and also explains the wide variety of responses and commentaries on the crusades that developed in later years, as men of Europe looked upon these events and tried to see what was motivated by God, and what was not.

Tyerman’s examination does not dig into the origins of the pope’s call for arms, however, instead focusing on the mindset of Europe as a whole. Like Runciman, this leaves one with the impression that the crusade came from the minds of the European populace, or some agreement of noble leaders or church officials, instead of being a new idea brought out by the pope. Historians emphasize the importance of the crusade and how drastically it altered the landscape of European political, social, and economic history; this same level of importance must be given to understanding just where this radical shift in European ideology came from.

Another key area where historians focus their attention on the crusades is as the origin of the religious conflict between Islam and Christianity. This is problematic for two key reasons. First, it was not the first time European Christian soldiers fought Islamic opponents, as that was begun by the Almoravid invasion of Spain in the eighth century and continued well past the crusades. The Iberian conflict influenced Europe in significant ways, but it was not an overwhelming obsession, showing that Europe as a whole was not driven by any sort of desire to stamp out Islam as a rival religion. The

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Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 17. Asbridge points out that “Christianity and Islam had existed for centuries in equanimity,” thus setting up the crusade as the blow that would end that equilibrium.
second problem with portraying the crusades as the beginning of religious animosity between Islam and Christianity is that this view puts the motivation of the war squarely in the differences in the two belief systems. When looking at the writings of the day, men like Pope Urban and Bernard never refer to any specific belief espoused by Islam, simply labeling their enemies as pagans or infidels.

It is important that this point is emphasized. At no time did any Pope in the decades prior to the crusade, or even Bernard after the crusade, focus their energy on the Muslim nations. This seems to show that the specifics of the Islamic religion was not the reason behind their attacks, but rather the simple fact that they were not Christian, thus fighting them was not seen in the same way as fighting and killing fellow Christians. This may seem like a rather self-serving idea, but it was a simple way to mitigate violence between the people of the church, tell them to fight those not under the protection of God. This is a callous turn of phrase, but it does emphasize that the target of the crusades was not chosen for their specific religious beliefs, but rather that they simply were not Christian, which shows the focus of the crusade was not an anti-Muslim holy war, but a move to stop violence between Christians.

The tendency to view the crusades through the window of the present day lends bias toward one side or the other in terms of blame for the conflict, blame which can also be caused by prejudice against the Christian church as a whole. This is why it is important to remember that the Christians of the medieval world bear very little in

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6 Joseph O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 16. In relating the two sides of this conflict, a good comparison is the Muslim conquest in the eight-century. Just as the armies of Islam had swept through all nations of North Africa, Persia, and Iberia without a specific religious target, the crusades were geared to simply fight the “other,” not a specific other.
common with modern ideas of Christianity, and as such it is not a reflection of acceptance or denial of Christian precepts to accept that the Christian religion was a motivating factor in the lives of the men and women of Europe in this period. The people of the Crusade era placed tremendous importance on the church and God in their lives, so historians must place the same amount of importance on theology when investigating the history of motivations and ideology.

Likewise it is crucial that historians differentiate between the ideas of the church and the opinions of Europe as a whole. Often historians have accepted that the actions of the nobility represented the opinions of the church, or even of Europe as a whole. But in looking at the criticisms given by the church and many secular writers through the centuries, it is more likely that the violence of Europe was not a good indicator of what the people accepted. Thus, it is not entirely accurate to frame the crusades as an outgrowth of militant Christianity, because the military solution to the conflict was a rationale, a compromise by the church hierarchy for the alleviation of sins, not a wholesale acceptance of bloodshed. “With the preaching of the First Crusade the Latin Church went far beyond simply condoning violence; it energetically encouraged military conflict and promoted carnage as an expression of pious devotion.”

While factually correct, this statement assumes the complete enthusiasm of the Pope and his representatives, and assumes that they knew what would eventually occur on the road to Jerusalem. It is important when examining Urban’s words at Clermont, as will be discussed later in the text, that he adamantly denounces the warriors of Europe as

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7Asbridge, 21.
murderers and thieves. It is for their sake that the crusade is called, not to use their evil for good, but to turn their evil into good.

The Knights Templar

The historiography of the Knights Templar is very widespread and heavily influenced by modern conceptions. The most common way in which the Templar order is approached today is as a part of a long standing conspiracy theory that originates in the final days of the order. The dissolution of the order at the hands of King Phillip IV of France in 1312 created the idea that there must have been something of great worth that the king was after, giving rise to the legend of the Templar treasure and a host of other theories. This in turn has been tied with later conspiracies, from the Masons to modern ideas of Christian conspiracies about the descendants of Jesus and other even wilder stories. Regardless of the credibility of any of these stories, it is a view of the Templar, very much influenced by the events of their later years, and seen through the lens of the modern world.

Few scholars have approached the Knights Templar from the beginning, examining their creation in terms of where the order originates and why it was created. This makes this area largely unique and untouched, and Bernard’s motivation for helping form the order has been largely overlooked. Viewing the order’s origin with its ending in mind is in a sense anachronistic, as it can taint what the historian sees as motives for the

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order with what the order evolved into. Examining the original charters and rules of the order, the fact that it would later become a massively wealthy and powerful organization was never even conceived of, let alone set out as any sort of goal for the order. The order at its ending was virtually unrecognizable from its much more humble roots.

Another interpretation of the creation of the order assumes that it was a natural progression of the contemporary attitude toward the crusade. It is sometimes argued that the crusades were a logical manifestation of the society of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and that the order was a simple evolution of that sentiment. This idea ignores the fact that the speech given by Pope Urban II was viewed with total astonishment by his contemporaries, igniting a new idea of redemption in the knights. Assuming that the eventual creation of several orders means that the idea was common before they were created is not taking the original motivations into account, or the mindset of the first founders. Looking at the words of Bernard in his *Praise of the New Knighthood* and the length of time needed for the founders of the order, Hugh and Godfrey, actually to receive papal support for their order suggests that the church had no idea how to handle such a unique idea. It took the eloquence of men like Bernard and Peter the Venerable of Cluny to make the idea more palatable for the church authorities, and even then the order did not in any way become a sort of standard form of knighthood.

It is important in order to understand the mindset of the men that created the order that historians separate what they know of the order’s future from what the men would have expected the order to become. It is also important that historians view the order in

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9 Barber and Bate, 38-42.

10 Peters, 32-34.
its appropriate context. Often, historians link the order to other militant religious groups, from Japanese warrior monks to the Ghazis of Islam. While there may be superficial similarities between these orders, it is not useful to understanding the impetus of the order itself to view it in this context, nor is it appropriate to link militant orders of various religions.\textsuperscript{11} Each grew out of distinct influences in their own cultures, and had virtually no commonality in their beginnings.

The \textit{Reconquista}

The history of the \textit{reconquista} is important to this subject as it sets the precedent for conflict between Islam and Christianity, and is the primary place Popes Gregory VII and Urban II created the terms of discourse later used in the time of the Crusades. This is significant, because it not only shows the origins of the ideas of crusade warfare, but also shows how the First Crusade was an offshoot of this idea, a new envisioning of warfare for Europe that was not motivated by the same causes of the \textit{reconquista}.

Historiographically, the \textit{reconquista} is very rarely related to the crusades, as it is studied much more in the context of the melding of Spanish and African cultures, and their outcomes centuries later in the growth of the Spanish nation. Historians also view the early period of the conflict as the origins of Spanish nationalism, as the warriors fighting Islam identify more and more as a unique culture centered on the Iberian Peninsula, and its many similar but distinct kingdoms.

A few historians have however centered their view of the early *reconquista* on how it relates to the crusades. Joseph O’Callaghan’s book *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* is a primary example,\(^{12}\) framing the wars in Spain in the context of the crusades, and showing the close tie that existed in the eyes of the Popes that influenced the conflict. This is an example of how sometimes a viewpoint can shape a study of history, as the only two aspects that linked the Crusades to Spain were the Popes hoping to influence both conflicts, and the Spanish that participated in those conflicts. This also makes clear that the crusade is very much a separate and distinct war that was not caused by the Spanish fighting nor related to it, but the two were linked ideologically by Pope Gregory and Urban II as they moved toward the eventual culmination of the First Crusade.

Medieval Outlook on the Crusades

This portion of the historiography, while seemingly less directly related than the others to the topic in question, is crucial to the understanding of Bernard’s views and how they evolved from the earlier writings on crusade. Understanding how contemporaries would view the words of the Pope at Clermont, and how this would gradually progress to the more fully formed theology of Bernard, centers on understanding how the medieval person linked the workings of God with the world of man.

Analysis of this subject has become much more prevalent in the last few decades, starting with works by Patrick Geary investigating the historical significance of

\(^{12}\) O’Callaghan, 32.
Hagiographies and how they show the inner workings of the medieval mind. This topic was then expanded by various historians, and most pertinent to the topic of Bernard’s teachings is the work done by Benedicta Ward.13

Despite the fact that Bernard is not referring to miracles, Ward’s work heavily influences this analysis because of her attempt to show how the medieval mind would have perceived miracles. She states that the medieval idea of a miracle was anything that showed God’s activity in the world, making the medieval viewpoint much more complex and layered than a modern view. This brings into light Bernard’s view of the crusades, and how he could see God working good in Europe despite what modern historians would label as the horrors of the war. Ward shows how it is possible for a medieval theologian to link a benevolent, religious goal with a horrible truth like war, and see it as God working to aid humanity, and redeeming the sins of mankind in an effort to save them. This topic will be expanded on later in the work, but it is important to view Bernard’s theology not in a comparison to today’s thinking. The medieval concept of Christianity is separate from modern theology, so it is often beneficial to approach it from the outside without any preconceived notions. To do this, the historian must view the world in which men like Bernard lived, and examine what influenced their thinking and why they drew certain conclusions. It is also important when studying this type of history to separate the actions of those following a stated theology or ideology from what said theology proscribes. The fact that Urban or Gregory or even Bernard envisioned certain reasons behind the crusade and intentions for its inception does not mean in any

way that that was how those men that took the journey to Jerusalem viewed the conflict, or was the primary goal of the military leaders of the crusade. Just as viewing the conclusion of the crusade is problematic when investigating its origins, it is also problematic to look for one root cause behind the expedition. Each man would view it differently, with different motivations, and it is not appropriate to separate the religious motivations of men like Bernard from the earthly motivations of others. Contemporaries would see the working of God in all things, so that a seemingly secular achievement could be viewed as both religious and secular, as God rewards actions in both the spiritual and physical world. Likewise, it is also important to keep in mind that it is not possible for a historian to truly know a man’s motivation in anything he does, only to point out what he states as his motivation in the writings that remain. In this, it is vital to remember that studying medieval religious theology and thought is distinctly different than studying the actions of those men that claimed to follow the espoused beliefs.

Richard Kaeuper examined another integral part of the ideology behind the crusade, the concept of chivalry itself. By examining contemporary literature, records, and teachings of religious writers, Kaeuper gives a much more complex picture of the ideology of chivalry, and how it created constant strain in the society of the fighting men of Europe. Combining courtly conduct, excellence in battle, loyalty to a lord, and Christian piety, chivalry is a philosophy rife with contradictions and tensions. Kaeuper shows how a knight was expected to be, for lack of a kinder term, a hired murderer. He was trained to kill with as much ferocity and effectiveness as a human being can muster.

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Yet these same men were also expected to be kind and considerate to those around them, and to be a good Christian, with all that entails. This obviously creates a distinct dichotomy in the mindset of a knight. This tension was emphasized by the continued struggle of the nobility against the clergy, as churchmen railed against the constant warfare between Christian nations, and the nobility tried to keep the church out of their political and military endeavors. This is exactly the conflict Bernard is centered on, as he attempts to explain a way in which these tensions can be relived, while keeping a knight a fighting man, yet allowing him to serve God instead of himself.

Marcus Bull took an examination of the European reaction to the First Crusade from the point of view of the nobility and the laity. His analysis takes into account how the nobility would have viewed the success of the crusade, and how the mindset of the nobles and common people of France was conditioned before the crusade, by their theology and their past experiences, to understand the need for a military pilgrimage. This concept of a military expedition as a pilgrimage is what Bull centers his discussion upon, for the idea of pilgrimage was central in the belief structure of the French population in the tenth and eleventh century.

Bull explains how the idea of taking a journey, to sacrifice time and effort for the sake of piety, was something deeply ingrained into the French populace. To take this concept and apply it to military service combined two innately important aspects of this society and ideology into one understandable whole. As such, the message of Urban at

15 Kaeuper, 18-54.

Clermont is understandably well received by the French populace, even though a military pilgrimage was not something they had expected to see. “This is not to argue that the crusade was a necessary consequence of the nature of Latin Christian Society at the end of the eleventh century; it would be mistaken to imagine the West in the years before 1095 consciously preparing itself for the crusade message.”\(^{17}\) This clearly states Bull’s main argument, showing how the ideology of the crusade was something that built upon pre-existing pilgrimage ideas, despite it being a new idea for Europe as a whole.

Bull does not take his analysis one step further and discuss the motivation of Urban himself in declaring the crusade. Bull’s focus on the noble and lay reaction to the crusade is very thought provoking, but does not include the origins of the idea in the first place. Bull does discuss the ties to the *reconquista* and the Peace of God, the church’s movement to quell violence in Europe, explaining how the people of France and Germany, those that were the primary component of the first crusader army, would have had little to no experience with the Spanish or Byzantine conflicts, showing that they would not have been driven by the same ideology as the Aragonese and Castilians. In this way, Bull supports the idea that the *reconquista* was a separate line of a similar mindset, but built on different experiences, thus needing to be motivated in an entirely separate manner as Urban II explains in his speech.

Previous historians have delved deep into these four subjects, laying out the social, political, and religious impacts of the crusades and the *reconquista*, and explaining the unique outlook of the men and women of the medieval era, and how they would have viewed the tumultuous events of their day. Now an examination of the origins of the

\(^{17}\) Bull, 20.
crusader ideology is needed, and how this ideology was carried onward beyond the crusade to begin the knightly orders of Europe. These origins will show how the crusader mindset was not an evolution of previous Christian theology, but rather a conscious attempt to reverse the violence that had become commonplace amongst Christians.
CHAPTER III

THE ORIGINS OF BERNARD AND THE CRUSADE IDEOLOGY

Bernard of Clairvaux was the son of a French knight and the brother of knights, born in 1090. He entered the monastery of Cîteaux with thirty companions in 1113 and formed the monastery of Clairvaux shortly afterwards. His opinions on the organization of the Cistercian order were instrumental in the order’s structuring, and he was a noted theologian and social critic throughout his life. In particular, Bernard’s voice was instrumental in shaping the ideology and theology of French intellectuals toward material possessions, monastic devotion, and the duty of mankind toward Christ.¹⁸

Later in life Bernard’s voice was a powerful force behind the Second Crusade (1146-49), as well as in forming the Knights Templar. Though he refused the invitation from Baldwin of Jerusalem to form a Cistercian chapter in the Holy Land, Bernard often wrote of the Holy Lands and his desire to see the kingdom of Christ made manifest on earth. When the crusader stronghold of Edessa fell to the enemy in 1147, the Pope


¹⁹ Bernard never clearly states why he will not go to the Holy Land, aside from a few references to his age, but in reading his other works it seems that he felt he was more effective as a voice of the church in Europe than he would be in Jerusalem founding a new house. This emphasizes how Bernard saw each person’s role in God’s will as different, a concept he puts forth in the charter for the Knights Templar, as he does not lessen their role in any way, despite his preference for full monastic life.
commissioned Bernard to write letters to the monarchs and nobles of Europe, requesting aid in forming the Second Crusade. Bernard’s fervor for this duty was evident in the eloquent letters he wrote to men across the continent, and he became indelibly linked with this ill-fated crusade. Sadly, the crusade was a dismal failure, never succeeding in any major military goal. Bernard would later mourn the debacle of the Second Crusade as his greatest failure, and a failure of the piety of Europe as a whole. Despite this extreme setback, he never diminished in his fervor for the active pursuit of God’s will.\textsuperscript{20}

Pope Urban and the Call for Crusade

In understanding Bernard’s place in the development of the knightly orders and the discourse of the soldiers of God, one must look back at the beginnings of the First Crusade. In 1071 the Turkish sultan Alp Arslan defeated the army of Constantinople in what would be one of the worst defeats in the long history of the Eastern Roman Empire. This defeat led to a slow decline of Imperial power in Anatolia, as the Turkish sultans drove further and further west. Over the following twenty-five years, the power of the Turks increased in the Anatolian peninsula, steadily encroaching on formerly Christian held lands. This culminated in Emperor Alexius I Comnenus of Constantinople sending a message to the Pope in Rome, asking for assistance against these Turks. In it, he embellishes the plight of Christian pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem, an embellishment that apparently struck home with its audience. Pope Urban II responded to this by beseeching the men of Europe to rise up in arms against the Muslim invaders of the Holy

\textsuperscript{20} Evans, 89-133.
Land, though in truth the city of Jerusalem and its surroundings had been in Muslim hands for centuries.\(^{21}\)

The fervor of the First Crusade can largely be attributed to the speech Pope Urban gave at the council of Clermont in March of 1095. As mentioned previously, this speech begins with a cry for the attention of the warriors of Europe. “Listen and learn! You, girt about with the badge of knighthood, are arrogant with pride. You rage against your brothers and cut each other to pieces. This is not the true soldiery of Christ which rends asunder the sheep-fold of the Redeemer.”\(^{22}\) This first portion is a solid example of how Urban puts into context the urge to fight non-Christians instead of Christians. In the eyes of the Church, it was better for one’s soul to fight non-Christians, as it was an affront to God to kill one of his children. As such, the impulse to fight Islam has less to do with racism or religious intolerance, and more to do with the theology of Christianity and a desire to mitigate in-fighting amongst Christians. This quote also highlights an idea earlier expressed by Augustine of Hippo, calling each follower of Christ a soldier of God.\(^{23}\) The “soldiery of Christ”, therefore, is not a specific body of warriors, or even a specifically military term, but rather all those who stand with God against sin.

This open condemnation of knightly action continues in even more graphic terms, “You, the oppressors of children, plunderers of widows; you, guilty of homicide, of sacrilege, robbers of another’s rights; you who await the pay of thieves for the shedding

\(^{21}\) Asbridge, 5-75.

\(^{22}\) Peters, 31.

of Christian blood-- as vultures smell fetid corpses, so do you sense battles from afar and rush to them eagerly.”24 This quote is visceral in its imagery, and plainly shows the disgust of the Pope toward the militant nature of European society. This is one of the most striking pieces of evidence that shows that the crusader ideal was in no way a natural outcropping of militant nature in Europe. The violent nature of the nobility is exactly what Urban is attacking, not trying to defend or endorse. This blunt condemnation was followed by a call for the men of Europe to cleanse themselves of these sins by turning their violent ways toward the rescue of the Holy Land. The Pope states that battle with the Saracens “is the only warfare that is righteous, for it is charity to risk your life for your brothers.”25

The Pope then calls on the bishops of the land to pray for the brothers that travel east, that their trip shall redeem them of their sins and “even if they die, they shall die cleansed of evil in the eyes of God.”26 This second portion of the speech is critical in the motivation behind the men that travelled to the east, as well as to men who supported the crusade, men like Bernard of Clairvaux. Because the Pope decreed that fighting and if necessary dying while taking part in the crusade was effectively an act of total atonement, this would be seized upon both by clergy and by those that felt the need to atone as a means to right themselves for past actions. Many of the men that travelled to the east did so because they found themselves wanting spiritually, and sought to redeem themselves in the eyes of God by fighting on crusade. This concept of redemption through service

24 Peters, 32.

25 Peters, 32.

26 Peters, 32-34.
seems to have taken hold in the minds of many of the contemporary clergy, as well as later clerical scholars like Bernard, as it was a way to turn violent action, even conquest as the crusade eventually became, into a holy act of contrition for the people of Europe.  

The reaction to this decree was definitely not what either Pope Urban or Emperor Alexius had expected. Nobles from across Europe, most predominantly from France, led an army eventually totaling somewhere between sixty and seventy thousand men into the east, ultimately capturing Jerusalem in 1099 and creating the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, which would last nearly two centuries. What had begun as a request for western mercenaries to aid the Emperor of Constantinople against his Turkish foes had resulted in a migration of European power to the east, and the creation of the first Latin kingdoms in the Holy Land.

Precedent to Crusader Thought

To understand the roots of the declaration by Urban at Clermont, it is important to look at the decades leading up to this momentous event, and the influence the previous Popes, Gregory and Alexander, had on other conflicts. In the first decades of the eleventh century, the conflict with the Muslims in Spain had come to the attention of the pope. This conflict originated in the Invasion of the Iberian Peninsula by the Almoravid faction of Muslim culture in 718, crushing the Christian Visigoth Kingdoms of Iberia and

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27 Asbridge, 75-115.

28 Asbridge, 75-323.

29 See Asbridge for a narrative of the key events both before and after the First Crusade.
placing nearly the entire peninsula under the control of Islam. Only a small sliver of Christian states remained in the northern portion of the region, states that were under frequent attacks and raids by their Muslim neighbors. These Muslim lands changed hands several times over the following centuries, as various factions of African and Middle Eastern Muslims exerted their influence in the region.

This constant warfare and distinct religious and cultural dissection of the peninsula created an atmosphere of antagonism between the northern Christians and their southern Muslim neighbors. Despite their desire to reclaim the southern lands, the Islamic Taifa states, independent city states and kingdoms loosely associated under Islamic law, were far too powerful for the Christians to threaten. Only in the latter portion of the tenth century did the power of the Spanish kingdoms begin to rise, giving them some opportunities to attack and retake portions of the Islamic dominion. The eleventh century proved to be the beginning of a true re-conquest with the capture of Toledo in 1086, becoming a joint vision for all the Spanish nations, and drawing the attention of the popes in Rome.

In looking at the manner in which the Popes influenced the conflicts in Spain, a few key factors emerge. The first is that Popes Alexander II, Gregory VII, and Urban II did indeed attempt to send aid to Spain, calling for a renewal of the conflict against the Muslims and an active part of Europe in the battles. These letters of exhortation were often phrased very similarly to the words used by Urban at Clermont a few decades later, but there is one key difference. This difference lies in the ultimate stated goal of the attacks, the reclamation of Christian lands from foreign invaders. This is clearly stated in
a few of the letters sent to the nobility and clergy of Spain, and sets these missions of the Pope apart from the later crusades in terms of orientation and focus.

The first letter that shows this distinction was sent by Pope Alexander II to the clerics of the Spanish town of Vulterno, in 1063. In it, Alexander exhorts these men to contribute to the efforts of the Spanish military forces attempting to push the Almoravid forces away from the Christian held lands. To help accomplish this feat, Alexander tells the clerics of Vulterno to offer the soldiers penance in return for their service in battle, giving them a remission of sins. His use of the term *remissionem* and *penitiam* is the same way of phrasing the offer as that of Urban a few decades later in his proclamation of the crusades. This shows that the idea of military service as penitence, a sort of quasi-pilgrimage, was beginning to enter the ideology of the papacy as early as the mid eleventh century.

The same sort of terminology is used by Alexander’s successor, Gregory VII, as well as his successor, Urban II. Following Gregory’s example, Urban II also became heavily involved in the wars in Spain, directing military efforts in a manner similar to his predecessors. In a letter addressing the clerics of Saragossa in 1091, Urban built a legal case explaining the ownership of the city of Tarragona, its history as a Christian land, thus explaining why the Aragonese should continue in their efforts to reclaim it. This is distinct from Alexander’s letter, and is representative of much of the *reconquista* during this period. The idea of previous ownership of the land was central to the incentive to

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attack. Urban states that the goal of the military endeavor is *reclamationem*, reclamation of the formerly Christian lands. This letter is important for two main reasons. First, it shows how Urban continued the tie to the Spanish conflicts that his predecessors had created, but it also shows how Urban viewed this conflict. He spends a good portion of his letter explaining Tarragona’s past, setting it up as a former city of God, explicitly stating that the city was punished for its sins by falling into the hands of the infidel, and now it was time for the Christians to reclaim it.\footnote{La Documentacion Pontificis Hasta Inocencio III, trans. by Demetrio Mansilla (Rome: Institute for Spanish Ecclesiastical Studies, 1955) letter 32, p 49-51. This letter is part of a series of letters from Urban exhorting the clerics of Saragossa to aid the noble Berenguar in taking Tarragona, something that did not occur in his lifetime. His use of the terms of reclamation and liberation are continuous through these letters, as he attempts to place the city of Tarragona under Berenguar as a new Bishop once it is freed.} Though very similar, this is a distinctly different way of viewing a Christian-Muslim conflict by the same man from whom the Crusades originated. This shows the distinction of the two different military endeavors, placing one firmly in the realm of a land centered conflict, while the other is stated as a form of penance for the warriors themselves, not necessarily directed at a distinct military conclusion.

These letters show the early roots of the ideas of militant penance and the rewarding of remissions of sins in turn for military service. This idea was growing in popularity at this time, and Urban takes much from the ideas of his most recent predecessors, Gregory and Alexander, and expands it into his ideology of crusade. These letters also show how the key piece that differentiates the two conflicts is the central theme of land reclamation present in the reconquest of Spain that was never stated by Urban at Clermont. This sets the crusades and the *reconquista* both as distinct, unique
manifestations of papal authority sanctioning military actions against Muslim opponents
for the remission of sins.

The Results of the Crusades and their Impact on Medieval Ideology

The First Crusade resulted in the capture of Jerusalem and the creation of the
Latin Kingdoms of the East, a bastion of Christianity in the Islamic states that lasted for
nearly two centuries. This was the end of a truly bloody and destructive campaign that
saw thousands of innocent deaths, both Christian and Muslim alike. It is this fact that
historians have latched onto, putting this forth as evidence of the inherent violence of the
Christian mindset. But when one looks at it from the view of the men that would have
marched in the crusader armies, as well as the holy men back in Europe, it is a much
different picture.

In drawing from the recent scholarship on the medieval mindset, it is important to
understand that these men would not have separated religious motivations from secular
motivations. Accomplishing a task that is viewed as an errand for God that also serves
one’s wants is not a tainting of a holy endeavor with selfish desires, but can be seen
rather as a way of God rewarding ones piety. Extrapolating this to a grand endeavor like
the crusades, it is possible to see how the capture of Jerusalem would have been viewed

32 Asbridge, 318. “The crusaders had apparently come to Jerusalem alight with a pious
passion to do God’s work, but a modern observer might be forgiven for imagining no
flame of Christian devotion could possibly continue to burn amid such a storm of greed
and violence. For the sack of Jerusalem proves one thing beyond contestation-- in the
minds of the crusaders, religious fervor, barbaric warfare and a self-serving desire for
material gain were not mutually exclusive experiences.:”
as a great reward for the diligence and faith of the crusaders. This is not to negate the extreme violence that occurred during the conflict, but in the eyes of the men that lived in this period, they would have seen that violence as a necessary evil, a product of the carrying out of God’s wishes. Also, the violence of the crusader victory in Jerusalem was not widely known outside of the Holy Land for some time, so many who spoke of the event as a great victory for God would not have known the extent of the horror that had been committed.

The crusades were a world changing series of events that reached far beyond the scope of the original goals, both in terms of political and military changes, and in terms of theological and societal shifts. But these monumental changes were not envisioned by the originators of the crusade ideology, as they focused on far more intimate needs of Europe. Urban II’s call for crusade was aimed at the hearts and sins of his followers, the men of Europe, who in living lives of warfare had tainted themselves in the eyes of God. To aid these men, the pope called for a pilgrimage uniquely suited to their own abilities, an armed journey to the holy land with the goal of atoning for their past sins. This crusade, this expedition of God, was a new venture for the Christians of Europe, and it was the idea of a military pilgrimage to remedy the sins of its participants that Bernard embraced, and cultivated further into the ideology behind the knightly orders of God.
CHAPTER IV
THE FORMING OF THE TEMPLAR ORDER

In 1119, after the end of the First Crusade and the founding of the Latin kingdoms in the east, two French knights named Hugh de Payens and Godfrey of Saint-Omer took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in the manner of the monastic orders, dedicating and consecrating themselves to fight the enemies of Christ and protect the pilgrims travelling in the newly conquered areas of the Holy Land. After King Baldwin II gave these knights and their followers a fortress next to the Dome of the Rock, which was called the Temple of the Lord by the crusader states, these men were officially recognized as the Knights of the Order of the Temple of Jerusalem, or more commonly, the knights Templar.\(^{33}\)

To cement this newly formed order, Hugh de Payens asked the cousin of Godfrey of Saint-Omer, the Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, to help him create the rule of the Templars, modeled after the rule of St Benedict, which formed the basis of the Cistercian order. This rule was first drafted by Bernard for Hugh and presented at the Council of Troyes in 1128, which was called for the church organization as a whole to recognize the order as an official branch of the church, and to more concretely clarify their function as

\(^{33}\) Barber, 1-59.
protector of pilgrims and the Holy Land in general. 34 Before this council solidified the order, this small group of fighting men was a tiny band, no more than a half dozen knightly brothers and possibly up to a dozen sergeant-brothers. In an attempt to raise the spirits of his order, as well as to get confirmation of his cause for himself, Hugh de Payens asked Bernard to write a letter of exultation and praise for the new order. 35 In this letter, Bernard not only praises the order, but reveals much of his personal opinion on the debate between the virtues and vices of knightly life, as well as setting up this new, holy, order of knights as an ideal way to escape the pitfalls of a life of war.

To examine Bernard’s view of the Templars, a closer analysis of the letter itself, along with his accompanying writings, is required. Then, I will examine a contemporary literary source, the epic Raoul de Cambrai, and how its tones toward violence and the pride of the nobility mirror Bernard’s words. This work, written by an unknown author sometime in the late twelfth, early thirteenth century, is but one of many contemporary epics, but its degree of intense violence and its themes of the futility of revenge and the violence that is associated with chivalric honor coincide very well with Bernard’s own criticisms. Finally, I will examine the rule of the Templar order itself. Laid out in conjunction with Bernard and other monastic leaders at the Council of Troyes, the rule shows how the Templar order combined both monastic and knightly ideals, and also shows the degree in which the religious leaders understood what an effective fighting order needed, and what steps needed to be taken to keep them militarily capable while retaining the holiness that was proper for a religious order.

34 Barber, 1-63.

35 Barber, 24-29.
Bernard’s Praise of the New Knighthood

Bernard writes his letter almost in the manner of a sermon, but it is possible to see in his arguments and his praises much of the major conflict that existed surrounding Christian violence, as well as Bernard’s answer to the problem. His thoughts would in many ways mirror the sentiments put forth by Pope Urban a few decades previously at Clermont, but Bernard was much more thorough in both his condemnation of the life of a secular knight, and in his explanation of why it was a benefit to fight for the Holy Land. He begins his letter by laying out the faults he sees in the knights of Europe, and how their lifestyle is in direct defiance of Christ’s teachings. His major point is the combination of fleshly intent and spiritual intent that drives mankind. He explains that if a man fights with fleshly goals, it is sin. On the other hand, fighting with spiritual goals in mind, specifically fighting with the intent of defending the followers of Christ and furthering the goals of God, was the only way that the killing of others was acceptable.

Bernard heaps great praise on the knights that have dedicated themselves to fighting for God. He describes the originality of the order by stating, “It ceaselessly wages a twofold war both against flesh and blood and against a spiritual army of evil in the heavens.” This reference to Ephesians 6:12\(^{36}\) shows how closely Bernard believes the lifestyle of this new order merges with the life the apostle Paul espouses in his letters. This allusion also shows how directly Bernard sees the spiritual side of the Templar life contributing to the constant fight against evil, which monks were expected to fight every

\(^{36}\) Ephesians 6:12 (NIV) “for our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”
day. This is an insight into Bernard’s mind, as it shows how crucial the spiritual side of life is, and he praises the Templar for being capable of fighting on both fronts without falling to sin. He explains that fighting one’s enemies is common enough, and even fighting the forces of evil in spiritual warfare is not exceptional, since there are numerous monks. But for an order to dedicate itself to fighting in both ways, and to do so in such a way as to glorify God, that is a truly exceptional and praiseworthy aim. For a knight who does this, “He is truly a fearless knight and secure on every side, for his soul is protected by the armor of faith just as his body is protected by steel.”37 He also explains that this is a noble and Christian act, not only because it helps other Christians by defending them in both body and in spirit, but that the warrior is faced with a situation that is beneficial no matter how it resolves. If he is victorious over his foes, then he has struck a blow for God and aided the cause of the church, which is a noble act.

If, however, the Christian warrior falls in combat, than he can expect nothing less than recognition for martyrdom and the acceptance of salvation from Christ. “The knight of Christ, I say, may strike confidence and die yet more confidently, for he serves Christ when he strikes, and serves himself when he falls.”38 Bernard is very direct in saying that to ultimately die in service to God is the greatest goal these knights can possess, and they should strive to face death without fear, and with the full knowledge of their imminent salvation upon death. This almost seems counter intuitive in a military context, but Bernard explains that the order should not solely be aimed toward aiding others, but


should also serve as a way of redemption for those who have embraced the way of combat and have no other means of atonement.

The concept of atonement and reconciliation with the past is critical in understanding Bernard’s ideology. The crusaders, and later the Knights Templar, were almost exclusively men who came from lives already committed to the art of war. These men would have spent their entire lives training and then fulfilling their role as killers in the fields of Europe. These men were already guilt of the sins Bernard speaks of, and indeed had no other way of life to fall back on. This is why Bernard’s ideas of the crusade and the Templar order hinge on these men changing their motivation, not their lives. Bernard is not idealistic, or perhaps foolish, enough to ask that every fighting man of Europe would simply drop his sword and recommit his life to God, no matter how much this would please him. Instead, he asks that they turn their violent lifestyles to a new aim. This would enable them to use the skills they had honed in their lifetimes to serve God, instead of attacking God by openly sinning against him. This would serve as atonement for their past crimes, reconciliation with God that would turn a brutal killer into a holy knight of the faith.

Bernard speaks of this in reference to the crusade often, and in previous letters he threw his wholehearted support behind the venture, seeing it as not only a way to free the Holy Land from the hands of the Muslim armies, but also to give an outlet to the men of Europe for their violence, and in so doing give them a chance to redeem themselves. In a letter to Duke Wladislaus and the people of Bohemia, Bernard clearly states that the crusade is for the benefit of the crusader’s souls. “Hear then the good news I have to tell you, news of deliverance…this time is not like any time that has gone before, new riches
of divine mercy are descending on you from heaven, and happy are we to be alive in this
year of God’s choice, this year of jubilee, this year of pardon.”39 That final word,
coupled with his description of divine mercy, epitomizes how Bernard views the crusade.
To him it is a God given chance to dedicate one’s life, and if necessary one’s death, to the
cause of Christ, for the redemption of one’s sins. This was one of the first
understandable solutions for warriors in the service of God that had even been presented
to Europe, and Bernard’s words were a strong praise of this idea. Bernard’s writings
bring the central precepts of Urban II’s speech at Clermont back to the foreground,
espousing an order of warriors designed for the benefit of its members.

In fact, in many ways Bernard sees the crusade as a rehabilitating tool for the
criminal elements of French society as well as the nobility, as the criminals and soldiers
that go on this crusade can wipe their slates clean in the eyes of God. In his letter to the
people of England, Bernard speaks of the criminal acts of violence, “Put a stop to it now,
for it is not fighting, it is foolery. Thus to risk both soul and body is not brave but
shocking, is not strength but folly.”40 This is a slight twist on the original intent of Pope
Urban II, as Urban focused much more on the spiritual bankruptcy of Europe instead of a
social decline, but it is concordant with the original crusade ideals. Bernard places the
salvation of the soul as the highest of all priorities, and to fight and die for selfish reasons
was to doom one’s soul. This makes the Templar ideal of fighting for God’s children
instead of for oneself the only way that a knight can save his soul. This takes Urban’s

(Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), 463.

40 Bernard of Clairvaux, Letters, 462.
original ideal and pushes it to the extreme, making the Templars the only true way for European knights to remain in good stead with God.

Bernard’s discourse on the knights Templar is a continuation of this same discourse, as he focuses the idea of redemption through combat on those who make their lives by the sword, the knighthood of Europe. Being both a man of God and tied to the nobility of France by blood gives Bernard an insight into the motivation and workings of the knightly class that is also a window into the vices of the ruling class. Never one to back down, Bernard uses this window to attack the knightly class for sins he sees in their existence, sins which he feels are his responsibility to correct. He attempts to point out the errors of the knightly class in many of his earlier letters, but he makes his points particularly bluntly in his *Praise of the New Knighthood*.41

The first major criticism Bernard makes is of the inherent violence of the knightly life. As a class of people trained to fight and kill, the nobility of Europe faced some extreme dilemmas in their existence. To show one’s prowess in battle was the major way for a knight to gain renown and honor in the eyes of his peers, but as Bernard points out, it is also an affront to God as these men kill others, particularly other Christians in the constant in-fighting between the many nobles in France, with the goal of gaining fame from another’s death. “What else is the cause of wars and the root of disputes among you, except unreasonable flashes of anger, the thirst for empty glory, or the hankering after some earthly possessions?”42 Bernard does not hesitate to bluntly criticize. He sees

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41 Evans, 78-119.

through the illusions of nobility and honor to the core of the knight’s life, and he does not like what he sees.

The fact that their enemies are Christian only exacerbates the problem. As explained previously, Bernard has a very dim view of the men who are willing to kill for their own gains, and even in entering into combat with this motivation they are sinning against God. He explains this dilemma quite clearly, “If you happen to be killed while you are seeking only to kill another, you die a murder. If you succeed, and by your will to overcome and to conquer you perchance kill a man, you live a murder. Now it will not do to be a murder, living or dead, victorious or vanquished.”43 Paired with his earlier words supporting the purpose of fighting with God’s goals instead of one’s own, it is clear that in Bernard’s mind, the only good use of the sword is in defending other Christians from persecution.

Contemporary Literary and Clerical Criticism of Chivalry

The violence of the knightly lifestyle was not noticed and criticized only by Bernard and other religious leaders. Many pieces of literature, such as Arthurian tales44 and other examples of medieval romances, lay out the inherent faults in the ideology of chivalry and its influence on European society. One famous example of the impact of

43 Bernard of Clairvaux, In Praise of the New Knighthood, 131.

44 Chretiene de Troyes’s Arthurian tales are but one example of literature used to criticize the inherent problems of chivalric society. Chretiene does not focus as much on the impact of violence, though he does use it on many occasions, so his work was not as critical of an example.
violence on the chivalric way of life is the contemporary epic *Raoul de Cambrai*. In this tale, the anonymous author lays out an intricate tale of revenge and death that result from the many blood debts and acts of revenge arising from ideas of honor and chivalry. In the tale, the protagonist, if such a positive term can be used for the character of Raoul, starts a chain reaction in seeking revenge for his father’s death that results in the destruction of many lives and his whole household, all for the sake of personal honor. As a child, Raoul’s family estate is taken by the king of France because he is too young, with the promise of the king that it will be returned. But when this estate is given to another noble by the king in order to save face, Raoul goes to war with this noble, a conflict that outlives both him and his enemy, and is continued by their sons. Raoul’s pride and insistence on vengeance are emphasized throughout the tale, as he consistently acts in a cruel and spiteful manner for the sake of revenge.

One of the most despicable acts conducted by Raoul and his men in the course of his revenge is the burning of a convent of nuns at Origny. This act also seals Raoul’s fate, as the mother of one of his foes, Bernier, is killed in the burning, and he ultimately takes his own revenge in single combat with Raoul. But in keeping with the author’s intent of showing the futility of revenge, Bernier’s own act of revenge is in turn avenged by one of Raoul’s allies, Gautier, even after the two forces apparently reconcile. Thus the author shows that the killings only beget more killings, and that in a way there is no ending the cycle of violence.

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46 Raoul de Cambrai, 142-168.
It is stories like this that show just how much contemporaries of the knightly classes saw the seeking of honor as problematic, and yet completely endemic to the knightly life. The author intentionally plays on the fact that while Raoul has a somewhat legitimate case in that his family estate was given to another, his attitude toward his enemies and the cold blooded manner in which he pursues his cause makes him anything but noble in action. This is exactly what Bernard is so actively lobbying against, but it is not the violence alone that he sees as the primary flaw in the chivalric life, it is the root of the violence that Bernard wants to call to the attention of his audience.

The true problem in Bernard’s eyes is the inherent sin of pride, the seeking of personal glory and ambition at the cost of the lives of others. The violence inherent to being a knight is horrific to Bernard, but the fact that this violence is undertaken with the goal of personal glory sickens him. To condemn others to death, and to condemn one’s own soul, simply for the approval of others is the worst form of evil that Bernard can describe. He rails against the attitudes of the nobility, as he explains that the only way their actions can be redeemed is if they replace the goal of personal glory with the goal of God’s glory, to fight for the defense of other Christians and to sacrifice themselves for that cause. As Bernard mentioned in the *Praise of the New Knighthood*, “What else is the cause of wars and roots of disputes among you, except unreasonable flashes of anger, the thirst for empty glory?”\(^\text{47}\) This is why he sees the knights Templar as one of the few possible avenues of redemption for this way of life.

His criticism of the nobility not only focuses on pride, but on their vanity as well. He points out that if the goal of a knight’s life is to serve his master as a capable warrior,

why do they cover themselves with gaudy clothing and other decorations that only serve
to hamper their combat ability? He pointedly asks why the men dress so flamboyantly,
with long, curling locks and flowing robes that hang about them lavishly. He mentions
how they cover their horses in silks and their panoply in jewels and gold. Then he asks
simply, “Are these the trappings of a warrior or are they not rather the trinkets of a
woman?”\(^{48}\) Bernard’s criticism of the long hair and gaudy clothing is particularly
structured to elicit the idea of womanly dress, making this criticism of the masculinity of
the knights all the more demeaning. The fact that the critic is a monk, criticizing warriors
for their lack of masculinity is extremely striking to the modern eye. But to really
understand this criticism it is important to realize that to Bernard, a true man is one that
follows Christ whole heartedly, not one that puts importance in earthly trappings. That
Bernard is so familiar with this penchant among the knighthood to place material wealth
over spiritual health is a product of his closeness to the nobility, and to the fact that he
has made the same criticism of some Bishops who rely too heavily on material goods to
preach the word of God. \(^{49}\) Bernard was well known in Europe at the time for being a
proponent of monastic life over clerical life, particularly those members of the church
who had great wealth due to their positions. Bernard believed that wealth in the hands of
clergy should only be used to serve God, and that it was often better for that wealth to be
given away completely, as it was a great temptation to those who possessed it. \(^{50}\)


\(^{49}\) Bernard, \textit{In Praise of the New Knighthood}, 137.

\(^{50}\) Evans, 68-72.
Raoul de Cambrai and other contemporary epics and poetry give vivid depictions of the gaudy clothing of the knights, and indeed the authors seem to gain much satisfaction in painstakingly describing the sumptuous clothing and equipment used by the knights. In one particular scene, Raoul is outfitted as a knight by the king, and he receives a gold encrusted helm won from the Saracens by Roland, a gold hilted sword, a swift destrier, and a cloak of ermine fur. There are many similar points in the epic where the sumptuous outfits of the knights are described, and it becomes clear that a part of being a knight was to dress in as fine an outfit as possible. This is telling of the true motivation of the knights, and it is something Bernard is adamantly set against. His focus on the internal instead of the external cuts through veneer of chivalry and aims at the true motivation of these men.

Bernard’s criticism is not just limited to the nobility, but rises even to the royal courts themselves. When the defeated crusader armies of the Second Crusade returned in 1149-1150, Bernard took his instrumental role in its beginnings to heart, growing frustrated and angry with the outcome. In instituting the crusade, he wrote letters to the King and the people of England, as well as Bohemia, and his language is very similar to that which he used to exhort the new knighthood. “For how long will your men continue to shed Christian blood; for how long will they continue to fight amongst themselves?” he asks, even while he flatters the English people about their reputation as warriors. Then he lays out the purpose of his letter, the redemptive power of the crusades. “But now, O mighty soldiers, O men of war, you have a cause for which you can fight without

51 Raoul de Cambrai, 11.
danger to your souls; a cause in which to conquer is glorious and for which to die is gain.” Messages like these were instrumental in rallying support for the Second Crusade, and Bernard did not shy from sending them to anyone who would listen.\(^{52}\)

Bernard is overcome with anger once he comes to a conclusion about the reason the crusade failed. This is revealed in a letter written by him to the Abbot Suger, a highly placed churchman closely tied to the crown of France, and actually acting regent during a portion of the Second Crusade. This letter was written a few decades after the forming of the Knights Templar, but it is strikingly reminiscent of his earlier stance. After returning from the crusade, the brother of the king of France and many of his nobles organized a tournament, something the church had long condemned as barbaric and sinful violence between Christians. Bernard directly names this as the reason behind the failure of the crusade in his letter to Suger, asking, “Notice with what sort of dispositions they must have taken the road to Jerusalem when they return in this frame of mind?”\(^{53}\) In Bernard’s eyes this exposed the true intent of the knights and even the king of France, as they were more concerned with the pageantry and glory of a tournament than the soul-searching Bernard sees as necessary for a crusader army. This lack of piety is all the more disheartening after the disastrous failure of the crusade that Bernard supported wholeheartedly. Though this event and Bernard’s reaction take place after the events surrounding the formation of the new Order, it is a critical look into how important Bernard holds the mindset of the knight when he embarks on crusade.

\(^{52}\) Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, 462.

\(^{53}\) Bernard of Clairvaux, *Letters*, 476.
The emphasis that Bernard, Peter the Venerable, and Papal authors put on the importance of separating the spiritual from the physical, and that fighting against other Christians is a sure way of damnation, makes it clear that the church at the time was in no way a warlike one. That there was so much turmoil around the crusades and the creation of orders like the Templars is proof of that. In examining *Raoul de Cambrai*, the author of the epic makes it very clear that the lifestyle of the knight, particularly those that put more emphasis on material possessions and personal or familial honor is one of destruction and misery. The fact that nearly every character in the epic dies because of the constant search for revenge is not used lightly by the author, but rather to show the ultimate outcome for those who hold honor over virtue.

The Templar Order in the Eyes of Bernard

But the Knights of the Order of the Temple were a way to resolve this inherent pride, and to redeem many of the warriors that had lived for so long driven by the desires of the flesh. Bernard goes on to describe how much like a monastic order these knights would be. They would forgo all the trappings of knightly society, and not gain wealth or glory from their actions, save the glory inherent in serving God. “They wear what he (their master) gives them, and do not presume to wear or to eat anything from another source. Thus they shun every excess in clothing and food and content themselves with what is necessary.”54 Bernard also explicitly points out the order’s willingness to forgo

the normal trappings of a knight, “They foreswear dice and chess, and abhor the chase; they take no delight in the ridiculous cruelty of falconry, as is the custom...their hair is worn short, in conformity with the Apostle’s saying,\textsuperscript{55} that it is shameful for a man to cultivate flowing locks.”\textsuperscript{56} Bernard clearly sees in this new order a departure from the vanity and pride he criticizes in secular knights.

In the eyes of Bernard, the current society of the nobility and the knighthood was in large part driven by greed and other selfish motives. Being closely related to the highest levels of French nobility, Bernard’s judgment of his family and peers must have at least some experiences to support it, making it a telling portrayal of the men he is trying to reach. Bernard’s view makes clear that the conflicts and social interactions of the nobility in this period were often marked by great acts of selfishness and pride, acts that tainted the view of the class as a whole. Because of this, Bernard desires to paint a portrait of a more correct knighthood, one that is not plagued by selfish desires and petty conflicts.

He also emphasizes the strict rules set for these men, “Discipline is in no way lacking and obedience is never despised.”\textsuperscript{57} Likewise, Bernard points out the strict monastic lifestyle they maintain, how their lives would be dedicated to God first, and the salvation of their souls, even over their military training. “So that their evangelical perfection will lack for nothing, they dwell united in one family with no personal

\textsuperscript{55} 1 Corinthians 11:14(NIV) "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?"

\textsuperscript{56} Bernard, In Praise of the New Knighthood, 138.

\textsuperscript{57} Bernard, \textit{In Praise of the New Knighthood}, 138.
property whatsoever, careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."58 This foreshadows the rule of the order he helps create at the Council of Troyes, a rule that is a close match to the Benedictine rule.

The Rule of the Knights Templar

When comparing the rule of the Knights Templar to the Benedictine rule Bernard used as a template, a few interesting differences emerge. In designing the rule for the new order, Bernard seems to have taken into account the rigors of a soldier’s life, as well as the needs of a military institution. In doing so, he has altered some of the more rigid strictures his own Cistercian order followed, while still maintaining the spirit of the monastic life. Whether this insight into the life of a soldier came from Bernard himself or was influenced by Hugh de Payens or another member of the order is uncertain, but it is clear that the rule takes into consideration many unusual circumstances that would not be seen by a non-military monastic house.59

The first set of changes made to the Benedictine rule to make it more applicable to knightly brothers was a change in diet and daily life. While these changes may seem trivial, in reality it shows a willingness to break from the often very strict daily schedule to allow these men to remain at their best both as praying men and as fighting men. The main change to the diet is the addition of three meals a week of meat, altered to avoid


eating meat on holy days, in which case the brothers are then fed meat the next day in plenty. In addition they are to be given two meat meals on Sunday in honor of Christ. The servants and squires as well are given meat, but only one meal a week. 60 This addition of meat is to give the men the strength necessary to act as soldiers in the forces of the order, something that did not have to be taken into account for Cistercian or Benedictine monks, and in fact nutrition was usually intentionally strained to provide the proper attitude of penance for the monk’s prayers. The Benedictine Rule actually institutes a purely vegetarian diet, “let everyone, except the sick who are very weak, abstain entirely from eating the meat of animals.”61

In addition to the change of meals, the rule institutes a set time for military drill and practice which is in fact the bulk of a knight-brother’s day. This is in stark contrast to the normal monastic life of quiet work and prayer, and these duties are taken by lay brothers of the order as well as servants. In the Benedictine system, monks alternated set times of prayer, contemplation, and work on the monastery grounds. Benedict states, “Idleness is the enemy of the soul, therefore the brothers should have specified periods for manual labor as well as prayerful readings.”62 Setting standard times for training allows the knights themselves to retain the highest level of military coordination and skill possible, one of the main characteristics that later made them one of the most feared

60 The Rule of the Knights Templar, 26.


62 Benedict, The Rule of St Benedict in English, 69.
fighting forces of their time. This is also a major facet of the combination between a monastic and military order. While the knight’s duties outside of their chapter houses, protecting pilgrims and fighting Muslim enemies in the Holy Land, seems like the center of their existence, their day to day life is what separates them from both secular society and other monastic orders.\footnote{The Rule of the Knights Templar, 82-94.}

Another set of concessions made in the rule of the Knights Templar regards the entrance of knights into the order and the organization of knights within. Unlike many earlier Benedictine houses, the Knights Templar refused all children into their order, for reasons obvious when one considers their main duties of protection and warfare. But unlike other orders, the Knights Templar accepted married knights into the order, as well as temporary knights that did not swear the permanent oaths. This concession seems to be completely against the Benedictine rule, as it allows close interaction between secular knights and knight-brothers, but it is very practical when considering what the knights would be faced with in their area of influence, the Holy Land.\footnote{The Rule of the Knights Templar, 34-35.} The Holy Land, or Outremer as it was called at the time, simply did not have the numbers of individuals entering the monastic life as in France and the rest of Western Europe. Couple this with the fact that the Knights Templar’s militant directives would be a constant drain on the manpower of the order makes keeping the chapter houses at fighting strength a legitimate concern. Allowing married brothers to enter the order is a very small concession to make, and allowing nearby secular knights the ability to temporarily join the order when
needed to face a stronger foe is both militarily sound and allows the superior fighting drill and morale to benefit the surrounding kingdoms as well, fostering a close relationship between the order and the Christian lords of the many holdings in Outremer.

These temporary and married brothers were still restricted from total inclusion in the order. Married brothers were not allowed to live in the same quarters as the unmarried knight brothers, and neither temporary nor married brothers were allowed to don the full robes of the order. These white robes symbolized the purity and celibacy the knight-brothers swore to, so the temporary knights were not allowed to wear them unless they took the permanent oaths, and the married brothers were not allowed because they were obviously not celibate. ⁶⁵

Allowing temporary brothers to be admitted into the order is an extreme concession on the side of Bernard and the other monastic influences on the order. No monastic order up to this founding allowed for members to swear allegiance temporarily. Indeed, the idea of a monk only swearing into an order for a temporary basis was effectively the opposite of what monastic life intended. The monastic orders were founded to create a place in which men, and women in many orders, had a place to sequester themselves from the outside world completely, dedicating themselves to the worship of God for the remainder of their lives. There were strict regulations about a monk attempting to leave the orders, and it was never viewed in a positive light. In fact, according to the Benedictine rule, monks who leave the monastery are only allowed to

⁶⁵ The Rule of the Knights Templar, 34-35.
return once. If they again decide to leave, they are to never be welcomed back in any monastic order.  

The rule in regards to temporary and married knight-brothers is one of the few places where it becomes difficult to differentiate between what portions were put forth by Bernard in his original rule, and which were added at the Council of Troyes with the aid of the knights themselves, specifically Hugh de Payens and Godfrey of Saint-Omers. It seems unlikely that Bernard would make so drastic a break from the traditional Benedictine rule without being influenced by the military opinions of men like Hugh and Godfrey. It is possible that these concessions were made at the Council itself, and that they were a compromise on the part of Bernard and the other church officials. Regardless of whether or not they came from Bernard’s mind initially, or if they were added in discussion later, it is still notable that the clerical council at Troyes made these concessions and still sat well with the mind of Bernard, at least well enough that he endorsed the final version.

The sergeant brothers of the order and the servants were also restricted from wearing the robes, making the white robes a sign of a full knight brother only. This reinforces the distinction between nobly born knights Templar and their low-born servants, and in was intended for that purpose. Unlike the monastic life of a Cistercian or Benedictine, in which every monk was intended to live the same as any other, the Knights Templar were a fighting order, and as such the distinction between knight-brother and sergeant was not one of simple class, but one of fighting ability and training. The nobly born knight-brother was trained from a young age to fight from horseback,

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something that was simply not the case for the sergeants and servants who joined the
order. Because of this, the different strata of membership in the order were not a simple
class system, but rather a separation of military distinction. The knight-brothers were the
heavy cavalry, while the sergeants would serve as light cavalry and infantry support to
their brothers. This is a distinction unique from any non-militant monastic order, and like
the inclusion of the married and secular knights, seems to be a concession made for
military reasons.67

Interestingly, the rule also has a few guidelines that are not normally included in
monastic systems, that seem directly aimed at knights. The strictures on hunting,
particularly falconry, are directly aimed at a common pastime of knights and nobility in
general, making the fact that they deemed it necessary to be spelled out very telling. This
hearkens back to Bernard’s denunciation of falconry as a cruel sport in his letter of praise
of the knighthood.68 Other guidelines, like the rules on inheritances being handed over to
the grand master or left with the family, and the strict rules on gaining land for the order,
and reference to citadels in the Holy Land, are very much in place to keep the line
between knight-brother and the secular knighthood they would interact with intact.
These men were living a life that combined aspects of both knighthood and monasticism,
and these rules were designed to keep them firmly in the order, without being pulled too
far into the secular world.69

67 The Rule of the Knight Templar, 36-38.


69 The Rule of the Knights Templar, 39-42.
Bernard’s vision of the Knights Templar is a development of the original intentions of the First Crusade put forth by Urban II. Building on the idea of crusade as a military journey intended to redeem the soldiers who participate, Bernard saw the forming of an order of knights intended to exist permanently in a sort of crusader mindset as a progression of this ideal. Taking monastic oaths would enable these knights to escape the inherent selfishness, pride, and vanity that Bernard and others saw as the evils of the fighting men of Europe, while retaining the core of their identities, both in God and in their own minds. To facilitate this development as much as possible, Bernard aided in the forming of the order and the writing of the rule, combining those concepts most important in both military and monastic life, and putting his full support behind the men that sought to join this new order.
CHAPTER V
OTHER OPINIONS OF THE NEW KNIGHTHOOD

Bernard does not necessarily see this new order as the ultimate state for a Christian, however. Multiple times, he points out that the life of a monk would be a safer, and more penitent way of living, and he even goes so far as to say he regrets that his cousin Hugh could not have dedicated his life to God as a Cistercian instead of a knight. “How willingly would I provide for your soul and body were it but granted to us to live in the company of each other!” Despite this reluctance, Bernard fully understands that God’s will for each individual is different, “But because this is not to be, because I may not have you ever present, as I should like, it only remains for me always to pray for you absent.”

Bernard, it seems, views the life of a monk as the most effective way of communing with God, as it removes one from many of life’s temptations, and gives one’s life meaning in serving God. But Bernard is not an unrealistic person, and he realizes that not everyone can be a monk, both for individual reasons and the fact that society could not exist with only monks. The world needs those that would protect others, and he sees the lifestyle of the Templar Knights as the purest way of serving this purpose.

70 Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, 65.

71 Evans, 89-92.
Many others voiced their opinions during the foundation of the order, laying more precedent for the example of the knights as a separate and vital part of the church hierarchy, and giving them an even more unique mandate. In the papal bull set forth by Pope Innocent II (1130-1143) granting the authority of the church to the order, he gives the directive that no man in the order may lay aside his oath to the order and take up the robes of a full monk. The papal bull (1135) states, “…so it is in no way acceptable that for you to move to another place in order to enjoy a more religious way of life: for God, who is unchanging and eternal, does not approve of fickle hearts.”\(^72\) The argument behind this is twofold. First, there is the simple fact that the Templars, and men that qualify to be in the order, are relatively rare at the time, compared to the many monks that served in the monasteries at the time. The second part of the argument is that the Knights Templar are already serving the church in their order, and to leave it is to give up their calling. The papal bull reminds the knights that there are many noble and godly men that died on the field of battle in service to God before the order was founded, and these men were every bit as much of a servant of God as a monk.

This is part of a larger debate happening at the same time, the argument of what was proper service to God. The papal bull clearly states that in the eyes of the bishop of Rome the Templar was if not superior, than at least equal to a monk. This is in direct contrast to Bernard’s own view, which was expressed in his letter to Hugh about his choice of vocation, that he would prefer him to take orders as a Cistercian monk as

opposed to a Templar, but he could not force him.\footnote{Bernard of Clairvaux, \textit{Letters of Bernard of Clairvaux}, 476.} To even further complicate this argument, a letter written in the years after the council of Troyes, and signed by Hugh ‘Peccator,’ an unidentified Templar, argues that the Templars serve God much more directly than monks. His argument is clearly summed up in his statement, “If the apostles had told Jesus Christ, I want to leave this place and go contemplate, to not worry about work, and to avoid people who argue and fight, where then would there be any Christians?”\footnote{Barber and Bate, 54-59.} While not a new argument, as it had been the basis of the debate between monks and priests for centuries by the twelfth century, it is interesting that it is put forth by a Templar, one that had to have been closely associated with Bernard at the founding of the order. It takes on an even more poignant meaning if Hugh de Payens himself, one of the three men named Hugh that could have called himself Peccator, wrote the letter. The idea that the Templars were a monastic order, and yet actively served God in a military capacity, made them a unique new entry into the debate of whether or not the monastic or clerical life was a more appropriate way to serve God. We can easily glean Bernard’s opinion on this subject from his letters, but it complicates the matter further that he would aid in creating an order that in some ways goes counter to his idea of religious perfection.

Even the abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, wrote an addition to this discourse. Though he had many reservations about supporting the idea of armed Christians, he seems to throw his full support behind the Templar order. In a letter to Everard of Les Barres, the master of the Order in 1150, he gives this heartfelt description of the knights.
“You are monks by your virtues, knights by your deeds, filling one function spiritually and exercising the other physically. For your brothers you have exposed your souls to life, your bodies to death; which in battle you daily offer to God to be shed if necessary.”

Interestingly, this letter and that written by Hugh ‘Peccator’ have often been interpreted differently. Due to the order’s later history, and their eventual dissolution at the hands of Phillip IV of France with the support of the Pope, most historians ignore the uniqueness of the order at its outset, and what it says about the culture of France, particularly the phenomenon of chivalry, at the time. Some historians simply assume that the order is a natural progression of a warlike religion, or label it a way for the descendants of the Germanic people of the past to reassert their violent ways in the religion that they had adopted. To assume this is not only to overly simplify the culture of Europe, both at the time of the crusades and before, but it is not taking the contemporary literature into account as well, both letters and treatises like those of Bernard, and epic literature like Raoul of Cambrai.

75 Barber and Bate, 228.


77 Wise, 3.
Hospitallers: First Order to Follow the Templar Example

Looking at the formation of a similar knightly order, the Hospitallers, shows a parallel development that is contemporary to the Templar order and develops in a large part because of the Templar founding. The Hospital of St John of Jerusalem was actually founded in 1080 in Jerusalem while it was still under Muslim control. The establishment was designed as a charitable organization for caring for the sick and for pilgrims coming to Jerusalem. After Jerusalem fell to the crusaders, the hospital began to evolve as a center for care of pilgrims and crusaders.

Once the Templars had been founded in 1128, the Hospital of St John began to see a need for protection of pilgrims outside of the walls of Jerusalem, a duty that the Templars were designed to fulfill, but could not carry out on their own. Roughly around 1150 the Hospital of St John petitioned for the right to create a militant branch founded along the same lines as the Templars, to aid in the protection of pilgrims and holy sites. This order, the Hospitaller knights as they were known, was closely affiliated with the Templars for the majority of their existence, until the fall of the Templar order in the early years of the fourteenth century.  

It is interesting to note that the Order of the Hospitaller knights, which many historians use alongside the Templars as an example of how much fervor there was in Europe for this junction of militant and monastic orders, was actually formed as a result of the Templar creation. The Hospitaller knights were not as directly militaristic as the

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Templars in their duties. The Templar knights quickly gained a reputation as the foremost military order in the Holy Land, and by the time of the Third Crusade and the eventual decline of the Latin Kingdoms in the east, the Templars were always expected to ride at the vanguard of the crusader armies, using their superior drill and morale as a spearhead against enemy formations.79

The Hospitaller knights on the other hand were usually used as support in battle, and while in no way seen as less than capable knights, their duties were more geared toward escort and aid. The Order of the Hospital also never lost its original charter, and the knights were still expected to care for the sick and wounded. This seems to have made them less of a forceful presence in the minds of the European kings and nobles, as they were in many ways closer to the monastic side of the dual orders.

The Hospitallers were organized along similar lines as the Templars, with their monastic rule copied almost completely from the Templar rule. The only major difference was that the Hospitallers were much more willing to allow women into the order for the express purpose of tending to the sick and wounded in the many hospital-chapter houses the order created.80 This shows that the Hospitallers were also shown an understanding by the church hierarchy, giving them concessions so that they may perform the duties for which they were created.

The Hospitallers also remained in existence far longer than the Templars, with their order existing in one form or another even unto the present day. Though this does not reflect on the origins of the two orders, it does show how much time can distort the

79 Peters, 88-119.

80 Riley-Smith, 54.
intentions of the men that founded the new knighthood, and how these orders changed to fit the evolving circumstances of the world.

The reaction of Europe to the forming of the Knights Templar and the ideology it represented is indicative of how original this new order was to Christian theology. Likewise, the fact that the clergy and monks of Europe still quarreled over the order’s place in the hierarchy of the church, and whether or not it was more like a clerical or monastic institution indicates that they had never before considered this type of order, or where it would fit in the tenuous power satiation that had been built in the European church over the previous centuries. The support given by the later popes and by men like Peter the Venerable also shows that while not an expected development, the Knights Templar represent a theological step that is understandable to Europe, and accepted and even praised by the religious community. The swift development of the Hospitaller order demonstrates how swift the European church was to grasp the ideas espoused by Bernard, and the continued success of both these orders, and the dozens of orders that developed in the next few centuries, shows how firmly placed in the theology of the church this concept became.

The Crusades will always be viewed as a clash of cultures and religions that had far ranging consequences and created deep seated grudges that remained for centuries. But in viewing the origins of the call for crusade, and the theology of the men that sought to propagate the crusade, it becomes clear that the military pilgrimages of the twelfth century were not a natural outgrowth of violent European Christianity. Rather, the crusades were started by the clerical leaders as a reaction against this violence, to attempt to funnel the evils of pride, vanity, and violence for selfish reasons into a holy endeavor
blessed by God. One cannot judge to motives of these men by the ultimate outcome of the crusades, for they did not know what they had begun. But their intentions were to save the souls of the men that marched the hundreds of miles from Europe to the Holy Land, and to redeem their society in the eyes of God.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The Templar order has been widely studied by historians, but most have focused mainly on their later years, and the unfortunate circumstances surrounding the dismantlement of the order. In 1312 the order was brought up on falsified heresy and sodomy charges by a council formed by the Pope in Avignon, under the direction of Phillip IV, the king of France. This was largely due to the wealth the order had acquired by this point, wealth that Phillip desired. This sordid story tainted the order, and made most historians focus on this event, rather than the earlier portion of the order’s history. It is important to keep in mind that the origins of the order in no way relate to how the order ultimately ended, as those men that founded the order had no idea what would happen in the future.

When looking at religious and ideological history such as the motives of Bernard and the other founders of the Knights Templar, it is also important to keep in mind that the study of religious ideology is not the same as the study of the actions of those that follow the religion. This is crucial in understanding the disconnect between the motives espoused by men such as Bernard and Pope Urban, and how they are radically different

81 Barber and Bate, 189-217.
than the ultimate outcomes of the Crusades, and the actions individual crusaders took. In looking at Pope Urban’s message at Clermont, it is clear that he is focused not on a conquest of the Holy Land, but in a defense of pilgrims in the area, so that they can worship God unmolested.\textsuperscript{82} The fact that the crusaders conquered this territory does not reflect the original intentions of Pope Urban, just as his actions do not necessarily reflect the original intentions of the message from Constantinople to Rome. The actions of the princes of Europe as they moved into the Levant reflects the same desire for glory and conquest that Bernard criticizes in his letters, and the reason why the Templar order is a more appropriate way of defending the faithful.

In examining the Knights Templar and their origins in the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux, a dichotomy of sorts emerges. Bernard truly wishes that all men could live the life of a monk, but he knows that the world is full of sin and that most men will not be able to live up to that life. In response to this he sees the Knights Templar as a way of salvaging those men who seek a life of battle, harnessing that impulse in service to God. It is in this that Bernard sees an answer to the sin of the men of Europe, a way for the nobility to still live lives of bravery and sacrifice, but to do it in a manner pleasing to God.

To this end, Bernard helped promote the idea begun by Urban at Clermont, to focus the violence of the knights of Europe into a force for God, and enable these men to redeem their actions without forcing them to completely change their way of life. This concession was the impetus behind the Crusade, and Bernard further developed this ideal by helping to promote the Second Crusade, and to aid in the development of the Templar

\textsuperscript{82} Peters, 32.
order. In this order, men could serve as knights for the Christian faith, and the violence of their former lives could be used to protect instead of destroy, to build the church instead of tearing down the society of Europe. The Templar order became the first of the orders from Europe to attempt this shift in ideology, and even though they ultimately did not become what Bernard envisioned, it is possible to see his true conviction in the order’s founding.

This order was a new branch of the Christian church, separate from the institutions of the church and the monastic communities, yet firmly seated in the theology and ideology of the church at the time. This should not be mistaken for a natural progression, as the ideology put forth by Urban II and Bernard was not built upon until the men that formed the Templar order decided to take this step, and yet it is possible to look back and see the theology that led to the development, and justified its existence. Like the Templar order, the crusades were a development that was not expected, but not completely radical, in Europe in the eleventh century.
Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


