

# **THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY**

## **The Mediterranean World in 1453 and Beyond**

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in 1453 and Beyond**

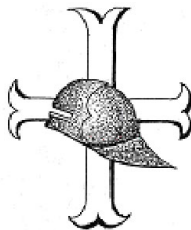
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*This book is dedicated to*

*Robert L. von Dauber  
1939-2018*

*Historian  
Knight of Grace and Devotion  
Grand Cross of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta*

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## EPILOGUE

Dane Munro

### *Introduction*

After more than 900 years of existence, the Hospitaller Order of St John is still very much alive, with more than 13,500 Knights and Dames active in charity worldwide of which only a mere 100 in Malta itself. This book will have taken you from the humble beginnings, when it started off as a hospitaller initiative of Amalfitan traders in Jerusalem in c. 1054 to serve as a charitable institution for Christian pilgrims coming from all over Europe and locals, to phases of militarisation when politically depending on the Latin East. The articles in this book will have informed you about the period the Hospitallers, together with the newly formed Order of the Temple and much later the Teutonic Order, formed the standing army of Western Christian powers in the Holy Land, adding to their identity new and perhaps confusing aspects of nursing and soldiering. The journey continues, after the Holy Land was lost in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, the Hospitallers gained territorial and political sovereignty in Rhodes and Malta. During these 'island state' periods, the Hospitallers did not forget the initial reason for their existence, charity. It planted the seed of carrying out charity under cover of arms, at land and sea, extending it to policing the Mediterranean to protect Christendom against Muslim and Ottoman expansionism, to guard Christian shipping and to free Christian slaves. The Hospitallers went about their manner of protecting Christianity even long after mainland Europe deemed this protection unnecessary, out of date and in conflict with their international trade policies. This *Epilogue* will treat the modern period of the Hospitaller Order, after Napoleon Bonaparte temporarily stalled the organisation when he evicted the Hospitallers from Malta in 1798. After re-grouping and contemplating on

their situation, the Order turned full circle to its core business of being global hospitallers and a charitable institution, reaching out far and wide. While this article will take you to the modern period, this paper will first trace the development of the Hospitaller chivalric character over the centuries, tracing the transformation of chivalry over the centuries into the modern times. At some point, examples of Hospitaller chivalry and charity are quoted, based on the *corpus* of inscribed texts at St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta, Malta, which can be regarded as samples of chivalry and charity in context.

### *In the beginning*

René Aubert de Vertot, a chronicler of the Order of St John, starts his 1726 history on the Order of St John by stating that his book is about 'a fraternity of Hospitallers' at Jerusalem who later developed into a military society and finally into a sovereign Order.<sup>1</sup> His work is a contemporary view, fully biased in relation to Christians, Muslims and Ottomans and not in the least hindered by present day political correctness or modern ideologies. His work is often criticised by historians as being inaccurate, prejudicial, judgmental and romanticising, which is arguably not altogether bad when writing about the chivalric qualities of Hospitaller Knights. De Vertot continues his introduction by mentioning the Hospitallers' *raison d'être*, 'instituted upon motives of charity and prompted by a zeal for the defence of the Holy Land, to take up arms against the infidels.' In one sentence he manages to bundle three very different and distinctive periods and identities. These identities range from permanent and unchanging (charity), temporal and relinquished (defence of the Holy Land) and discontinued (fight against the enemies of Religion).

The first motive, that of charity,<sup>2</sup> has been a continuous one, up till the present day, while the 'zeal for the defence of the Holy Land,' was documented between 1124 and 1291.<sup>3</sup> The other motive, the aspect of 'taking up arms against the infidel' is one which changed too over the centuries. This struggle against the enemy of Religion, after the Holy Land was lost in 1291, continued in Cyprus, Rhodes and Malta, at sea rather than on land, until their final days, when the French evicted the Hospitallers in June 1798 from their island state of Malta.

De Vertot here also fuses two admirable human qualities, piety and bravery, and recognises that they are at either extreme end of a dichotomy. Nonetheless, he claims, the Hospitaller Knights of St John, as soldiers of Jesus Christ, managed to bridge these two remote qualities admirably well. A few samples, of many, will suffice from the oeuvre of inscribed texts at St John's Co-Cathedral. The sepulchral monument of Grand Master De Valette, at the Grand Master's Crypt, says it all (in English translation): De Valette 'was a terror to the enemy, dear to his own people, whence not without reason he was called the guardian-of-the-people and the curse-of-the-enemy by everyone.'<sup>4</sup> Another example is that of Frà Jacques de Virieu Pupetieres, who was 'a soldier of the Venerable Tongue of Auvergne of the Hospital Order of Jerusalem, guardian of peace and charity, and also a tireless defender of the Catholic Faith.'<sup>5</sup>

#### *The origin of knighthood and charity*

In the year 476 the centrally organised administration of the Western Roman Empire fragmented into many pockets of power, of a mostly tribal, rural and illiterate nature.<sup>6</sup> About 100 years before, Christianity had become the official state religion of the Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church was the only remaining centralised Roman power unit which survived. It seemed that the West became a citadel under siege and was indeed for a large part invaded by Norsemen from the north, Magyars from the west and Muslims from the south.<sup>7</sup> In particular, the Arab invasions are often seen as a factor which broke the cultural unity of the Mediterranean drastically,<sup>8</sup> or at least divided the artificial entity in which a Rome based post-

hellenistic cultural umbrella overshadowed its cultural diversity.

As a consequence, a number of new cultural elements were introduced to Europe. Processes of integration, acculturation and acceptance of new cultural traits was a slow, long and complex process. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church had difficulties accepting the military character of the way of life of the Germanic newcomers, which was essentially regarded as truly foreign to the initially peaceful religion of Christ, as, for example, the early saints turned their back on violence and were happy to be martyred for their pacifism.<sup>9</sup> Coming to terms with violence, the Church, at first, had thought to prevent Christians from becoming soldiers. When it was realised that this was a rather unsustainable ideal, in the eleventh century, the weakness of their peace argument was turned into a strength.<sup>10</sup> Violence was from then onwards allowed not only to defend one's self, but also used for the purpose of protecting Christendom in an offensive format and became an answer to the biggest threat to Europe of the day, the holy war of Islam.<sup>11</sup>

Due to all these wars and conquests in Europe, a large number of warriors went about, looking for a sustainable livelihood and simultaneously causing mayhem and near-uncontrollable violence. Fragmented Europe was indeed in chaos, not only because of continuous invasions and internal wars, but also because of the existence of many pockets of power; there was an inextricable tangle of rules, regulations and borders.<sup>12</sup> According to Huizinga, the Church-structured chivalric ideal helped to create an illusion of order, and knightly fiction was created to make sense of the incomprehensibility and disorder of the above-described medieval world. Even from contemporary writers and chroniclers, Huizinga filters out the thin veneer of chivalry, hastily coating over a reality of merciless fighting, greed, corruption and noble arrogance. The chivalric ideal reduced the harsh reality to an unreachable ideal, wistful thinking rather, of knightly virtue and princely honour, a game with noble rules. The knightly ideal is a collection of winning narratives forming collectively an aesthetic ideal, vibrant imagination and moving charm, and also a corresponding identity. The passionate longing to be remembered for one's



reputation and honour, to be praised by those coming after, is a strong motivator. A true knight had a dislike of wealth, was sober, moderate, pious and at the same time courteous and educated. Also, the ascetic element is very strong and equals the most severe monastic ideals and rules.<sup>13</sup> Such people were perfect candidates to become part of a Hospitaller system. Much of this chivalric ideal is captured in the winning narratives of the *corpus*.

### *The development of the knightly class*

Free knighthood was initially for people who neither belonged to the rank of nobility nor to the rank of the ministerials, who originally were unfree persons to whom an important office was entrusted. It was regarded as a middle category between nobility and ministeriality, to which also free city citizens belonged. In the twelfth century the traces of their unfree background were gradually erased and in the late medieval ages the ministerials were absorbed into knighthood, city patricians and gentry.<sup>14</sup> The *equites* were free knights, from which later the equestrian warrior or *chevaliers* developed. The title of 'knight' became restricted and reserved for sons of knights, not of nobles. Knighthood becomes henceforth *de facto* a new class of hereditary nobility, a new privileged class. The rank of knight was only obtainable by means of a ceremony, the investiture. In order to encourage the fighting class to carry out their profession in unison on behalf of the Church's interest, the Church instituted the reception of Christian knights through a Christian knighting ceremony.<sup>15</sup> In reality, it took a very long time before this raw knightly energy of burly young men on horseback, a testosterone circus fused with adrenaline, was somehow controlled by the Church.<sup>16</sup>

### *The conceptual idea of knighthood*

There are a number of broad concepts which define Western European knighthood, after its initial development in the early middle ages. By the first millennium, matters seem to have matured. Kaeuper's analysis speaks for itself. Much weight is given to suffering, the physical suffering of a knight during a life-time of exercising and fighting, which determines the spiritual value and benefits of this suffering for the knight's soul. By suffering the

knight underwent atonement for sins committed during the exercise of knighthood, where matters as violence, misjudgement and unfair treatment were included in the package. Through suffering, physical and emotional pain, death, combat, toil, endurance, his knighthood acquired *Gestalt*. Suffering, that is, suffering personal hardship in defence of Christendom, is therefore necessary if the knight is to be regarded as meritorious, since with his suffering he imitates the suffering of Christ. The more blood-stained the knight is, the more virtuous the knight becomes and the larger his prowess is deemed and the bigger his honour is. Not only the *Chansons de Geste* give numerous samples of this state of mind, also in the *corpus* the medieval sense of knighthood seems unchanged: 'Halt and mourn, passer-by. Here lies Frà Jean-Jacques de Verdelin, a strenuous soldier of Christ, stained on a hundred occasions with the blood of the enemy, on seven with his own.'<sup>17</sup> It was said of Frà Jean de la Baume de Foursat that 'So great was the courage of this man that he indeed disdained his fear of Death itself when he, near Levkás, with equal courage, drew blood from the enemy and got wounded himself.'<sup>18</sup>

The growth of the Hospital at Jerusalem in a particular direction and the presence of the knightly social class are closely connected to social and historical developments in medieval Europe. Crusader ideals were fused to the tradition of pilgrimage to Jerusalem and from there it was another small step to presume that fighting the infidel was the same as performing a pilgrimage.<sup>19</sup> The Hospital, after the Crusaders arrived in Jerusalem in 1096, took upon itself as an additional task the protection of the pilgrim caravans through the unconquered territories between Jaffa and Jerusalem, with armed escorts. Normally a pilgrim went unarmed, but idea had grown that it was acceptable to defend one's self on strange soil and to accompany pilgrims by armed men and to take control by force and place areas under Christian control for the safety of pilgrims. These armed escorts were either knights from Europe or otherwise people who knew how to fight. Whether they were pilgrims or Crusaders, they seemed at least possessed with crusader zeal,<sup>20</sup> and an additional well-developed notion of justified war, intertwined with the transforming qualities of the Beatitudes.<sup>21</sup>

## *Chivalry in this book*

The quintessential aspects of chivalry did not seem to have changed much over the years, but seem to get more and more defined. Eventually, the 1480 siege of Rhodes and especially the Great Siege of 1565 have set the benchmark for heroism and chivalric behaviour of the Hospitallers. To its own opinion, the Hospitaller knights were true knights, always ready to engage in a heroic fight, not overtly bothered when seriously outnumbered because they fought with God on their side. Their perseverance and steadfast beliefs will make them overcome any enemy and will bring them great honour. Chivalry and charity not only developed parallel to each other, it seems that they also needed each other for their respective development. Some samples from the *corpus* will give a broad idea how important the tandem of charity and chivalry was. Frà. Eustache Médéric Audoard of Malta was promoted to the Priory of the Sacred Order's Infirmary and its Clergy who were devoted to the sick. He was 'absolutely not discouraged by regular infections he had contracted in the course of duty of such Christian love. Finally, he was swept away by a deadly attack of fever, to everyone's grief, gave up his life sooner than his work on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 1766, at the age of 39, a victim of his very own charity. His meritorious parents placed this tombstone for their dear son overwhelmed by tears.'<sup>22</sup> On the other side of the dichotomy charity-chivalry stands Frà. Giovanni Minutillo, who, very much aware that his death 'was imminent, although reduced by old age and illnesses, dragged himself onto his feet and into church to receive his Last Sacrament, showing that a Religious ought to go to Mass, a soldier ought to die in his boots.'<sup>23</sup>

### *The end of chivalry as the Hospitallers knew it*

However, the world changes, and sometimes it changed faster than the Hospitaller Order realised or could care about. Chivalric ideology enjoyed a long stay in Europe and found its way into behaviour, art, religion and war. It managed to adapt over ages and is still around albeit in a near unrecognisable format. It must be remarked that the hospitaller chivalry was one of the last to collapse within the European framework of statehood, humanism, military progress and religious Reformation.

In the eighteenth century, statehood was developing rapidly, resulting in new politics, early forms of democracy, together with changes in the military. New military technologies, bureaucracy, tactics and command structures did allow for some prowess, but not chivalric prowess. Besides, spreading of modern thought, such captured in humanism, challenged knighthood and the far going religious developments in Protestantism no longer placed value on a suffering knight for atonement of sins.<sup>24</sup> God allowing Christ to sacrifice himself on the Cross for the forgiveness of our sins was, according to the Protestant reformers, a sign that human effort was useless in this respect, as Salvation was now thought to come from Christ alone. Personal asceticism and suffering as atonement for sins was suddenly unnecessary. Imitating the suffering of Christ was now regarded as foolish and no longer meritorious, as it had been for centuries. The achievements of the Church to harness chivalry and let knights fight for God and Church, were invalidated, as the Reformation broke the connection between chivalry and the suffering of Christ. This was probably a deathblow to chivalry in Europe, but not in Hospitaller Catholic Malta, where the knights of the Order were still prepared to suffer and to show piety and prowess at the same time for their Christian ideals and goals. Nonetheless, heroism and chivalry were still important issues in Europe, albeit in a literary, nostalgic and romantic sense. Moreover, military orders continued to exist. Hence, the outer layer of chivalry remained while the content changed dramatically.

The Reformation, as mentioned above, had removed the aspect of Damnation/Salvation, and only honour remained. Even that honour was being transformed in the modernisation of the military apparatus. Warring and fighting was no longer the prerogative of a band of feudal knights, it became the responsibility of modern states, either kingdoms or republics. One did no longer fight for God, one would fight for the fatherland. Where does this leave the Hospitallers? They were knights, their religion Roman Catholic and their sovereignty organised as an *Ordensstaat* which they called a republic. In the *corpus*, a number of references are made to the republican form of governance, naming it the Maltese Republic, the Christian Republic, the Sacred Republic or the

Sacred Republic of the Jerusalemite Hospital. These Hospitaller knights still had honour, piety and prowess and preserved and valued their Catholic suffering. Moreover, unlike the modern military in northern Europe, the Hospitallers could not actually fight for their fatherland, being a band of individual knights from all over Europe, united in the Order. Instead, they fought for God, their Prince and Grand Master and the Hospitaller Republic. In these Republican forms, chivalry and honour still played an important role. An example from the inscribed texts will suffice: 'To a chosen Prince, his benefaction a father of the destitute, the Most Eminent Grand Master Frà Emanuel de Rohan who guided the Republic through 21 years, prudently in times of growth, tirelessly in times of adversity, giving new lustre to the Sacred Order and, in fact, while kingdoms were being overturned, he obtained the people's favour with his generosity, trust with his justice, affection with his Christian love. He died on the 13th day of July 1797, at the age of 72.'<sup>25</sup>

#### *The Hospitallers and the French Revolution*

For a very long period, the Hospitaller Order at Malta had been a buffer zone for Christendom, at the fringes of Europe, between the Ottoman expansion and the North African piracy. Although after the Battle of Lepanto in 1571, the Ottoman threat was gradually diminishing, it really never went away, while the state sponsored piracy by the North African states did not show signs of waning. Continuously there were clashes with pirates from Tripoli and in the years 1783 to 1784 there was an attempt by the Hospitallers, in league with the Spanish and Venetian fleets, to put an end to the Tunisian and Algerian corsair states. Especially Tunis was a place where the Hospitallers were engaged in fights and struggles, both on land and at sea. One of the early mentions of trouble with Tunis is in the inscribed text of the sepulchral monument of Grand Master Pietro del Ponte (d. 1535),<sup>26</sup> which says that the galleys of the Order, in league with the fleet of Charles V, that they had forestalled the Turkish fleet and had captured and laid waste Tunis. The last mention of Tunis in the *corpus* of inscribed texts at St John's is of Sancho Basurto, a captain of a galley active in besieging Tunis in the 1770s (d. 1797).<sup>27</sup> This, however, only gave a temporarily respite and it was only in 1830,

when the French occupied parts of North Africa and turned these into colonies,<sup>28</sup> that piracy and slave markets were terminated in this region. The galleys of the Order were the only ships which could match the speed of the North African pirate ships. Besides that, Malta was the only Naval Academy in the area, serving also, for instance, Naples, Sardinia and the Papal States.<sup>29</sup> It was the intermittent fighting between France and Spain that encouraged the North African corsairs to increase their activities. Contrary to some opinion, the Order had not sunk into lethargy and oblivion, but was rather active counter-acting the renewed vigour of these North African pirates. A sample from the *corpus*: 'For the bones and memory of Frà Jean Hector de Fay de la Tour Maubourg of Auvergne (d. 1685), who, just coming out of his puberty, not just once gave proof of warlike and Christian valour in frequent conflicts near the Hellespont. What [kind of bloodshed] the Maltese troops could pour out over the enemy, under the leadership of our Hector, in the African expedition aimed at Jijeli, and soon after in the theatre of war in the siege of Crete, the aggressors by now gripped by fear, the allies by now admired in astonishment. In his last duty, when Corone was besieged by the Venetians, he was assigned to the supreme command of the Maltese forces, [and] took the fate of the fortification of the beleaguered city in his own hands, and upheld it virtually alone, but alas! for so great a victory a soul should be sacrificed, and our leader was the price for that captured city, putting an end to living and conquering.'<sup>30</sup> The chivalric elements of warlike and Christian values, *i.e.* prowess, honour, being outnumbered, bloodshed, victory, suffering and self-sacrifice for Christendom and the Hospitaller Republic, speak for themselves.

In the year the French Revolution started, 1789, the Hospitaller Order had 2,128 listed knights, which is about two hundred fifty more compared to 1631.<sup>31</sup> In this respect, the quality and essence of chivalry and the rigours of knighthood were still firmly in place. As Sire remarks, the danger came from the leadership of the Order, where there was a increasing habit to give Grand Priories to people who were not professed knights. In the past, such positions had to be earned by professed knights the hard way, through fulfilling the prescribed number of caravans at sea, where the essence of

knighthood came about in many facets. Further threats came from enlightenment thinking, a difference political ideology and supremacy of the developing early modern European states.<sup>32</sup> There was also an internal threat, as in the Chapter General of 1776 there were reform proposals made, suggesting that the Order should no longer be obedient to the Pope and that the Order ought to continue as a military and nobiliary order only.

#### *The near-end of the Order and the expulsion from Malta: unintended consequences*

The French Revolution dried up the revenue for the Order from their estates in France, as the revolutionary government had seized them all. When the revolution spread over Europe the same happened to its estates in the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. All feudal rights had been abolished, sending the Order into a financial crisis.<sup>33</sup> Here the real problem became visible. Although the revolution had put an end to some of the Order's features that the revolutionaries regarded as contemptible, such as their noble titles, old feudal rights, landed property, participation in slavery and corsairing; it also indiscriminately broke down the Order's system of hospitals, almshouses, poor-houses and the network of hospices, which were serving the *pauperes*, who were now mostly out in the cold, as the revolutionary governments, not very well able to look beyond the revolution, were still a long way from providing a care equal to that of the Hospitallers. Centuries of humanitarian achievements were simply wiped out, although fortunately enough, a number of the facilities were taken over by surviving religious houses.

During the French Revolution, and also during the Cold War, they could only see the nobiliary side of the Order, not the humanitarian aid, its members dispensed everywhere. In their zeal for revolution, these matters were conveniently overlooked and the *pauperes* lost much of the care and cure the Order had provided.

With the expulsion from Malta in 1798, the Hospitaller sense of chivalry and pride had been severely bruised. Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch zu Bolheim was described as a minor diplomat with a few qualities. He certainly lacked

leadership qualities and was the antithesis of chivalry, a knight in name only. Moreover, the Order was described as being just a shadow of their former self, 'sunk in indolence and pleasure, and did not even attempt to defend itself.'<sup>34</sup> Napoleon Bonaparte was reputed have have won over a number of French knights to his side, and was therefore able to take Malta without resistance. It became painfully clear that von Hompesch lacked authority, had no grip on his men and, most importantly, possessed no military experience. It has been suggested that, had he kept the doors of Valletta closed, the French, on their way to Egypt and with no time to waste on a prolonged siege, probably would have given up soon enough. This may be confirmed, albeit probably in an anecdotal context, by a remark of Caffarelli, that 'It is well there was someone within to open the door for us; had there been no garrison at all, the business might have been less easy.'<sup>35</sup> Although the French Revolutionary Republican government wanted to have a naval base in the Mediterranean, they would have sought a different place without so many fortifications to challenge.<sup>36</sup> The idea that a Grand Master would capitulate without being seriously besieged went against the grain of chivalry and against the statutes too,<sup>37</sup> and would be considered not less than treason and reason for on-the-spot defrocking.

Von Hompesch and most of the Knights were evicted from Malta, in June 1798. The dynamics of the French Revolution certainly killed the Order's military character in the sense of chivalry in action and its activities as the policeman of the Mediterranean. It also lost its territorial sovereignty. The French Revolution finished the military role of the Order, but did not end piracy taking place from the North African harbours and slave markets; on the contrary, by ending the role of the Order, it facilitated their business instead.

#### *The Russian Czar and Grand Master*

More ignoble episodes would follow. Paul of Russia was made the Protector of the Order by von Hompesch. After the latter was finally declared to have abdicated, further intricate manipulations took place by a few members of a small part of the fragmented Order; the Priory of Poland which was transformed into the Priory

of Russia. The Czar arranged for non-statutory elections and became the Grand Master, without being a practising Catholic and not being a professed knight who lived according to the three vows of celibacy, obedience and poverty. In March 1801, Czar Paul was strangled and his successor, Alexander I, sought to resolve the situation. The idea was to reconstruct the Order to the norms of its statute, so that a Grand Master could be elected in an acceptable and legally valid manner.

When the Czar of Russia assumed the title of Grand Master, the Order had become a *de facto* secular order of chivalry. The revived Order of St John is still a military order, which means it is a religious one because a chivalrous order is by definition secular. The word 'military' here refers to canon law, 'an order of knights'. This has to do with the Latin word *miles*, meaning knight.<sup>38</sup> Professed knights are sometimes regarded as monks while they should be called 'Religious', as the *corpus* clearly shows. Frà Jean de Vintimille d'Ollières, 'in order to receive the rewards of a most generous Knight and a good Religious, he took wing into Heaven in the Year of Salvation 1610.'<sup>39</sup> Frà Louis du Mesnil de Simon of Maupas was addressed as a 'Religious Knight.'<sup>40</sup> Likewise, Frà. Louis Roger de Blécourt Tincourt was addressed as a 'military Religious.'<sup>41</sup>

Many things can be said about the Russian intervention, but it did keep the Order from being dissolved altogether. However, there is a darker side to the Russian intervention and the creation of the Russian Priory. Although the Grand Priory of Russia has been dissolved, the result is that there are at present at least more than twenty unrecognized orders of St John, with claims of original descent. These so-called fake orders or mimic orders all have names as close as legally possible to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, to profit from the Order's good name in the field of international charity.<sup>42</sup>

Regularly, people are invested in these orders in change of substantial sums of money. Even famous people who already have a serious title apparently fall for the charms. Sir Cliff Richard was invested in a non-recognised order in 2011. The Cliff Richard Fan Club website announced that in May 2011 'Cliff became a Knight of the Order of St

John at a ceremony in Malta, and also received the Palma D'Oro (a Peace Award).'<sup>43</sup> In a reaction, the Ambassador of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta, known also as The Sovereign Military Order of Malta, said that he wished to

'inform readers that it has no connection with the organisation which calls itself the "Knights Hospitallers of the Sovereign Order of St John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta – The Ecumenical Order". This organisation has recently been given coverage by this newspaper in connection with the fact that the renowned singer Cliff Richard has been made a member of this organisation.... it is pertinent to note that the organisation in question is not recognised by the Republic of Malta or by the Holy See. This is simply one of the many organisations which have, for reasons best known to themselves, decided to impersonate the Order of Malta by making irregular and unauthorised use of its symbols and names. Some of these organisations use the Republic of Malta as their headquarters, possibly for the purpose of giving their members or prospective members the misleading and erroneous impression that they have a historical connection with the Order which made Malta its home between 1530 and 1798. The Order of Malta is indeed saddened when it learns about individuals who have been led to believe that they are joining a bona fide Order of Chivalry, possibly parting with a significant amount of money in the process, only to discover some time later that they have simply been hoodwinked into joining an organisation that is devoid of any legitimacy.'<sup>44</sup>

#### *Era of missed opportunities*

After the Russian episode, followed a very difficult period, during which the Order's restoration saw many missed opportunities.<sup>45</sup> During the Greek War of Independence of Turkey, 1821-9, the Order's Lieutenant Busca, of the same bad quality as von Hompesch as it was implied, lost an opportunity to recapture Rhodes in a period in which the Ottoman Empire was

seriously disintegrating. With Rhodes the Order would have recovered its territorial sovereignty and continued with its protective role of Christians against Ottoman repression in the eastern Mediterranean. It all came to nothing, mainly because Busca followed Austria's Metternich, who was afraid of a revolution in Austria. Metternich therefore decided to lend a certain solidarity to the Ottomans, the declared enemy of Austria over the past three hundred years.<sup>46</sup> Another option was that the Order would be integrated into the Papal Army, and that failed too. Sire is of the opinion that thanks to these failed options, against all odds, the Order survived. A Hospitaller Order state on Rhodes would surely not have survived Greek and Turkish politics after Greece's independence. In 1870, as a result of the unification of Italy, Rome became part of the Kingdom of Italy and the papal army was dissolved.<sup>47</sup>

Busca had seemingly ruined the relationship with France and, as a result, the Order stopped to exist there. The only places where some activities of the Order continued, were the Vatican and Austria, and, for some time, a few of the lesser Italian city-states. The *raison d'être*, charity, did probably not stop all together, but it is difficult to see how a fragmented and disunited Order could carry out any hospitaller activities without proper funding. Between 1814 and 1834 no core activities such as hospitaller work occurred. Even the Order's headquarters was declared bankrupt.<sup>48</sup> The new Lieutenant, Carlo Candida was the only knight left who had had naval experience in Malta. Very early in his career he asked Pope Gregory XVI for a hospital where new novices could start learning the basic tenets of the Order, hands-on charity. Cento Preti, at the Ponte Sisto, became the designated hospice to rekindle a Hospitaller duty which had been pushed to the background in years of political turmoil. Candida also set in motion the development of family commanderies to generate income, new members and political strength.<sup>49</sup> The Order was nearly destroyed by the French Revolution and just avoided being taken over by European states. What saved the Order was its rebuilding by means of national associations and the influx of members of the tertiary class, Knights of Honour and Devotion. Most remarkable was that in the day and age of revolutions, the Order managed to keep its sovereignty.<sup>50</sup>

## *Post-revolutionary Europe*

The Order revived in Europe, especially in Protestant countries, like England and Germany. The Venerable Order, established in the late 1830s and the Johanniterorden, first established in the second half of the sixteenth century,<sup>51</sup> after Luther's Protestant Reformation had divided the Germany city-states and principalities in Lutheran or Catholic. Knights of Malta, of the German Langue, followed the lead of the Bailiwick of Brandenburg and became Protestant. These Protestant knights did not take the three vows of obedience, celibacy and poverty, but were mostly married. The Bavarians remained professed Catholic knights. The Bailiwick of Brandenburg was dissolved in 1812 and was restored in 1852, on both occasions by kings of Prussia in their role of Protector of the Order, and could then continue its charitable work undisturbed.<sup>52</sup> Re-establishment of the associations of the Order followed in Italy, Spain, Bohemia and France, rekindling the united spirit of chivalric, aristocratic charity. In 1909, a Catholic association was grounded in the Netherlands, followed in 1911 by a Protestant branch. The Order returned to Malta in the 1960s.

## *Modern times*

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Order was back on track with their hospital trains and ships. When Calabria experienced a heavy earthquake in 1908, the hospital train immediately left from Milan to give assistance, while their hospital ship was moored at Messina. Since then, the Order's medical corps is part of the Italian army. The Order's hospital ship transported more than 12,000 wounded to Libya during the Italian-Turkish War of 1911-2.<sup>53</sup> Military nursing was then a natural extension of its military past and this metier was tested to the full during World War I. A total of eight trains were employed, many hospitals were fitted out and hundreds of members, both lay and religious, gave their services voluntarily. From then onwards, the Order steadily developed and was able to carry out its purpose of charity. While the Order was only recognised by the Vatican in 1919, soon after many other states followed. Worldwide, numerous national associations were formed and helped spreading the charitable goals of the Order. World War II

saw the Order confronted with a large number of displaced people which had to be relocated.

The current website of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta provides detailed information on the activities of the Order, such as aid for refugees, disaster relief and provision, diseases and epidemics, medical facilities and social assistance.<sup>54</sup> Undoubtedly, the flagship of the Order is at present (but since 1882) the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem, Palestine. This maternity hospital is the only place for all women of that region to give birth under excellent medical conditions.

### Conclusion

There are a number of remnants of the chivalrous and military past of the Hospitallers, which seem possibly antiquated at present. Nonetheless, a good number are timeless aspects of chivalry, today translated not only as courteous behaviour but also as timeless discipline, personal integrity, standards of care and voluntary work in the charity sector. It is nowadays also agreed, that when one engages in charity, one has to be healthy and wealthy, to old *noblesse oblige*, because if one is as poor and sick as the *pauperes* or the disempowered, one cannot help anyone, certainly not on a worldwide scale. Therefore, the revolutionary way of making the rich poor, has never made the poor rich, only poorer.

The modern Order of St John has preserved many ways of the past, including a certain measure of pageantry. There are processions in which the members participate in their *coccola* or church robe, with the eight-pointed cross prominently displayed, as are the decorations. During the annual pilgrimage to Lourdes, the members and

volunteers wear a military uniform, including insignia and decorations. The measure of discipline is preserved, as honour and personal pride to be able to contribute to the well-being of people worldwide, is still a very strong motivator, besides working for God and the Order as such.

Care is cure echoes the old Hospitaller mottoes of *tuitio fidei* and *obsequium pauperum*. Of course, the first motto of *tuitio fidei*, fight against the enemies of Religion, is now interpreted as 'leading by example', 'nurturing the Faith' or 'upholding human dignity'. The second motto, *obsequium pauperum*, care for the sick and the poor, is the one which has survived untouched over the centuries.

Chivalry is likely to outlive its original scope, albeit in a transformed manner. There are always people who want to sacrifice themselves for the greater good, work for God and the disempowered. It takes courage to enter a area of natural disaster, to help the victims of war, or to enter a zone were a plague is running amok. It takes equal courage to state, in a secular, and at time, hostile world, that one is a Christian and will dispense charity to whomever needs it, no matter one's gender, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, social status or sexual orientation. Modern Grand Masters, such as Frà Angelo de Mojana di Cologna (1962-1988) and Frà Andrew Bertie (1988-2008) have shown great chivalric spirit, working relentlessly to make sure the services of the Order were truly globally accessible for those in need.

At present, the number of the professed knights stands at 58, while the number of lay knights is close to 13,500. Nonetheless, the Grand Master and the professed Knights form the core of the Order of St John.



## Notes and references

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<sup>1</sup> R. A. de Vertot, a.k.a Abbé de Vertot was born on 25 November 1655 at the château de Bennetot at Caux, Normandie. He died on 15 June 1735 at Paris. R. A. de Vertot, *Histoire des chevaliers hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem 1726*. Facsimile of the 1728 English edition: *The History of the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem, styled afterwards the Knights of Rhodes and at present the Knights of Malta* (Malta, 1989). Two volumes. The English version will be referred to in this article.

<sup>2</sup> J. W. Brodman, *Charity and Religion in Medieval Europe* (Washington, D.C., 2009), 10: Christian obligation to charity is a topic already present in the work of the early Church fathers, such as Ignatius of Antioch (d. 980-117) and St John Chrysostom (d. 407). The latter, a patriarch of Constantinople, remarked that charity is not only words but requires actual assistance and empathy. Scriptural tradition demands charity, both as a generous duty to others and as a humble right to receive. Psalm 68 (1-3), also gives an impetus to actively to scatter the enemies of God, to drive them away like smoke vanished '*sicut deficit fumus deficiant*' and fire melts the candle '*sicut tabescit cera a facie ignis*.' It seems that charity and protection go hand in hand, an important factor for developments both in armed pilgrimage and protecting pilgrims by armed escorts. Medieval charity was an ecclesiastical and episcopal initiative, while later it shifted to the monastic orders, such as the Benedictines. Charity is something communities, but also individuals (members of the clergy and wealthy laity), must engage in to care for *les misérables*, the weak, vulnerable or degraded persons inside or outside their direct community. The sense of duty was obviously directly connected with the concern for one's salvation, the avoidance of sin and the service to God. *Biblia Sacra; iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, ed. Roger Gryson (Stuttgart, 1994): Matthew (19:21) states '*Ait ille Jesus si vis perfectus esse vade vende quae habes et da pauperibus et habebis thesaurum in caelo*' (and Jesus said to him: 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and you will have a treasure in heaven'). There are many more examples of charity as a duty in the New Testament and the warning not to practise false piety and fail one's duty to charity. Since it could be that if one turns one's back to *les misérables*, Christ could be among them, charity is still the main drive of the Hospitallers today.

<sup>3</sup> De Vertot, 29: The first instance is the capture of Ascalon and Rapha. Further to De Vertot, the first official participation of the Hospitallers as part of a standing army in Palestine was when King Baldwin took Ascalon and Rapha in 1124, and 'the Hospitallers attended the king in all these expeditions.' (p. 29). What 'attended' means is not clear; the last military action to save the Holy Land for Christendom was in 1291, when the last stronghold of the Hospitallers, at Acre, was lost and they had to abandon the Holy Land and flee to Cyprus (p. 172). Historians do question when the Hospitallers become involved in military action. Nicholson places this event between 1139 and 1143, interpreting some observations of Pope Innocent II in his bull *Quam amabilis Deo* to mean that the Hospitallers hired fighting men for the purpose of escorting pilgrims. See: Helen Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller* (Woodbridge, 2007), 10. Sire claims 1136 as a starting date for serious military action, when King Fulk of Jerusalem presents the Hospitaller with the southern town and castle of Bethgibelin at the border with the caliphate of Egypt. H. J.A. Sire, *The Knights of Malta* (New Haven, 1996), 7.

<sup>4</sup> D. Munro, *Memento Mori: A companion to the Most Beautiful Floor in the World* (Malta, 2005), no. 359.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, no. 200.

<sup>6</sup> M. Bloch, *Feudal Society* (London, 1961), 3.

<sup>7</sup> T. Holland, *Millenium: The End of the World and the Forging of Christendom* (London, 2011). In 846, Muslim pirates sailed up the Tiber and sacked St Peter. Vikings attacked Orleans in 856 and in 899 the Magyars, the present Hungarians, began raiding Christendom.

<sup>8</sup> H. Kinder & W. Hilgeman, *The Penguin Atlas of World History* (London, 1987), 135. Within 120 years after the death of Mohammed in 632, the Muslim forces, fighting for Allah, had conquered an area radiating from the Arabic peninsula to the North-African coast, to the Levant and stretching to India and up to what is at present Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The Arab success was mainly due to a lack of resistance and/or strong discontent among the conquered with the arrogant Byzantine suprastructure. In the meantime, Scandinavian marine war tribes, a.k.a the Vikings, engaged in Europe for a few centuries of first raiding, and then settling and assimilating. Lindisfarne, Northumbria, was their first, and most famous victim in 793. To the east, those Scandinavians called Rus, intervened with the Slavs and set up their principalities of Novgorod, Kiev and Moscow. In the west, the Magyars conquered the Slavs in the tenth century, and occupied and settled in the Hungarian plain after raiding and plundering it.

<sup>9</sup> W. R. Cook & R. B. Herzman, *The Medieval Worldview: An Introduction* (New York, 2004), 97.

<sup>10</sup> D. MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity, the First Three Thousand Years* (London, 2009), 808.



<sup>11</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe* (Edinburgh, [1972] 1987), 6. Montgomery Watt writes that, for instance, the conquest of Spain came totally unexpected for the Spanish, but that for the Muslims it was a simple continuation of the practice of the nomadic *ghaziya*, later understood as *razzia*. For many centuries, the nomadic Arabic tribes had engaged in raiding each other for camels and cattle (and women). The basic idea was to make an overwhelming surprise attack on a much smaller group, who could then honourably flee, leaving the desired objects behind. Usually, there were no fatalities. This all changed after Mohammed made his move to Medina in 622, when his followers added a new flavour, that of their religion, to the *razzias*, which became, from then onwards, seriously violent. This developed in what is now known as the *jihad*, or fighting or striving in the way of Allah. When it concerned a *razzia* against unbelievers, it became a holy war, although it is very likely that the general motivation was material gains rather than religious missionary zeal. The difference between *jihad* and *razzia* was strategic. Nomadic tribes never rallied against an affiliated tribe. When the congregation of allied tribes of Mohammed gained pace and power, many tribes sought alliance, obviously under the condition that they became Muslim and that they recognised him as the only prophet of the only God. Since the alliances limited the scope of the *razzia*, the *razziatores* were forced by this habit to go further afield. This Muslim colonisation with a *jihadist* worldview became a trademark of their global expansionism.

<sup>12</sup> J. Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (Groningen [1919] 1985), 60-8.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> K. Militzer, *Die Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens* (Stuttgart, 2005), 92.

<sup>15</sup> S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades: Volume 1 - The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (London, 1991), 184-88.

<sup>16</sup> Holland, 156.

<sup>17</sup> Munro, no. 159.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem*, no. 181.

<sup>19</sup> Bloch, 3.

<sup>20</sup> MacCulloch. The absolutions and indulgencies offered by the popes soon became common good. Slaying the enemies of Christ, whomever they were, was one of the greatest virtues of chivalry, and was regarded as a dispensing of charities. The development of chivalry, the justifications for a Holy War, the increased resistance against the Muslim imperialism and expansionism, and popularity of pilgrimages, and finally Jerusalem, the heavenly city and the holy of holies of Christendom, the place where Christ the Saviour was crucified.

<sup>21</sup> R. W. Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors, the Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (Philadelphia, 2009). Christian peace-making, not pacifism, was based on the Beatitudes.

<sup>22</sup> Munro, no. 252.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*, no. 367, d. 1677.

<sup>24</sup> Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*.

<sup>25</sup> Munro, no. 322.

<sup>26</sup> *Idem*, no. 355.

<sup>27</sup> *Idem*, no. 378.

<sup>28</sup> A. Cobban, *A History of Modern France, volume 2: 1799-1871* (London, 1965), 90.

<sup>29</sup> H. J. A. Sire, *The Knights of Malta, a Modern Resurrection* (London, 2016), 12.

<sup>30</sup> Munro, no. 115.

<sup>31</sup> Sire, (2016), 11.

<sup>32</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>33</sup> *Idem*, 17.

<sup>34</sup> J Gibson Lockhart, *The History of Napoleon Buonaparte* (New York, 1835), 112

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Sire (2016), 17.

<sup>37</sup> De Vertot, 'The Old and New Statutes of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem,'

<sup>38</sup> Sire, (2016).

<sup>39</sup> Munro, no. 339.

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*, no. 375.

<sup>41</sup> *Idem*, no. 92.

<sup>42</sup> J Riley-Smith, Jonathan. *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St. John* (London and Rio Grande, 1999).

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.cliff-guaranteed.co.uk/cliffrichard/biography.html> [accessed on 31st January 2017].

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20110611/letters/Unauthorised-use-of-Sovereign-Order-s-name.369992> [accessed on 31st January 2017].

<sup>45</sup> Sire, (1996), 247-253,

<sup>46</sup> Sire, (2016), 94-5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Riley-Smith.

<sup>49</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>50</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>51</sup> The Venerable Order, the Johanniterorden (properly the Bailiwick of Brandenburg of St. John and Jerusalem), the Order of St. John of the Netherlands and the Order of St. John of Sweden are at present recognised Protestant allies of the (Roman Catholic) Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

<sup>52</sup> Sire, (2016), 195.

<sup>53</sup> *Idem*, 171.

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.orderofmalta.int>