

## Nine Original Members of the Templar Knights

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What do we know about the nine original members of the **Knights Templar**, not all of whom were knights but are remembered and honored by our *Ordo Supremus Militaris Templi Hierosolymitani* (OSMTH). Are there descendants today who can claim this noble heritage?

Little is known of their personal lives or the activities of those first Templar Knights. Indeed, the best sources available to scholars of the Crusades and Templars can provide full biographies for half of the nine original members of the Knights Templar, but only the first names of the two monks: “Rossal and Gondamer.” However, tradition suggests that in 1118 these nine lay knights, led by **Hugues de Payens** and **Geoffrey St. Omer**, approached the recently installed King of Jerusalem **Baldwin II** (r. 1118-1131) with a radical idea for establishing a new society of knights. They envisioned forming a hybrid Order that combined a monastic way of life with that of a professionalized military army dedicated to protecting the road to the Holy Land for Christians and security within the Kingdom – and yet adhere to the highest monastic rule of poverty, chastity and celibacy.

Equally unique, this new Order would be bound only to the Pope rather than a feudal Lord, but support such Lords in causes that advanced or militarily defended Christendom. Baldwin II accepted this far-reaching offer in view of the extremis circumstances of the Kingdom during those early years. He quartered and supplied the seven Templar knights and two monks at his makeshift palace in the Mosque of Al-Aqsa, which was believed to be built over the original Temple of Solomon. Thus, the Order of *The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and the Temple of Solomon* was ceremonially invested in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on Christmas Day 1119.

Before coming to these nine original members, it is important first to discuss briefly the circumstances leading up to the proposal for the Templars. For instance, the first generation of Crusaders, like Baldwin II, was operating within what historians describe as a uniquely feudal “crusading” mindset. This mindset was driven not just by religious fervor but also by the structure of Christendom governed by the Church. During this high Middle Ages, being a Christian was tantamount to being a citizen of Christendom. In other words, Christianity *was* your citizenship. And part of being a good Christian citizen, was following the strictures of the Catholic Church, which held great influence over Western Europe’s perspective on all matters spiritual and secular.

Therefore, when Pope Urban II preached the crusades, it was heard by the faithful as both a religious calling and a civic duty. This mindset explains, in part, both Hugh de Payne’s radical proposal and Baldwin II’s quick acceptance but also the King’s insistence on making sacred the investiture on Christmas Day in 1119; just as Pope Leo III had done in a similar investiture of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day, 800 AD.

It should be mentioned that Baldwin of Bourq (later Baldwin II) accompanied his famous cousins, Godfrey and Baldwin of Bouillon, earlier to Palestine with the First Crusade in 1096. After Jerusalem was taken in 1099, Godfrey was unanimously chosen as its first ruler, a position he held until his death in June 1100. As in feudal Europe, succession in a Kingdom is generally passed down within familial ties. Thus, Godfrey was succeeded by his brother Baldwin as King of Jerusalem.

Baldwin of Bourq, in turn, succeeded Baldwin I as the new count of Edessa (now Urfa, Turkey) in 1100. The Seljuq Turks moved against Edessa in 1104, capturing Baldwin of Bourq on May 7. Baldwin of Bourq formally became Baldwin II when he was crowned king of Jerusalem on 14 April 1118 after the death of Baldwin I. Having had only daughters from his Armenian wife, Morfia and guarding against any divisive succession claims, Baldwin II arranged for his eldest daughter **Melisende** to marry **Fulk V**, count of Anjou and Maine, in 1129. Carrying out those arrangements on the King’s behalf was Hugues de Payens. Fulk V became King of Jerusalem at the death of Baldwin II in 1131 and ruled until his own

death in 1143. Many colonial immigrant Americans and their descendants can claim their heritage from Baldwin II and Fulk V (*including Chev. Watson*).

A key figure in the full recognition of the Knights Templar as a military-religious Order was **Bernard de Clairvaux** (1090-20 Aug. 1153). Bernard's lengthy biography is well known, which is readily available from many sources. Bernard was a French abbot and the most fervent and articulate intellectual of his age. He reformed of the Cistercian order to return it to its spiritual foundation, recommitting to a life of personal sacrifice and prayer and public life of selfless service to Christendom. In many ways, Bernard's Cistercian reforms was a doubling down of the "crusading" mentality – and a corrective to the Abbey of Cluny, the more power and influential Abby at the time but one more steeped in the temporal world of strategy, foreign affairs and use of force. At the request of Hughes de Paynes, Bernard attended and advocated for the recognition of the new Templar Order at the Council of Troyes in 1128. Bernard also framed and wrote the *Latin Rule* that governed the religious life of Templar Order. Bernard's famous treatise "In Praise of the New Knighthood" (*Liber ad milites Templi: De laude novae militiae*), soon after became the ideal description of Christian nobility, which he believed the Knights Templar embodies.

### **A Short Review of the Nine Original Members of the Knights Templar**

**Hugues de Payens** or *Hugo de Paganis* (ca 1070–1136), was a Frankish knight from the Champagne Region. Hugh de Payens was a vassal of Hugues I, Count of Champagne. Little information of Hugues de Payens exists and no sources on his later career give details of his early life. Information depends partly on documents that may not refer to the same individual, partly on histories written decades or even centuries after his death. However, Hugh de Payens was a founding member and first Grand Master of the Knights Templar. He created the *Latin Rule*, the code of behavior for the Order, along with Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. Hugh de Payens left no descendants.

**Godfrey de Saint-Omer** (known also as *Geoffroi* or *Godfrey*) was a Flemish knight and a founding member of the Knights Templar in 1129. He is said to have come from the family of the Lords of Saint-Omer in Pas-de-Calais, possibly a son of William I de Saint-Omer and Arganitrude de Brugge. Godfrey probably came to Jerusalem in 1099 with William I de Saint-Omer and Hugh de Saint-Omer. According to legend, Godfrey and Hugues de Payens were so poor that between the two of them they had only one horse. This gave rise to the famous image on the seal of the **Knights Templar**, of two men riding a single horse. Godfrey left no descendants. However, William II de Saint-Omer (possibly Godfrey's younger brother) and Miliesende de Picquigny (great-granddaughter of Templar member Guermond de Picquigny) had a son William III and a daughter Matilda, whose descendants married prominent nobility and English royalty. Many colonial immigrant Americans and their descendants can claim this heritage (*including Chev. Watson*).

**André de Montbard** (5 Nov. 1097-17 Jan. 1156) came from the Montbard family of Hochadel of Burgundy and was an uncle to Saint Bernard de Clairvaux as half-brother of Bernard's mother. He was a vassal of Hugues I, Count of Champagne. André de Montbard entered the Order in 1119 and went to Palestine, where he quickly rose to the rank of seneschal and became deputy and second-in-command to the Grand Master. André de Montbard was elected fifth Grand Master of the **Knights Templar** on 22 August 1153 to replace Bernard de Tremelay, who had been killed on 16 August during the Siege of Ascalon. He died in Jerusalem on 17 January 1156 and was succeeded by Bertrand de Blanchefort. André de Montbard left no descendants.

**Hugues I** or Hugh (c. 1074 – c.1125), the third son of Theobald II, Count of Blois and Adele of Valois, was known as Count of Champagne although he preferred Count of Troyes. His first recorded act was a monastic gift in 1094, which became the oldest document of the comital archive. However, his grant of lands in 1115 to the monk Bernard de Clairvaux of the reformed Benedictines is the longest remembered. Although Hugh was married twice, he considered himself impotent and never claimed Odo as his son (who left descendants) by his second wife Isabella. Instead, he transferred his titles to his nephew, who became Theobald II of Champagne. Hugh became a Knight Templar in 1125.

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**Payen de Montdidier**, who was related to the Counts of Flanders and a founding knight of the Knights Templar, established a Preceptory at Oxford, England because of strong support from Queen Matilda. The Queen, wife of Stephen I, King of England (1135-1154) and a niece of Baldwin I of Jerusalem and Godfrey of Bouillon, made Oxford one of the richest and most important centers of the Templars in England. Payen de Montdidier established another Preceptory, Temple Guiting near Cheltenham.

**Rossal** was a monk and a founding member of the Knights Templar, but no other biographical information was found. Apparently, little is known of his origins.

**Gondemar** (Gondamer or Gondemare), a monk of Portuguese origin, was a founding member of the Templar Knights. Gondemar is listed as one of the Masters of the Knights Templar of Portugal, but no other biographical information was found.

The story of the nine original members of the Knights Templar would not be complete without reference to **Warmund de Picquigny** (1080-July 1128, known also as *Guermond*, etc.), a Crusader and Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem (1118-1128). He was Regent of Jerusalem (1123-1124) during the captivity of Baldwin II. Warmund was approached by a group of Christian knights who requested permission to elect a master to lead them to defend the kingdom. Hugues de Payens was chosen as the first master of the Knights Templar. Warmund charged them with the duty of keeping the roads safe from thieves and others who were routinely robbing and killing pilgrims *en route* to Jerusalem. Warmund de Picquigny's descendants include Henri I, King of Navarre and his daughter Jeanne, Princess of Navarre who married Philip IV "the Fair" of France (grandparents of Edward III, King of England). Many colonial immigrant Americans and their descendants can claim this heritage (*including Chev. Watson*).

### **Nine Templars Collection**

GPUSA is presenting the "*Nine Templars Collection*" in commemoration of the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original nine members of the Templar Knights. This set of nine coins and a display base pairs a virtue with each of the nine Templars. Pre-production purchase announcement will be coming soon along with a new 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary website where you will find other historical material and merchandise.