

# Were There Really Only Nine?

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For the past few months, we have been taking a close look at the final days of the Knights Templar and the myths connected to that part of their story. But the origins of the order are equally clouded in legend.

Though we may not be able to recite all of their names by heart, most Masonic Knights Templar are aware that there were nine men who formed the original order in the early years of the twelfth century.

But were there really nine?

The traditional list of founding members of the Knights Templar comes to us, not from the time of the Templars, but from the writings of the French historian Charles du Fresne du Cange (1610-1688), who recorded them in his book *Les familles d'outremer*, published nearly two centuries after his death. In fact, the Templars kept no minutes or records of their early days, at least none that have survived, so to form a picture of those early days we must examine what contemporary chroniclers wrote about them and their humble beginnings.

Our notion that Hugh de Payens and Godfrey de St. Omer were joined by seven valiant knights comes to us largely from the writings of William, Archbishop of Tyre (1130 - 1190); however, William does not tell us that there were nine at the start, but rather that in their first nine years of existence, the Templars could raise no more than nine men. Although William was born in the Holy Land, he was not an eyewitness to the formation of the Templars. In fact, the Templars had already existed for more than a decade when William was born, and his chronicle was written many years later around the time of the Battle of Hattin (1187) when the Templars were well established.

Another medieval chronicler contemporary with the time of the Templars was Michael the Syrian, Patriarch of Antioch. In Michael's account of the Templars' beginnings we are told that Hugh de Payens had travelled to the Holy Land and vowed to never return to France. After serving in King Baldwin, II's army for a period of three years, de Payens, along with the thirty knights who had accompanied him east, accepted the king's advice to continue to serve the cause. According to Michael, Baldwin granted the knights a portion of the al Aqsa Mosque, believed to be Solomon's Temple, and thus the Templars were born.

Although Michael the Syrian's account has received less attention outside historical count of the formation of the Templars than William's assertion of just nine knights in nine years.

But there is another, more fanciful account of the early days of the order that is worthy of mention; the story presented by Walter Map, the Arch deacon of Oxford and a clerk in the court of King Henry II of England. While both Michael the Syrian and William of Tyre credit Hugh de Payens as the leader, Walter introduces us to a Burgundian knight named Paganus, who single-handedly took on the task of defending Christian pilgrims. In Walter's story (more in keeping with Arthurian legend than medieval history) Paganus was troubled to see Christians regularly attacked at a horse pool near to Jerusalem. It was only after his opponents became too numerous for him to handle on his own that he petitioned for assistance. However, that assistance was not to come from the king of Jerusalem, but rather from the monks of the Temple of the Lord (Church of the Holy Sepulchre). Like the traditional account, Map's story tells us that the canons of the Lord's Temple granted Paganus a base of operations from which to draw more knights to the cause.

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Stephen has appeared in several documentaries on the history of the Templars and related subjects including Sacred Societies - A&E, In Search of Satan - MSNBC, and The Prince and the Grail - Vision TV Canada and served as a consultant in the production of The Templar Code - History Channel. He can be contacted at: PO Box 3135 Morinville, Alberta T8R 1S1 or [author@stephendafoe.com](mailto:author@stephendafoe.com)

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