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The Templar Trials: Did the System Work?

Anne Gilmour-Bryson*

The author directs attention to the very element of arbitrariness which the inquisitional procedure implied. Besides the given fact that the French King Philip 'le Bel' had political as well as material reasons to urge the papacy to act against the Order of the Templars, she suggests that the church institutions had sufficient cause to investigate what appeared to be a serious case and hold hearings. Thus this essay studies two hearings (Abruzzi; Cyprus) which so far have escaped the scrutiny of historians. Although the trials in general were held with enormous personal expenditures and by obviously careful observation of procedural rules, the 'system did not really work'; it was undermined by the dynamics of a legal instrument (that is, torture), which in the end was based on the use of violence.

The hearings into the Order of the Knighthood of the Temple (*Ordo militiae Templi*), and the trials of the members themselves took place between 1307 and 1311 under the presumed aegis of the Inquisition,¹ although most scholars would agree that the king of France, Philip IV, played a much stronger role than inquisitorial procedure allowed.² In

¹ On the Inquisition in general, for works in English, some of Henry Lea's monumental three-volume work is still valid but it must be used with caution: *The Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, New York, 1887. See also Bernard Hamilton, *The Medieval Inquisition*, London, 1981; Edward Peters, *Inquisition*, Berkeley, 1989; Gustav Henningsen and John Tedeschi (eds), *The Inquisition in Early Modern Europe: Studies on Sources and Methods*, Illinois, 1986; Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision*, New Haven, 1998.

² The bibliography on the Templar affair, the hearings in particular, is huge. The most recent thoroughly dependable work is still that of Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the*

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the words of Edward Peters, he 'consistently outstripped ecclesiastical authority'.³ The scholars addressing the issues of the Templar affair have generally been divided into three groups: those who wish to sustain the seemingly dubious behaviour of the pope, Clement V; those who champion the French king; those whose function seems to be to insist that the order itself was innocent of most or all of the charges against it.⁴ Much of the scholarship of the nineteenth century was polemic in nature: obviously aimed to sustain one of the three points of view mentioned above. The late twentieth century has produced much scholarship of a less biased and fairer nature.⁵ No matter what one reads, one is liable to end up with the overwhelming impression that the Templars were not guilty of most of the charges against them. There may have been some untoward behaviour on the part of some of the members, especially in rural or isolated areas. On the whole, nevertheless, the evidence does not indicate that, as suggested, all Templars everywhere were participating in acts so well described by the French king in his order of arrest of 14 September 1307, executed on 13 October of the same year:

Templars, Cambridge, 1978 and reprints; see also his article 'The Trial of the Templars revisited', in Helen Nicholson (ed.), *The Military Orders: Welfare and Warfare*, vol. 2, Aldershot, 1998: 329–42. His monograph has an excellent and thorough bibliography. On Philip the Fair, see Joseph Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair*, Princeton, 1980; Jean Favier, *Philippe le Bel*, Paris, 1978.

³ Peters, *Inquisition*, p. 72.

⁴ For a brief overview of the Templar trials see my latest book, *The Trial of the Templars in Cyprus*, Leiden, 1998 (referred to below as Gilmour-Bryson, *Cyprus*): 5–11, and the bibliography to that work as well as the bibliography in my earlier book *The Trial of the Templars in the Papal State and the Abruzzi*, Città del Vaticano, 1998: 269–85 (referred to below as Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*). An excellent review by Charles-Victor Langlois, *Journal des savants*, series 6, 1908: 417–35, of Heinrich Finke, *Papsttum und Untergang des Templerordens*, 2 vols, Munich, 1907 includes a résumé of the arrest and trial, a discussion of the imperfections of Konrad Schottmüller, *Der Untergang des Templer-Ordens*, Berlin, 1887; and notes how Hans Prutz sustained the thesis of Templar guilt in his *Entwicklung und Untergang des Tempelherrenordens*, Berlin, 1888.

⁵ Malcolm Barber's great contribution to the history of the Templars must be recognised. See especially his *The New Knighthood*, Cambridge, 1994. Most of his major articles are referred to in it or in one of the bibliographies in the preceding note. Other work of excellent quality in this area has been done by Alan Forey, *The Military Orders*, Toronto, 1992; his collected articles in *Military Orders and Crusades*, Aldershot, 1994; and his many works on the Templars in Spain.

Recently, as reported to us by persons worthy to be believed, it came about that brothers of the order or knighthood of the Temple, hiding a wolf under what appeared to be a lamb, and wearing the habit of the order, miserably insulted both the religion of our faith, crucifying in our time once again our Lord Jesus Christ, already crucified for the redemption of humankind, and heaping upon him insults more grave than those he suffered on the cross, when at the time of their entry into the order, and when they made their profession [the taking of vows at reception], someone presented to them his image, and by what I would call miserable blindness, they denied him three times, and with horrible cruelty, they spat three times in his face, after which, having removed the clothing which they wore in worldly life, naked, placed in the presence of him who received them [the dignitary in charge] or his stand-in, they were kissed by him according to the odious rite of their order, first at the base of the dorsal spine, secondly on the navel, and finally on the mouth to the shame of human dignity. And after they offended the divine law by such abominable works and by such detestable acts, and without fearing to offend human law, they gave themselves to one another, without refusing once it was required of them, through the effect of the vice [implicit in] a horrible and terrifying coupling. And that is why the anger of God has come down on these sons of infidelity. This unclean group has gone away from the source of running water, replaced His glory by the statue of the golden calf, and worshipped idols.⁶

Had the order generally acted as the king's accusations suggested, there is no question that a court of the Inquisition would have been perfectly correct in declaring them to be heretics under the meaning of that term in the early fourteenth century.⁷ If they were guilty, then the lengthy and cumbersome system worked. My aim in this essay is to discuss the evidence on both sides: did the system indeed work, or did it fail? Was

⁶ I have translated this text from the Latin–French edition: Georges Lizerand (ed.), *Le dossier de l'affaire des Templiers*, Paris, 1923, reprint, 1964: 18–19. On the accusation of homosexual practices in the order, see my essay: 'Sodomy and the Knights Templar', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 7(2), 1996: 151–83.

⁷ On the spurious relationship of many of the accusations to heresy, and on the notion of heresy itself, see my article: 'L'eresia e i Templari: "Oportet et haereses esse"', *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa*, vol. 24, July–December, 1983: 101–14.

the procedure strictly followed? I will use primarily two important but less well-known hearings: the hearing of only seven Templar witnesses in the papal state and the Abruzzi, and the large interrogation of 76 Templars and 56 non-Templars on the island of Cyprus, using other hearings where necessary. Information from the first Paris trial, and the Papal Commission held outside Paris somewhat later, has already been much more thoroughly analysed since the records have been in print for over a century.

The Inquisition, through its officers, had a duty to investigate all matters connected with whatever might be termed depravity in matters of faith. We have only to look at Pope Gregory IX's Decretal *Ille humani generis* of 1231 in which he cried out against:

That inveterate enemy of the human race, the instigator of all evils, whom his own pride drew down from the highest to the lowest state, [is] not content that by his wicked deceptions he led mankind to the Fall and to the labors of wretchedness. . . . In these recent times, perfidiously attempting to deprave the faith by his ministers, the workers of iniquity, he has spread deadly poison. . . . Exuding pleasant appearances, these sting with their tails like scorpions, and they would infuse their pestilential poison even into the golden chalice of Babylon. . . . Wherefore it is fitting that we rise up against them manfully, so that the faith of Christ may flourish and this heresy of theirs be confounded. . . .⁸

Was that not exactly what Philip's attack on the Templars amounted to? He most certainly suggested that the Templars had been brought down by their pride which had allowed them to deprave the faith in spite of their lamb-like appearance. It goes without saying, then, that they should be brought down and that was precisely what he was doing when he ordered their arrest.

What about Pope Clement? Should we consider him weak, vacillating, a mere creature or tool of the king, a craven coward, a simoniac? Did he have a choice? Far less scholarship has been devoted to the pope than to the king.⁹ Much of the anti-Clement writing comes from those

⁸ The translation is from Edward Peters (ed.), *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, Philadelphia, 1980: 196.

⁹ The latest major work on the pope is that of Sophia Menache, *Clement V*, Cambridge, 1998. She discusses the trial of the Templars on pp. 205–46. While deploring many of Clement's actions, she concludes on p. 245 that 'neither the arrest of the Templars

who believed Villani's fourteenth-century chronicle account in which Bertrand de Got (the future Clement V) met with Philip IV somewhere near St Jean d'Angély.¹⁰ The two allegedly struck a deal in which Philip would see to it that Bertrand was elected pope as long as he made various promises, all but one explained to him at the time. The secret promise was, in Villani's mind, the crushing of the Order of the Temple. Almost no one believes, nevertheless, that this account is realistic. According to the supposed whereabouts of the two principals they could not have met.¹¹

The Allegations

It is necessary to look at the whole list of allegations in order to assess the severity of possible Templar guilt.¹² In reading through them, it is perfectly clear that only about half of them are truly related to any possible charge of heresy.¹³ For example, allegations 1–15 are all of an extremely serious nature, related as they are to a total lack of belief in the divinity of Christ, in the possibility of redemption, in God and the saints of the church, in the fact that Christ died for his sins, in acts of sacrilege against the cross or crucifix (trampling, spitting, urinating), and finally in the worship of a cat. Several of the following charges, in contrast, do not implicate all the members in heresy but suggest only that some of the Templar priests failed to consecrate the host correctly

nor the abolition of the Order could be regarded as initiatives of Clement V, nor were they in accordance with either his character or the policy evinced during his nine-year pontificate'.

¹⁰ There are many editions of this work. I used Giuseppe Porta (ed.), *Giovanni Villani Nuova Cronica*, vol. 1, Rome, 1990, vol. 2, Rome, 1991, particularly vol. 2, libro 9, cap. lxxx, ll. 1–142 for the essay mentioned in the following note.

¹¹ Giovanni Fornaseri, 'Il conclave perugino del 1304–1305', *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia*, vol., 1956: pp. 321–44. I have written an essay on this supposed meeting in which I point out that it is theoretically possible for them to have met although there is not a shred of real evidence that they did so. It is in press at this moment with the *Rivista*.

¹² See the full list in Latin in Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 74–84, in English in Barber, *Trial of the Templars*, Appendix A: 248–52; the slightly different list of 87 allegations used in Cyprus in Gilmour-Bryson, *Cyprus*: 45–51; a discussion of the questions put to the witnesses in the Auvergne in Roger Sève and Anne-Marie Chagny-Sève (eds), *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne, 1309–11*, Paris, 1986: 45–50. For other lists consult Jules Michelet, *Le procès des Templiers*, 2 vols, Paris: 1841–51; and for Brindisi, Schottmüller, *Untergang*: 119–24.

¹³ I discuss precisely which charges are related in 'Eresia'.

or to say mass properly. Less serious again is charge 24 that the grand master could absolve them of sin. Uneducated, simple serving brothers or sergeants (the rank of most of those questioned at the various hearings) might well have believed that this theologically incorrect act was licit. A definite confusion also seems to have existed surrounding the absolution which the grand master, or major dignitary presiding over the chapter meeting, might grant the Templars for faults against the Rule. Some members in most places believed that the papacy had accorded the grand master a special power of absolution. Specific testimony of this sort occurred. Brother Ceccus, testifying in Penne said:

that brother Peter, preceptor of Apulia, who was a layman, in the presence of about seven or eight brothers of the order, in some meeting or gathering which he carried out in a place called Turris Maioris, on the day after he had made him worship an idol, said to the brothers congregated there that if any one of these brethren sinned that he should come to him [brother Peter] because he could absolve him and he would give him absolution.¹⁴

Here, as elsewhere, the preceptor could have been referring only to in-house offences, matters which he could quite properly absolve or penalise as in any other religious order. Unlettered members, like Ceccus, may have thought this instruction applied to other sins which should have been confessed to a priest, or even to the more serious sins which should only have been confessed to a bishop. More educated and credible witnesses (torture is thought to have been used in the Abruzzi) such as Ayme of Ossiliers, Marshal in Cyprus answered the query on lay absolution by saying: 'Asked about articles 103 and 104, about errors (including) "that the master could absolve brothers, etc.", he answered individually denying that the contents of them, or any of them, were true.' All other witnesses in this large hearing (76 Templar witnesses) denied any truth to that particular charge.

Just as well known as the Templars' purported improper religious practices, is the next major matter raised in the list of articles of accusation: the supposed illicit kisses and same-sex acts. Articles 30–33 list the various areas of the body allegedly kissed at or after reception. Charges 40–45 raise the spectre that men responsible for the reception ceremony instructed the postulants that they could have sex with one another:

¹⁴ Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 136.

'quod ad invicem poterant unus cum alio commisceri carnaliter.'¹⁵ The next two charges suggest that those listening were told that the same-sex act was licit and not a sin. The last two on this subject suggest that some or all of the members actually did this. Had large numbers of the members been actively engaged in such acts, it would have been a matter of concern to the inquisitors who often seemed particularly focused on sexual sin.¹⁶ While such behaviour is against church law, it would have been normally punished by penance, not by the arm of the Holy Office. It was common, in trials or enquiries into persons of importance, to allege the commission of sodomy or other illicit sex acts, as in the post-humous trial against Pope Boniface VIII. . .¹⁷ Sodomy, or same-sex relations, then, were commonly included in lists of improper actions. But here too, almost no Templars whatever confessed to such actions. The illicit kiss was confessed to fairly frequently in France and Italy (where torture is thought to have been employed), but not in England prior to the presumed torture of the final three witnesses, in the Iberian peninsula, or Cyprus.¹⁸ A Templar knight in Cyprus said on the subject:

On the contrary, it [carnal relations between brothers], is the greatest sin, and so the brothers proclaimed, and kept in mind, and maintained, and he himself maintained. And he said that any place or land where such a sin was committed should be submerged (under water).¹⁹

A higher ranked Templar, preceptor for the island of Cyprus, testified that: 'On the other hand, if anyone was found guilty of the vice (carnal relations between brothers), that the habit of the order was taken away

¹⁵ Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*, list of allegations: 77.

¹⁶ See any of the Cathar inquisitorial material on this matter. For a good beginning, start with Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324*, Paris, 1978 (or its English translation); and Jean Duvernoy, *La religion des cathares. Le catharisme*, Toulouse, 1976 (and reprints).

¹⁷ See the magisterial monograph by Jean Coste, *Boniface VIII en proces*, Rome, 1995 on this entire matter from the first accusations of 1297 to the end of the affair in 1312. The list of accusations relating to sodomy is to be found *ibid.*: 915. More specifically: '... he said that it was public knowledge that this same Boniface was a heretic, a Patarin, a sodomite and simoniac . . .', *ibid.*: 489.

¹⁸ See Gilmour-Bryson, 'Sodomy': 156–57. On the Templars in England, see Thomas Parker, *The Knights Templars in England*, Tucson, 1963.

¹⁹ Gilmour-Bryson, *Cyprus*: 228.

from him and he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment.²⁰ Ceccus, in the Abruzzi, although he had blackened the order in various areas, vehemently denied the sexual allegations, saying that such a thing had never been said to him (permission to commit the act), nor did it happen, nor did he know it to happen.²¹ The next witness in the Abruzzi, another serving brother, disagreed with him, testifying that:

as far as the contents of these allegations were concerned, he had heard it said commonly by brothers of the order with whom he spoke that the grand preceptor who received him, and other preceptors and senior brethren in the order, had boys with whom they 'carnaliter commiscebant'.²²

This apostate witness had left the order after only eight months, an act which was forbidden unless he had obtained permission from the pope or the grand master in Paris.²³

The questions suggesting the widespread existence of idolatry, charges 46–58, were denied by most witnesses, with the exception of a few in France, primarily those who described an always differing idol which appeared in chapter meetings. Importantly, even though detailed inventories were made of various Templar properties in France and Cyprus and elsewhere, in no property was anything found which could possibly have been an idol. Idolatry certainly constitutes heresy but the charge found only a low amount of not very credible acceptance from the witnesses.

Ceccus stated that he had seen an idol in the possession of the afore-said preceptor, Peter, who was custodian of the ecclesiastical objects in Turris Maioris. According to him, the idol had one face.²⁴ Andreas spoke of:

a three-faced idol, one cubit in height, which he had seen. Those present worshipped and venerated the idol as god and as their sav-

²⁰ Gilmour-Bryson, *Cyprus*: 293.

²¹ Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 138.

²² *Ibid.*: 149.

²³ On this matter, see statute 434: 'And no brother should leave the house in order to enter another order without the permission of the Master and of the convent . . .', J.M. Upton Ward (ed.), *The Rule of the Templars*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1992.

²⁴ Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 138.

iour and said that all the wealth of the order came from the idol and that it could save them, and thus he ought to adore it. Brother Andreas, on bended knee, adored the idol in a state of mortal fear because, as he said, those there with him had their swords unsheathed against him.²⁵

In contrast, the English Templar Nicholas of Peccia, testified in Cyprus that the cord all brothers wore over their habit did not, as alleged, touch the head of any idol whatsoever.²⁶ As one would expect, Templars in Cyprus insisted that there were no idols anywhere.

Article 65 suggested that any postulant who refused to commit the various illicit acts was killed or sent to jail. Ceccus appeared to agree with this when he said that the preceptor stood in front of him with a naked sword as he stood in front of the idol and said to him: 'Unless you do what we tell you to do, you will not get [out] of this place alive.'²⁷

A number of charges, 68–79, insisted that anyone who revealed any of the details of their reception would be killed. Testimony from Templars of all ranks who came from every part of Christendom said that members could not discuss their reception except with other brothers, usually those men who had attended that particular ceremony. There has never been a satisfactory reason put forward for this unaccustomed secrecy. My opinion, after a quarter-century of work on the Templar trials, is that this was because, as so many witnesses stated, receptions took place in chapter meetings, and matters discussed in chapter meetings are always considered to exist under a seal of confidentiality. The reason for non-disclosure stemmed not from any illicit activities during the reception but because certain topics had been discussed, such as sins and penances, or in the case of the Templars, military affairs, and these discussions simply could not be made public.

The next accusations, from 71–76, had nothing to do with heresy properly speaking. Article 75 did suggest that the brethren had not announced these errors to the holy mother church, but as the Templars in Cyprus vehemently stated: since there were no errors there was nothing to report, and nothing to correct. Accusations from 77–96 contained a litany of similar faults: particularly that the errors had occurred

²⁵ *Ibid.*: 150.

²⁶ Gilmour-Bryson, *Cyprus*: 172–73.

²⁷ Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 139.

everywhere, overseas and at home, that all members including dignitaries were involved, that the grand master knew about these sins, and once again no one did anything about it.²⁸

As an illustration of charges not connected with heresy, consider number 97 which states: 'That charity was not undertaken in the order as it should be and nor was hospitality'.²⁹ This particular accusation was denied with unusual specificity and detail in the Cyprus trial in which this article was numbered 93. For example, John of Molimers, a knight, testified that:

it is not true that they did not undertake works of charity. On the contrary, in a place where there was a chapel, three days a week they gave out bread, and a tenth part of all bread which was cooked in the order was given away, and he said that frequently on behalf of the master and the brothers of the order, charitable offerings of meats, and money, were made, and he said that hospitality was observed in such a way that when any religious person or other good man went to the house of the Temple for food or hospitality, he was generously received, and he said that the order is not required to observe hospitality.³⁰

A new issue was raised by Article 98, though not a matter of heresy precisely. It alleged that the Templars swore to increase the order's wealth by any means whether licit or illicit.³¹ No real evidence was adduced anywhere on this matter, with the exception of occasional hearsay. The charges then return to two familiar matters: a reiteration of accusations of secrecy, and queries in which the senior officers are implicated in improper behaviour. Charges 118–23 imply that public scandal arose. The order was positively notorious everywhere, so much so that members quit the order altogether.³² This charge of public scandal and notoriety was common to many heresy trials. The final four accusations relate to the fact that the grand master and other major

²⁸ On James of Molay (the last grand master) and his stewardship of the order and participation in the enquiry, see Malcolm Barber, 'James of Molay, the last Grand Master of the Order of the Temple', *Studia monastica*, vol. 14(1), 1972: 91–113. To consult his testimony, see the two volumes of Michelet, *Le procès*, index.

²⁹ Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 81.

³⁰ Gilmour-Bryson, *Cyprus*: 170.

³¹ Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 83.

³² *Ibid.*

dignitaries had 'confessed the above matters both in court and outside in front of distinguished persons, and in several places, even public places'.³³

The accusations, as we have seen, were crafted like a coat of many colours: some of the accusations, especially the first few, were accusations of what properly could be considered heresy. Other charges related to the day-to-day operation of the order and were unrelated to heresy. On the whole, nevertheless, the Order of the Temple and its members appear to have had a serious case to answer. Since it is crucial that courts investigate what appeared to be a genuine and serious case, I maintain that the Inquisition had sufficient cause to hold hearings.

The Procedure

The second part of this question which I wish to discuss is the matter of the way in which the hearings or trials were carried out. Did the methodology appear to afford the accused sufficient opportunity to tell the truth without pressure? It is quite obvious, as demonstrated, for example, in the early Poitiers trial of 1308, that in France and most of Italy, witnesses had been menaced, threatened and tortured. When asked whether he had been tortured, John of Cuisi stated that: 'He was placed ready to be tortured, but he did not sustain any actual torture, at once, when he was placed there, he confessed everything'.³⁴ In other words he, and many others, testified out of fear of the torture about to occur, not after torture had been applied.

The moving testimony of a knight in Poitiers, preceptor of the large preceptory of Douzens in the region of Carcassonne, Iterius de Rupe forti, does make us understand how those listening to him speak, probably including the pope and several cardinals, would have believed in the guilt of the order.³⁵ He recounted the usual sad story of spitting on the cross, denying Christ, and other acts, but only when threatened by the brethren with perpetual incarceration if he did not comply. As so many Templars insisted, he had denied Christ 'not with his heart but only with his mouth'. He was terrified.

³³ *Ibid.*: 83.

³⁴ Schottmüller, *Untergang*: 42.

³⁵ *Ibid.*: 47–48.

After this, the receiver led him into a certain secret room in a tower and showed him a certain wooden cross which was a crucifix, and ordered him to deny him whose image it was, and to spit on him. And when he objected that there was no way he was going to do that, the preceptor threatened him with perpetual imprisonment. And then he denied with his mouth, and said it but not with his heart. And he spat next to the cross, not on it as the preceptor had ordered him to do . . . He was stupefied and terrified.

Interestingly, this witness, like many others, said that he had confessed his sins, in his case to Brother Julian of the Order of the Hermits of St Augustine, vicar of the patriarch of Jerusalem. The vicar told the knight that this just could not be; he did not believe the story. However, Iterius insisted that the story was true and he was given a life-long penance of fasting. When he told the priest that the master would never give permission for fasting, he changed the penance by telling him to wear an iron hauberk all through Lent over his shirt. Not satisfied with this, Iterius confessed a second time, some 24 years previously, this time to the patriarch of Jerusalem himself. He was absolved this time with a penance to accomplish, namely that every Saturday for the rest of his life he would fast on nothing but bread and water.

I consider that there must be some truth to this story. I cannot conceive that this man invented the tales of the two confessions and details of penances. Certainly, in some cases stupid acts of intimidation must have occurred. What is so mystifying about them, is that from the moment of the reception day onward, the vast majority of Templars insisted that nothing else untoward ever took place (except of course at some other reception ceremonies). If the eminent persons who listened to the Poitiers testimony believed it, they would have had to insist that the enquiries continue. Even torture, which could well have led men to admit that they performed acts which never happened, would not impel witnesses to make up such a detailed and convoluted story. And, it would appear that those testifying in England and Cyprus were never involved in any such acts.

As far as the conduct of the hearings is concerned, was proper notarial or inquisitorial procedure followed? If it was not, we could much more easily come to the conclusion that the procedure was not conducted properly. After studying each hearing from late 1307 in France where they began, to Barcelona in 1311, I maintain that the best trial to look at from a procedural point of view is the one in the Papal State

and the Abruzzi.³⁶ The early interrogations to be found occurred in Bigorre, Bayeux, Caen, Cahors, Chaumont, Clermont, Renneville, and Troyes.³⁷ The records found and transcribed by these notaries are too fragmentary to allow any idea of the entire inquisitional process. The large (about 138 witnesses) Paris trial of 1307 is well documented in the surviving manuscripts (I have seen one in the Vatican Secret Archives and one in Paris) and the Michelet transcription. As I have said, nevertheless, this hearing has been extensively studied and written about. Some small hearings (Ravenna, Germany) before ecclesiastical councils lack adequate documentation. The hearings in England, Scotland, and Ireland are available in a printed edition (though a new one would be highly desirable), but they are not as fully documented as the peripatetic enquiry in the Papal State.³⁸

Hearing in the Papal State and the Abruzzi

The quality of the chief inquisitor is obviously of great importance in any hearing. The enquiry under discussion was headed by Pandulfus Savelli who had been an apostolic notary since the pontificate of Benedict XI in 1303.³⁹ He had been named pontifical chaplain 12 years earlier. As a member of one of Rome's most important noble families, he was extremely well known. Perhaps because of this, he carried out innumerable diplomatic missions, and is mentioned more than 100 times in the papal registers. His most noteworthy task was as member of the pontifical commission preparing the canonisation of Thomas Aquinas. His associate in the procedure under discussion here was James, Bishop of Sutri. James is much less known, but we do know that he had been

³⁶ A total of about 935 men testified on one or more occasion, often twice in France and up to four times in England. Dates for trials and approximate numbers may be seen in Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 54–55. See also the very useful chronology including dates of major hearings in Barber, *Trial of the Templars*: 258–59.

³⁷ Prutz, *Entwicklung*: 324–35. A few more may be found in Finke, *Papsttum*.

³⁸ *Concilia Magnae Britannicae et Hiberniae*, vol. 2, London, 1737: 324–401.

³⁹ Data on Pandulfus Savelli was gathered for my doctoral thesis defended at the Université de Montréal, Institut d'études médiévales, 1980 and the sources appear in my thesis 'Le procès des templiers dans le patrimoine de Saint Pierre, de 1309–1310, édition critique', published in a revised form by the B.A.V. and referred to here as Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*. Further references to the thesis will appear as Gilmour-Bryson, thesis. See the thesis notes 15, 17–21: 85–6 for sources on Savelli.

named vicar of Benedict XI in 1303. In the register, the pope described his 'vita laudabili, fide probata, scientia et circumspectione'.⁴⁰

In Cyprus, since Nicosia where the testimony was taken had no resident bishop at the time, the enquiry was headed by the two senior ecclesiastics on the island: Peter Erlant, Bishop of Limassol, and Baldwin Lambert, Bishop of Famagusta. In both cases, both chief inquisitors attended whenever possible. Occasionally, one of them was absent on some urgent matter or because of illness.

The trial in the Papal State heard only seven witnesses, all serving brothers except for one priest. Yet the R.P. Mariano D'Alatri wrote to me before I began work on MS Castel Sant'Angelo D-207 to outline how important this trial was in any survey of inquisitorial procedure.

The procedure began in September 1309 and continued until July 1310. Papal orders demanded that this enquiry cover the areas of Rome itself, 'Patrimonii beati Petri in Tuscia, ducatus Spoletani, Aprutii, Campanie et Maritime', a large area indeed.⁴¹ Most unusually, the inquisitors and their retinue of scribes, officials, notaries, secretaries and servants travelled almost continually from the monastery of SS Bonifatio ed Alessio where it all began, to the major Templar church of Santa Maria sull'Aventino where they cited the grand preceptor, James of Monte Cuccho, and members of the order to appear. They put up edicts on named churches and public buildings, all, as it turned out, in vain.⁴² They quite correctly stated that those whom they cited would be condemned summarily if they did not appear. On 12 November they were still engaged in selecting notaries.

On 20 December they set up headquarters in the episcopal, sometime papal, palace in Viterbo. They continued selecting notaries and *nuntii*, having more citations sent out and edicts posted. The inquisitors apparently sent two messengers to the episcopal prison in Viterbo ordering imprisoned Templars to present themselves. It would appear that few Italian Templars were arrested or detained. Most of them seemed to have escaped, perhaps because they were not arrested in one swift coup as they had been in France on 13 October two years earlier.

⁴⁰ For sources on Bishop James, see Gilmour-Bryson, thesis, note 27: 86.

⁴¹ The first mention of the geographical area of their commission comes on the first membrane of the manuscript, Castel Sant'Angelo, D-207. As always, they are to enquire not only about the Order of the Temple itself, but about the members of the order.

⁴² See the map of their travels in Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 267. For a chronological summary of these events see *ibid.*: 57–63.

Christmas festivities behind them, the tribunal was still waiting for witnesses to present themselves on 29–30 December. Oddly, they did not hear either Gerard, Peter or Vivolus at this time. All three testified in Viterbo later on. Instead, for some unknown reason, they marched, or more likely rode, off to Assisi where they went through their process of issuing citations in the Benedictine monastery of St Peter. They were still electing yet more *nuntii* as one presumes they had by then realised just what a difficult task had been entrusted to them. They travelled to Gubbio from 3–7 March, working from the episcopal palace of Santa Croce. Once again, the expected witnesses did not appear.

They then moved into the Abruzzi proper, stopping first at l'Aquila on 3 April in the magnificent episcopal palace of Santa Maria de Colle Maio. While they questioned 11 non-Templars one presumes no evidence was adduced because none of it appears in the manuscript. Between 16 and 22 April, still in the palace, they continued sending out messengers as they expected two imprisoned Templars to appear. They did turn up this time and declined to offer any defence. Not surprisingly they did not wish to appear before the tribunal. Finally, on 28 April the tribunal heard its first witness—Ceccus. Not only were the inquisitors present in the episcopal palace, but also the usual four notaries finally elected to serve in this enquiry, and as observers, two Dominicans and others described only as 'multis aliis testibus'.⁴³ Ceccus was sworn as a witness and then proceeded to answer all the set charges, read to him individually. In his case, as in that of other unlettered witnesses, the charges were translated into 'lingua vulgari'. Only the priest, William, appears to have heard the charges in Latin. At the end of the lengthy interrogation, Ceccus swore under oath that he knew nothing else. He also approved and confirmed his deposition as was required. Presumably, it was read back to him.

The group then moved off to Chieti to hear their second witness, Andrew, in the episcopal palace as usual. All the formalities noted above were observed here as well. We again have two named Dominicans present, and many other observers especially convoked for this hearing. This time, one of the *nuntii* read aloud instructions for anyone who wished to appear for the order or for the grand preceptor to come forward. No one did. Andrew took the oath and testified, answering the entire series of questions, some of them quite fully.⁴⁴

⁴³ MS D-207, m. 20–m. 24; Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 130–44.

⁴⁴ MS D-207, m. 24–m. 27; Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 145–58.

After a short interval of a few days during which time his deposition was read to him in his own tongue, the chief notary for this portion of the hearing, John Silvestri de Balneoregio signed his authorisation, accompanied by his seal, to authenticate the manuscript so far. Below his name appeared the names and seals of Peter Thebaldi of Tybure, another notary, John Mathei Pandulphi de Vassano 'alme Urbis illustris prefecti auctoritate iudex ordinarius et notarius publicus' signed next, followed finally by Silvester de Albano who also appeared by Roman prefectural authority. Peter, John and Silvester all reiterated that they were present for every matter about which John Silvester had written. They attended all sessions and heard every word. They read and approved the official transcript. Nothing was left to chance.

By 23 May the inquisitors and their suite were back in Rome at Santa Maria dell'Aventino reading and publishing apostolic letters and posting another edict. Five days later they returned to their usual location in Viterbo citing the imprisoned men again, demanding that they appear, and offering to hear anyone else who wished to be heard. As before, messengers returned to say that the men wished neither to appear nor to defend the order. Various named ecclesiastical observers were in attendance. Matthew of Cavellutis, Pandulphus' chaplain read the citations in the church of Santa Maria of Carbonaria in front of many male and female parishioners. Back in the episcopal palace in Viterbo the inquisitioners stated that they expected witnesses to appear before the hour of terce. By 7 June they would have convinced William of Verduno to testify. We are informed that the usual retinue of inquisitors, notaries and observers heard the citations ordering Templars, their hangers-on, anyone wishing to defend them, or anyone with information to appear at stated dates and places. They seem to have gathered together the four remaining Templars: William, Peter Valentini, Gerard of Placentia and Vivolo of comitatu Perusci who had been detained in Viterbo. Not surprisingly, they all repeated that they neither wanted to appear nor to defend the order. One wonders what happened to these men after they were returned to prison?

On 5 June the indefatigable group assembled in the now familiar precinct of the episcopal palace reading their, by now well-worn, edicts to anyone who cared to listen. They obviously wanted to read into the official record the sequence of events, edicts, citations and failure to appear. Once again they threatened anyone who should appear, but who did not, with contumacy.

On 7 June in the same place, with what I imagine was a considerable feeling of relief, they finally heard their third witness, William the priest. They had a named group of four ecclesiastical witnesses to observe the proceedings. William took the oath as usual.⁴⁵ As we find so frequently in other depositions especially in France, William stated that his reception ceremony was completely licit and normal. He had promised obedience, reverence, chastity and poverty. No illicit acts had occurred. Later however, and not on the same day, two Templar brothers took him aside into a room which served as a place where shoes were made in which:

closing the doors of the room, these brothers told him, William of Verduno, that every man who was received into the order must deny Christ. And he, on their incitement and command, fearing for his life, and because brother Peter threatened him with a naked sword, denied Christ with his mouth but not with his heart. Asked, he responded that he believed that all who were received into the order denied Christ.⁴⁶

This sort of evidence from a lettered priest must have impressed those hearing it. Yet, how is it that the evidence is almost always set down in the same words: separate rooms, orders to deny Christ accompanied by threats and drawn swords, witnesses who say they denied only with their lips? Is it that the notaries set down whatever the witnesses said in some sort of formulaic way? This would be a distinct possibility if all of the hearings took place with the same pool of notaries. But the wording of guilty witnesses whether in Viterbo, Paris or Penne is very much the same, often uncannily so.

The next day they assembled to hear Gerard, the fourth witness before the two inquisitors, four Dominicans, and assembled non-named others. He was duly sworn and testified as usual. This man was relatively uneducated and offered hearsay evidence on what he knew about the structure of the order in Italy and its associated province of Hungary. His interrogation was accompanied by all the usual formalities.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ For his testimony, see MS D-207, m. 31b-m. 36; Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 173-86. He finally responded when asked that he had nothing further to add to his sworn testimony.

⁴⁶ MS D-207, m. 31; Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 173-74.

⁴⁷ MS D-207, m. 36-m. 39; Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 187-99.

Continuing this relatively rapid rate of taking testimony on 9 June, still in Viterbo, the tribunal heard Peter Valentini. As usual, 'he swore on the Holy Gospels, touching the book, to tell the absolute full truth'.⁴⁸ His testimony on the illicit reception was very similar to that given by the Templars who preceded him. He gave specific eyewitness testimony about Templars trampling on the cross. One wonders if, or why, he would have invented such a story? It could, of course, have been invented by the notary on orders of the inquisitors, but there is no proof whatsoever of this. Neither is there any evidence of the account being invented by the witness out of fear, or because of torture, a much more likely event. He, unlike any witness in England or on Cyprus, gave specific testimony related to idol worship alleging that he had even seen the idol in the sacred precincts of the Templars' grand Roman church Santa Maria sull'Aventino. In spite of it all, he insisted that charity had been practised as it should be. He insisted at the confirmation of his deposition that he had said every word voluntarily implying that no torture had taken place. This frequent assertion in certain trials probably meant nothing at all.

Vivulus, the sixth witness, was heard in Viterbo on 10 June under the same conditions and with the same protocol in force.⁴⁹ He offered testimony concerning illicit kisses insisting that a Templar brother had ordered him to kiss him on the anus, navel and naked chest. He stipulated that he had refused to do the anal kiss but did the other two. After this man's testimony, at the conclusion of hearings in Viterbo, a statutory declaration was made by the four notaries to the effect that all the notaries confirmed what the principal notary had written in every detail. A second confirmation of the Viterbo testimony took place in a formal ceremony on 19 June, a ceremony not only held in the presence of the two inquisitors but an archbishop, and in the presence of at least 12 named religious witnesses from various orders, or secular clergy, and other unnamed witnesses. All four witnesses reconfirmed their depositions at this time.

The next portion of this hearing took place elsewhere and seems to constitute a separate section although the same inquisitors and their retinue were used. The heading reads 'Infrascripta sunt acta Maritime et Campanie'.⁵⁰ We are informed that the inquisitors had decided to

⁴⁸ MS D-207, m. 40; for his entire testimony see membranes 39-43; Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 200-12.

⁴⁹ MS D-207, m. 43-m. 47; Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 213-27.

⁵⁰ MS D-207, m. 48-m. 53; Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 228-47.

keep on the same staff chosen for the earlier hearings. They added a few more, presumably local officials such as John, Rector of the church of Santa Maria of Albano. On 4 July, in Albano, in front of the doors of the Church of St Peter, this portion began. The vicar of Leonard, the local bishop, and assorted civic and ecclesiastical authorities appeared to be present to hear the citations and convocations. These men came not only from Albano itself, but from the nearby towns of Marina di Castro, Ariccia (closely connected with the Savelli family), Torremaggiore, Castelgandolfo, and other lands connected with the Savellis. See, for example, the will of Cardinal James Savelli, the future Pope Honorius IV, dated 1282 which mentioned 'castri quod dicitur Turris Gandulforum'.⁵¹ For some reason, they now insisted on having a much larger number of clerics present: Peter, Vicar of the Cardinal, John, Archpresbyter of St Peter of Albano, the nobleman John of Savelli, two Dominicans, the subprior of the order of St William, and a number of other brothers of this local order found near Siena in 1157, the guardian of the local Franciscan order, and a number of Franciscans, the archpresbyter of St Mary of Aricia, a priest from St John of Marino, and several other priests connected to Pandulfus and his family. They went through the above-mentioned summonses, convocations, orders for witnesses to appear, and requests for hangers-on or defenders to present themselves in detail.

On 8 July the team found itself in the monastery of St Paul of Albano in which the inquisitors were lodging during this period. As was often the case, they sent out *nuntii* to surrounding areas to enquire about the possible presence of members of the order, or about the order itself. Once again citations were posted on cathedrals and churches in Velletri, Anagni, Ferentino, Alatri, and Veroli. On 10 July, citations were posted in Terracina. Once the messenger Iachectus returned, he told the inquisitors that he had failed to find his quarry in spite of posting copies of the mandates, accompanied by official seals.

On 15 July the party had moved on to the bishop's palace in Velletri where they issued more useless demands for witnesses to appear. They issued further citations on the next day. On 17 July they issued yet another formal statement in Velletri repeating what they had said earlier. Since no one had appeared they charged the delinquent witnesses with contumacy. They then decided to hear from local persons about Templars in the area. They listed their queries:

⁵¹ *Les registres d'Honorius IV* (M. Prou [ed.]), Paris: 1886–88, pp. 823, 830.

1. Do any brothers or members of the Templar order live in Campania or Marittima, in Velletri and its diocese?
2. Are there any persons who have sheltered or abetted the Templars?
3. Is there anyone whom the inquisitors may ask about the articles of accusation?
4. Is there anyone whom they may ask in order to know the truth about the despicable crimes which the inquisitors have been ordered by the pope to investigate.⁵²

They proceeded to question seven local clerics and members of the order of St William on these matters. All of them insisted, under oath, that they knew nothing at all.

No doubt with regret, the inquisitors issued a final statement on 17 July that in spite of all their many efforts:

it is not seen to be expeditious to delay any longer in Marittima and the city and diocese of Velletri, deliberating today in the episcopal palace of Velletri and deciding to go to Segni to inquire about these matters, and telling lord Peter, archpriest of Velletri, and Alberto familiar of the reverend father lord Nicholas by the grace of God bishop of Ostia and Velletri, appearing on behalf of the said lord cardinal in the episcopal palace of Velletri where the inquisitors are staying and meeting, that today they will have moved off to Segni.⁵³

The same day they tried once again to locate Templars or informants, this time based in the house of Nicholas Angelelli in an ecclesiastical building of some sort. They asked the local bishop, Peter, whether he knew anything. The bishop responded that he had no knowledge of any local Templars or any other persons in the various categories they were seeking. He knew no one from whom they might gain information. They then went through the same process they followed in Velletri. Their four listed questions were the same as the ones they had listed previously. The four clerics or members of religious orders gave the same disappointing response. They issued their final statement in the cathedral of Segni in which they stated that they had been unable to

⁵² MS D-207, m. 51; Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 239–40.

⁵³ MS D-207, m. 51; Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 242.

obtain any information and, in consequence, were moving on to Castrum Faiole.⁵⁴ Anyone seeking them was to go ahead to meet them there.

On 20 July they issued a statement in Castrum Faiole stating that they had gone off to Tivoli. On the next day, in Pandulfus' residence in Tivoli, they issued their final statement (accompanied by the usual notary attestations) regarding their fruitless quest in the Marittima and Campania.

The last act was about to be played out. In Palombara Sabina they heard the seventh and last witness, a serving brother named Walter.⁵⁵ They were located in a building described as 'palatio Rocche' most likely one of the Savelli local residences. The family possessed the castle of Castiglione near Palombara. His testimony was quite similar to that of the others in this hearing. He insisted that the wicked Templar who had ordered him to deny Christ responded when Walter asked him in whom he was to believe if not in Christ, 'In the one great god whom the Sarracens adore.' An image of this great god was allegedly used at chapter meetings but Walter never saw it.⁵⁶

End of the Hearings in the Papal State and the Abruzzi

On 27 July it was all over. In the palace in Palombara the final notary statements were set down. The four notaries agreed on the testimony, as recorded, of all seven witnesses. They attached drawings of their seals and the incredible nine or ten month peripatetic hearing had ended. This manuscript contains the names of 283 persons, including 21 Dominicans, 19 Franciscans, 5 Augustinians, 9 members of the order of St William, 2 Hospitallers, 5 canons regular of the Premonstratensian order, 10 Benedictines, 2 Cistercians, 19 abbots, priors, or subpriors attached to the various orders, 23 clerics identified as presbyter or sub-presbyter, 10 vicars frequently associated with the seven bishops mentioned, 2 cardinal-bishops, 4 popes, and various others called to observe the proceedings or the testimony. The trial used 23 *nuntii* and 13 notaries, a very large number indeed.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ This castle near Velletri belonged to the Savelli family. See the will of Honorius IV referred to above, p. 823, and Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *I testamenti dei cardinali del duecento, Miscellanea della Società Romana di storia patria*, 25, Rome, 1980: 201, n. 12.

⁵⁵ MS D-207, m. 54-m. 57; Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 248-62.

⁵⁶ See this testimony in Gilmour-Bryson, *Papal State*: 255.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*: 29.

It is my view that no group of inquisitors could have been more thorough. They, and their suite, travelled around the area back and forth listening to all sorts of local dignitaries, having citations and edicts posted, patiently trying to secure evidence, but with very meagre results. They must obviously have expected to question more than seven Templars. In a certain sense, in this hearing, the system worked. We are left, nevertheless, with the distinct and uncomfortable impression that torture was very likely used, and to our modern consciences, evidence given under torture cannot be deemed reliable Clement V sent out orders demanding that torture be used in cases where the witnesses had not already confessed in the bull *Dudum ad eliciendum* of 30 March 1311, no. 6716 in the pope's register. Torture had been prescribed from the very beginning, as explained by Barber in these words describing conditions in 1309 as outlined by the Bishop of Paris:

They (prisoners) are to be put on 'a restricted diet, namely bread and water and a few other refreshments, unless infirm, weak or for any other reason in need, in which case more may be administered to them'. If this does not work, they are to be made aware of the confessions of De Molay and other dignitaries. If this does not produce the desired result torture should be threatened and the instruments shown to them. As a last resort torture should actually be applied, at first lightly, and always in accordance with proper procedures, that is in the presence of an appropriate cleric and 'without excess'.⁵⁸

Obviously these methods could well have been precisely why the inquisitors did not interrogate the prisoners during their early visits to Viterbo before they had been softened up. Was this sort of pressure applied to witnesses who, although they had not wanted to defend the order (a courageous stance indeed since more than 50 of those who did so in Paris in May 1310 were burnt at the stake), were not guilty of most of the charges? They had not accepted the 'invitation' to come forward and testify earlier. Something happened during those intervening months.

The Trial in Cyprus

I would like to contrast the trial in the Papal State and the Abruzzi with that of Cyprus, procedurally and not with regard to content, since

⁵⁸ Barber, *Trial of the Templars*: 114.

no one confessed any guilt in the latter and all did in the former. The only extant manuscripts, like the only extant manuscript for the trial in the Papal State, are located in the Vatican Secret Archives in truly abysmal conditions.⁵⁹ We do not possess some early membranes which must have indicated a period of summoning, issuing citations, posting edicts and the like. There is indirect evidence in the register of Benedict XII that such preliminaries did occur.⁶⁰ In the remaining manuscript that we have, the hearing begins in April or May 1310 in Nicosia with the issuance of a public summons demanding that any members of the order present themselves within 15 days under penalty of excommunication. Otherwise, the inquisitors would proceed against them.⁶¹ Much, much sooner than in the Papal State, the inquisitors moved to hearing the testimony of noble, clerical and lay witnesses, followed by the 76 imprisoned Templars.

The testimony of the first group of 21 non-Templars is particularly important as it does not inculcate the order or its members at all. Many of these persons were well-known members of the party of the exiled King Henry II. The king is considered by most scholars to have been distinctly hostile to the order and partial to the Hospitallers (the Order of St John of Jerusalem). Since Baldwin and Philip of Ibelin, Aigue of Bessan, and Rupen of Montfort, for example, like all the others gave testimony in favour of the order, it leads me to a very strong presumption of overall innocence.⁶² This group ended its testimony on 5 May.

On the same day, Ayme of Osiliers, marshal of the order in Cyprus, began his testimony, giving a short deposition, as did everyone, as to where, when, and how he was received into the order. Every Templar then gave a similar short statement primarily on the personal details just mentioned. The much longer depositions (probably given on the same day as the short statement) in which the same group (minus one person who did not give the long deposition) answered a series of 123 questions, finished on May 28. Much shorter but similar notarial statements occurred at the end of each section of interrogations.

⁵⁹ Vatican Secret Archives, Castel Sant'Angelo D-223, and D-228(1), D-228 *bis*, and D-228 *ter*.

⁶⁰ Vatican Secret Archives, *Regestum Benedicti XII*, 48, f. 471.

⁶¹ D-223, m. 182. Very few of membranes 18–23 are readable. Gilmour-Bryson, *Cyprus*.

⁶² Consult my edition of this trial for notes on all the people involved. See also the many excellent articles by W.H. Rüdiger de Collenberg who wrote extensively on the Cypriot nobility. Peter Edbury's, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191–1374* is the best modern work on Cyprus in this period, complemented by the much older George Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, 4 vols., Cambridge, 1940–52, see especially volume 2.

On 1 June, the two inquisitors heard another set of non-Templar witnesses, 35 in number. As had been the case with the first group of non-Templar witnesses, we are not informed that these men appeared with a number of clerical observers as had been the case when the Templars were testifying. In the case of Ayme de Osiliers, for example, as well as the inquisitors and notaries, the following observers were in attendance: Lord Nicholas, Deacon; Lord Nicholas of Acre, Canon in Nicosia; Brothers Jordan Angeli and Jordan of Paris, Dominicans; Brother William of Schoria, Vicar of the provincial minister of Cyprus; Raymond of Ligniaco, a member of the Franciscan order; and Lord Almerus of Lavetta, a judge. While the names of the witnesses differed from one session to another, observers were always present when Templars were being interrogated.

The closing notary statement in the Cyprus trial manuscript reads:

And I, Onufrius, notary public by imperial authority, notary of the judge Nicholas of Fractis, just as I found, saw and read it, as contained in the original of the testimonies, have transcribed faithfully in six pieces of parchment, and copied it at the order or, by the authority of, the reverend in Christ, lord father Peter, by the grace of God bishop of Limassol, delegated by the Holy See as administrator of the church of Nicosia and drawn up in public form in the year of our Lord one thousand three-hundred and ten, eighth indication, on the nineteenth day of the month of June, in Nicosia, in the house of the lord bishop of Limassol, in the presence of venerable men lord Peter of Plexia, archdeacon of the church of Nicosia, and lord Roland, long-time chaplain of the lord of Tyre and canon of Tortosa, and of the priest John Frisoni of Nicosia, witnesses called and requested.

And so it ended: no Templar declared guilt on any heretical charge. The only abnormality mentioned was that of holding receptions secretly, and that was explained by saying that it was because they occurred in chapter. While we lack some of the procedural records which must have accompanied this hearing, great care was taken in the calling of observers for each session and the recording of answers. One may conclude that in Cyprus the system worked.

Conclusion

As I have already stated, I consider the order in general and most of the members of it to be basically innocent of serious illicit acts of any kind. Since the bull *Vox in excelso* promulgated at the Council de Vienne in 1311 put an end to the order, must I say that the system did not work?⁶³ The pope admitted in that bull that the order had not been found guilty, it had been so defamed by the evidence given, especially by dignitaries, that no man would ever again want to associate himself with it. It must be abolished. I can only conclude, nevertheless, that the real fault was not in the procedures followed before the tribunals in Abruzzi, the Papal State, Cyprus, or for the matter Paris or London. The fault lay in the 'licit' use of torture at this time which impelled many men to confess acts which never happened, coupled with the French king's executions which became widely known in France causing the defence effort to crumble. Perhaps we should never forget the words of Peter of Bologna, procurator and chief defender of the order in Paris in April 1310 prior to his disappearance.⁶⁴ He had stated that the members of the order had a leader (James of Molay), and without his authority they could not mount a defence. Nevertheless, he insisted:

all the accusations sent by the lord pope in his bull, read and explained to them, were dishonest, most evil, irrational, and detestable, and horrible. They are lies, false, even very, very false and iniquitous . . . the religion of the Temple is without stain and immaculate and always was . . .

Had the Inquisition not permitted threats and torture, results might have been perfectly accurate. Faced with what some Templars described as horrendous and lengthy torture or starvation, most of these men crumbled and testified to a litany of incredible acts. Clearly, the system did not really work in spite of the fact that in some places such as Cyprus or England, in which torture was not used, those accused were allowed to tell the truth.

⁶³ For *Vox in excelso*, see Joseph Alberigo et al. (ed.) *Conciliorum Oecuminorum Decreta*, Fribourg, 1962, pp. 312-18. On the confusion between this bull and *Vox clamantis in deserto*, see my essay "*Vox in excelso*" and "*Vox clamantis*", *Bulls of Suppression of the Templar Order, A Correction*, *Studia monastica*, vol. 20(1), 1978: 71-76.

⁶⁴ Michelet, *Procès*, vol. 1: 115-16.