

Confession and Confessors in the Templars' Testimonies, 1307–1311: Notes on the Brothers' Defence Strategy

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This paper focuses on one of the elements employed in their defence by individual Knights Templar during the trials preceding the dissolution of the order: making reference to a previous confession made long before the start of the trials, in the course of which a brother divulged the sin of heresy. Questions are raised about the reliability of fragments of testimonies pertaining to this, the potential benefits that the Templars could have gained and the risks involved. An attempt is also made to indicate the source of this defence strategy, as well as the way in which it was disseminated among brothers interrogated at various times and in various places.

Much has been written about the Knights Templar based on the documents from a trial that started in 1307 and preceded the dissolution of the order in 1312. Historians make use, among other things, of reports from hearings carried out in various countries and at various stages of the trial.¹ In spite of this, there is still a lot of information in these documents that allows for formulating new questions and analysing new issues pertaining both to the trial as such and various aspects of the mentality of the Templars. Among them there are recurring remarks about prior confessions, during which brothers had allegedly mentioned heretical practices of the order long before the initiation of the trial.

¹ The literature based on the minutes of interrogations of the Templars is very extensive. See, for example, a recapitulation of the most important directions of studies relying primarily on documents from French proceedings in *Processus contra Templarios in Francia: procès-verbaux de la procédure menée par la commission pontificale à Paris (1309–1311)*, ed. M. Satora, Leiden 2020, i. 30–4.

They stand out from other information given by the Templars, because they were not directly related to any of the charges laid against the order.² Some brothers talked about the prior confession of sins that were committed during the reception ceremony although in the vast majority of cases the interrogators did not ask them about it. The number and content of these references allows for asking questions about the purpose of including them in the testimonies, and their significance for the trial and in consequence for the stance of the Templars with respect to the trial and their capacity to actively influence its course.

Table 1 (*see below*) summarises information about proceedings during which the Templars mentioned prior confession/s, primarily referring to the number of such references and the confessors identified by the brothers. It demonstrates that the first Templars to incorporate this strategy in their testimonies were those investigated in Paris and in Carcassonne shortly after their arrest in France in 1307.³ Later, brothers testifying before the cardinals in Poitiers in 1308 followed suit. However, this time the investigators asked many of them about such confessions. During the next stages of the trial, such questions were only asked in individual cases.⁴ Yet the Templars mentioned earlier confessions of the sin of heresy unasked, and definitely more frequently. This was the case in the procedure carried out by the diocesan commission in Clermont in 1309: twenty-three out of sixty-nine Templars on trial mentioned such confession; and also during the proceedings before the papal commission in Paris between 1310 and 1311, when this issue was brought forward by ninety-six out of 226 testifying Templars. During the interrogations in

² The interrogations of the Templars during different stages of the proceedings were carried out based on changing lists of charges against individual members of the order or the entire order. See, for example, lists of charges used during different interrogations in France: *Le Dossier de l'affaire des Templiers*, ed. and trans. G. Lizerand, Paris 1923, 26–9; *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne (1309–1311): édition de l'interrogatoire de juin 1309*, ed. R. Sève, and A. M. Chagny-Sève, Paris 1986, 107–11; *Processus*, i. 162–9.

³ Minutes from interrogations carried out in the last months of 1307 in other parts of France have also been preserved to the present day (Troyes, Pont de l'Arche and Roche d'Orival, Caen, Cahors, Aigues-Mortes, Nîmes, Bigorre). Prior confession is not mentioned in them. For all hearings carried out in France after the arrest of the Templars see A. Demurger, *La Persécution des templiers: journal (1305–1314)*, Paris 2015, 59–75, 363.

⁴ Pursuant to the content of the minutes, the question about prior confession was asked thrice during the work of the papal commission in Paris. The commissioners first asked about it when they noted that the testimony of one of the Templars was in many aspects consistent with the testimony of a witness heard just before him. However, it did not refer to earlier confession: *Processus*, i. 338. Later, the question about confession was asked twice (i. 525f, 627). It may be surmised that in these cases too the commissioners took the content of the testimonies of the Templars heard before them into account.

Table 1. *References to confession in the Templars' testimonies, 1307–11*

Confessor	Number of mentions of confession in Templars' testimonies											
	Paris (1307)	Paris before the university masters (1307)	Carcassonne (1307)	Poitiers (1308)	Chinon (1308)	Clermont (1309)	Alès–Nîmes (1310–11)*	Brindisi (1310)	Viterbo (1310)	Palombra (1310)	Vienne or Avignon (?) (1310–11) (?)†	Paris (1310–11)
Cardinal												1
Patriarch of Jerusalem				2	1	2						
Bishop, archbishop‡	2	2		1	1						2	9
Archdeacon												1
Secular priest, parish priest§	1**					>9††			>1		2	>19‡‡
Friar (without defining the order)	1			3 (4?)§§		>6***						
Franciscan	2			5		2	1	1	1		1	33
Dominican	1		1	4		2				1		5
Augustian				1		1						2
Carmelite												3
Canon												2
Canon of Val-des-Écoliers												1
Templar	1			>4†††		1			2		>7†††	>16§§§
Unknown			1	2****					1			>1††††
Total number of references/Total number of confessions	8/138	2/37	2/6	19††††/40	2/5	23/69	1/32	1/2	4/4	1/1	13/24	96/225

Note. This table was prepared on the basis of the newest editions of the documents from the following: Paris (1307): *Le Procès*, ii. 275–420; Paris (1307, before the University masters): Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 307–13; Carcassonne (1307): Nicolotti, *L'interrogatorio*, 697–729; Poitiers (1308): Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 13–71; Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 329–40; Chinon (1308): Frale, *Il Papato*, 198–215; Clermont (1309): *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne*; Alès and Nîmes (1310–11): Ménard, *Histoire civile*, I: *Preuves*, 166–96, 209–14; Brindisi (1310): Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 108–40; Viterbo (1310): *The trial of the Templars in the Papal State*, 163–227; Palombra (1310): *The trial of the Templars in the Papal State*, 248–62; Vienne or Avignon (?): Frale, 'L'interrogatorio', 199–272; Paris (1310–11): *Processus*, i–ii.

* The same brothers were interrogated in Arlés in 1310 and in Nîmes in 1311.

† In the surviving documents there is no information about the time and place of the proceedings. On this question, see, for example, Barber, *The trial*, 206–8; A. Demurger, 'Le « peuple templier » ou du bon usage d'un procès', in Chevalier, *La Fin*, 43–60.

‡ Jean de Fouilly talked about confession on three occasions: *Le Procès*, ii. 278; Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 311f; Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 36. All three references are included in the table.

§ One of the brothers interrogated in Paris in 1307 and in 1311 mentioned confession on both occasions: *Le Procès*, ii. 418; *Processus*, i. 701. Both references are included in the table.

** Nicolas de Compiègne said that he had confessed to the confessor of the bishop of Troyes: *Le Procès*, ii. 418. In turn, in his testimony in 1311, he said that he had confessed to a secular priest in the entourage of the bishop of Troyes: *Processus*, i. 701. It can be assumed that he was talking about the same person on both occasions.

†† Six brothers claimed that they had confessed to many secular priests: *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne*, 129, 146, 159, 174f, 191, 204.

‡‡ One brother claimed that he had confessed to more than one secular priest: *Processus*, i. 515.

§§ One Templar claimed that he had confessed two or three times to Franciscans or Dominicans: Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 15f. Another brother listed an abbot of a monastery near Amiens as his confessor. Unfortunately, the name of the monastery in the document is illegible (p. 46).

*** Six brothers claimed that they had confessed to many friars: *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne*, 129, 146, 159, 174f, 191, 204.

††† One Templar claimed that he had confessed to more than one Templar chaplain: Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 330.

‡‡‡ One brother claimed that he had confessed to more than one Templar chaplain: *ibid.* 348.

§§§ One Templar claimed that he had confessed to several Templar chaplains: *Processus*, i. 768.

**** One brother said only that he had confessed but he did not give any details: Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 65.

†††† One Templar said that he had confessed to different confessors: *Processus*, i. 647.

††††† Apart from the mentions included in the table one more Templar mentioned confession (Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 15f). However, he did not reveal to the confessor that he had renounced Christ during his reception, so his testimony is not included in the table.

Alès and Nîmes in 1310 and 1311, however, only one of thirty-two brothers mentioned earlier confession.

Outside France, the trials of Templars began in 1309 and in some countries in 1310. A clear majority of brothers under examination did not acknowledge the deeds of which they were accused, and thus did not mention any earlier confession of alleged sins.⁵ The exceptions were some of the hearings in Italy and in the Kingdom of Arles. The Templars testifying in 1310 in Brindisi, Viterbo, Palombra, Vienne and Avignon admitted to the charges and some of them also mentioned earlier confessions.

The Templars made such references in various contexts: when recounting the reception ceremony,⁶ when answering questions about the requirement of confessing exclusively to the order's chaplains,⁷ the possibilities of the absolution of sins by lay members of the order or commenting on the charge pertaining to the failure to repair the order's errors.⁸ However, brothers also raised this issue separately from the articles on which they were being questioned.⁹ It is quite telling that – according to the minutes of individual investigations – remarks about prior confession were made in the same context in every single case. It is not known whether this actually reflects the fact that the Templars had had the opportunity to discuss their testimonies or to listen to the interrogations of other brothers or whether it was a result of the way in which notaries wrote down the evidence. At least in some cases notaries did try to standardise the records of the hearings, which may reflect on how they were presented.¹⁰ However, from the point of view of the issues discussed here, it is not of any major significance.

Members of the order on trial usually provided information about the time of their prior confession and about the confessor. More information

⁵ This was the case in Aragon, Castille, Portugal, the Kingdom of Mallorca, Cyprus, Germany and in a majority of investigations carried out in the British Isles, where only a few Templars made incriminating testimonies. See a review of trials outside France and their effects in M. Barber, *The trial of the Templars*, 2nd edn, New York 2006, 217–58.

⁶ In this context, the Templar dignitaries, interrogated in Chinon, and the brothers interrogated in the Kingdom of Arles talked about prior confession: B. Frale, *Il papato e il processo ai Templari: l'inedita assoluzione di Chinon alla luce della diplomazia pontificia*, Rome 2003, 200f, 204f; H. Finke, *Papsttum und Untergang des Templerordens*, Münster 1907, ii. 344, 347f, 355 and passim.

⁷ The brothers interrogated about confession by the papal commission in Paris talked about confession in this context: *Processus*, i. 289, 329, 354 and passim.

⁸ The Templars interrogated in Clermont talked about prior confession in this context: *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne*, 126, 129, 132f and passim.

⁹ This was done, for example, by the Templars testifying in Poitiers: Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 333, 338.

¹⁰ Cf. A. Krüger, 'Schuld oder Präjudizierung? Die Protokolle des Templerprozesses im Textvergleich (1307–1312)', *Historisches Jahrbuch* cxvii (1997), 340–77.

was sometimes given, primarily by the brothers testifying before the papal commission in Paris between 1310 and 1311. They also mentioned the penance that they received and sometimes even the reaction of the confessor to their confession.¹¹ What can be learned from all these accounts?

In a definite majority of cases (132 out of 166 brothers who brought this issue up) brothers confessed to priests from outside the order to heretical incidents committed during the reception ceremony. This would mean that for several decades representatives of the Church were aware of the heretical practices of members of one of the largest military orders in the Christian world. It is clear from Table 1 that confessors included members of orders engaged in fighting heresy, as well as dignitaries of the Church. Robert de Surville, testifying in Paris in 1307, stated that he sent a relative to the papal Curia with a written confession of sins in order to receive absolution. However, the relative died on the way back.¹² Jean de Cassaignes, testifying in Carcassonne in 1307, said that he went to Rome personally in the jubilee year and received absolution.¹³ Pierre de Clôtoir, testifying in Paris in 1308, presented his confession in a similar way. He confessed his sins in Rome, on the way to the East, and received a general papal absolution for all pilgrims.¹⁴ It is hard to believe that all the clerics outside the order who learned about the heretical practices of its members did not oppose or disclose them in any way.

Researchers analysing the testimonies of Templars usually doubt their reliability, concluding that they resulted from torture or pressure of some other type.¹⁵ In the case of accounts pertaining to prior confession, the situation is more complex. It cannot be stated straightforwardly that the Templars lied when talking about prior confession of sins due to coercion, as this issue was not the object of any charges levelled against the order and thus, from the point of view of the interrogators, it did not have to be addressed in the testimonies. Furthermore, there was a significant risk of

¹¹ On the differing reactions of confessors see J. Riley-Smith, 'Were the Templars guilty?', in S. J. Ridyard (ed.), *The medieval crusade*, Woodbridge 2004, 107–24.

¹² *Le Procès des Templiers*, ed. J. Michelet (1841–51), Paris 1987, ii, 293.

¹³ A. Nicolotti, 'L'interrogatorio dei Templari imprigionati a Carcassonne', *Studi Medievali* lii (2011), 706.

¹⁴ K. Schottmüller, *Der Untergang des Templer-Ordens mit unkundlichen und kritischen Beiträgen*, Berlin 1887, ii, 17. On the possible knowledge of the Templars' crimes among the church representatives before 1307 see A. Forey, 'Could alleged Templar malpractices have remained undetected for decades?', in J. Burgtorf, P. W. Crawford and H. J. Nicholson (eds), *The debate on the trial of the Templars*, London 2010, 11–19.

¹⁵ For a summary of the discussion on this question see S. L. Field, 'La Fin de l'ordre du Temple à Paris: le cas de Mathieu de Cressonessart', in A. M. Chevalier (ed.), *La Fin de l'ordre du Temple*, Paris 2012, 101–32. See also J. Théry, 'Une Hérésie d'état: Philippe le Bel, le procès des « perfidies templiers » et la pontification de la royauté française', *Médiévales* lx (2011), 157–85, and *The proceedings against the Templars in the British Isles*, ed. H. J. Nicholson, Farnham 2011, ii, pp. xli–xlvi.

disclosing potential lies, as priests outside of the order, identified as taking part in the act of confession, might verify or otherwise the information provided by the brothers if necessary.¹⁶ No other aspect of their testimonies created a comparable threat as all other practices within the order that the Templars were asked about were, by assumption, not accessible to individuals outside the order. Hence, were the witnesses mentioning earlier confession of their sins telling the truth, at least in some part? Most probably not; there are three arguments for this.

First of all, it would have followed from the testimonies that knowledge of their transgressions would have been quite broadly disseminated in various countries. However, although in the last decades of the thirteenth century many commentators did criticise the Templars for various reasons, and the reform of the military orders was discussed within the Church, there is no mention of heresy in any of the sources from that period.¹⁷ Despite many opportunities to disclose potential knowledge about incriminating confessions made by members of the order, clergy did not do so before the proceedings against the Templars started. Nor did they do so during the trial in spite of being encouraged to do so and in some instances even being summoned to hearings.¹⁸ Priests and friars outside the order, testifying in various countries,¹⁹ rarely mentioned such confessions, and if they did,

¹⁶ The surviving documents provide no information on whether the inquisitors or papal commissioners were trying to verify the truthfulness of the testimonies of the Templars. However, it follows from the minutes of hearings carried out in the British Isles that the inquisitors interrogated persons who were previously pointed out by witnesses outside the order as their source of information about the transgressions of the Templars: *Proceedings*, ii, p. xxxiii. Hence, the verification of testimonies was possible.

¹⁷ For the question of criticism of the Templars and discussion of the fusion of the military orders held at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries see A. Forey, 'The military orders in the crusading proposals of the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries', *Traditio* xxxvi (1980), 317–45; A. Demurger, *Les Templiers: une chevalerie chrétienne au moyen âge*, Paris 2005, 395–409.

¹⁸ The papal commission conducting the proceedings in Paris ordered the summons for all witnesses who had something to disclose about the Templars to be read out in cathedrals, collegiate churches and universities: *Processus*, i. 60. In turn, in England, the archbishops of York and Canterbury ordered all persons associated with the Templar Order, among them priests who were their confessors, to be summoned and interrogated: H. J. Nicholson, *The Knights Templar on trial: the trial of the Templars in the British Isles, 1308–1311*, Stroud 2009, 101; *Proceedings*, ii, p. xxx.

¹⁹ In the British Isles clergy were a clear majority among the 170 witnesses from outside the order: *Proceedings*, ii. 105–11, 189–230, 365–80, 387–95 (English translation). See also A. Gilmour-Bryson, 'The London Templar trial testimony: truth, myth or fable?', in her *A world explored: essays in honour of Laurie Gardiner*, Melbourne 1993, 44–61. Twenty-two clerics outside the order took part in the Cyprus trial: *The trial of the Templars in Cyprus: a complete English edition*, ed. and trans. A. Gilmour-Bryson, Leiden 1998, 74f, 405–41. See also A. Gilmour-Bryson, 'Testimony of non-Templar witnesses in Cyprus', in M. Barber (ed.), *The military orders: fighting for the faith and caring for the sick*, Aldershot 1994, 205–11. Clerics from outside the order also testified in Paris in

they made positive references to the Templars in this respect.²⁰ Only Lord William of Jafford, rector of the church of Croft, who participated in the English proceedings, stated that he had heard about the heretical practices of the Templars from a deceased Augustine abbot, who in turn learned about it during confession by one of the knights, also deceased.²¹ Hence, it is a ‘second-hand’ confession, impossible to verify and thus of little reliability.

The second argument concerns the Templars themselves. It follows from their testimonies that they were fully aware of the impropriety of practices employed during reception into the order, and their earlier confessions were proof of this.²² Moreover, a definite majority of Templars declared that they had confessed the sins committed during the reception ceremony shortly afterwards, i.e. most often within the next few days or weeks,²³ which means that for practically all the time that they were members of the order, they were aware of belonging to a heretical community. However, few of them decided to leave. Some testifying Templars said that they did not leave the order and did not disclose its sins out of fear.²⁴ But some did leave and during the hearings claimed that they had decided to do so due to the heretical practices of the Templars, yet they had also failed to reveal them to church authorities.²⁵ What is more,

1311: *Processus*, i. 532–8, 888f; Navarre: Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 375; Castile: J. M. Sans I Trevé, ‘L’inedito processo dei Templari in Castiglia (Medina del Campo, 27 aprile 1310)’, in F. Tommasi (ed.), *Aciri 1291: la fine della presenza degli ordini militari in Terra Santa e I nuovi orientamenti nel XIV secolo*, Perugia 1996, 227–64; Aragon: A. Forey, *The fall of the Templars in the Crown of Aragon*, Aldershot 2001, 81.

²⁰ For example, one of the witnesses testifying in Cyprus said that during eighteen years of staying with Templars he served as confessor for at least sixty of them. He had nothing to accuse them of: *The trial of the Templars in Cyprus*, 41of. A Franciscan friar participating in the trial in the Kingdom of Navarre made a similar statement. He said that he was the confessor for several Templars and believed them to be good Christians: Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 375. See also Forey, ‘Alleged Templar malpractices’, 17n.

²¹ *Proceedings*, ii. 191, 437 (English translation).

²² Only one Templar testifying in Poitiers and asked by the cardinals about earlier confession answered that he did not confess because he was not aware of having committed a sin: Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 333.

²³ For example, in the course of various proceedings, the Templars talked about confession made on the day of reception: Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 60; a few days after reception: *ibid.* ii. 133; two or three days after reception: Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 348; within a month of reception: *Processus*, i. 289.

²⁴ This was said by one of the brothers interrogated by the cardinals in Poitiers: Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 338; the brothers testifying in Clermont: *Le procès des Templiers d’Auvergne*, 129, 133, 143 and *passim*; and one brother interrogated in Alès: L. Ménard, *Histoire civile, ecclésiastique, et littéraire de la ville de Nismes avec des notes et les preuves*, Paris 1744–58, I: *Preuves*, 175.

²⁵ This was the testimony of the brothers heard before the papal commission in Paris: *Processus*, i. 225, 340, 885. See also other examples in A. Forey, ‘Desertions and transfers from military orders (twelfth to early-fourteenth centuries)’, *Traditio* 1x (2005), 143–200. See also Forey, ‘Alleged Templar malpractices’, 14n.

there are also cases of brothers who left the order due to transgressions which they did not reveal and who later returned.²⁶ It is hard to believe in such far-reaching weakness of character or corruption on the part of so many brothers, coming from different backgrounds who entered the order at different ages and for different reasons.

The final, probably the most serious doubt concerns issues of procedure, which were briefly mentioned by Henry Charles Lea in his *History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*. In the chapter devoted to the trial of the Templars, when considering whether the order was innocent or guilty, he referred, among the arguments against the credibility of incriminating testimonies of the Templars, to the issue of prior confession. He concluded that a definite majority of the confessors listed by the Templars did not have the authority to absolve for the sin of heresy, but according to the brothers' testimony, they did offer absolution, along with prescribing rather mild penance. This he interpreted as evidence that the Templars were lying.²⁷ However, he did not elaborate on this further. From the point of view of this discussion, this issue should be analysed in detail. Only five among the confessing brothers admitted that they did not receive absolution. Eudes de Dompierre, interrogated by the papal commission in 1310, claimed that after hearing his confession during an inspection at the Templar house in Le Mesnil-Saint-Loup, the bishop of Troyes refused to absolve him, yet when he went to the bishop's palace on the next day and confessed his sins again he received absolution.²⁸ Guillaume Tixier did not receive absolution from a parish priest, but when a week later he confessed to a Franciscan, his sins were absolved.²⁹ The case was similar for Dominique de Dijon, who was told by a parish priest in Longvic to apply to the Dominican prior in Dijon.³⁰ Two other brothers said that the Franciscans hearing their confessions ordered them to apply directly to the Holy See.³¹ Moreover, according to the testifying brothers, confessors did not see the need for the penitents to leave the heretical order. Only two ordered them to do so as part of their penance,³² one only advised it,³³ while another, a Dominican, encouraged joining another order.³⁴ Other brothers said that they received absolution and various types of penance. This last issue was addressed primarily by witnesses testifying in Poitiers (eight out of forty) and before the papal commission in Paris (eighty out of ninety-six).³⁵ Most of them spoke

²⁶ Cf., for example, *Processus*, i. 885.

²⁷ H. C. Lea, *A history of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages*, London 1887, iii. 275.

²⁸ *Processus*, i. 393.

²⁹ *Ibid.* i. 828.

³⁰ *Ibid.* i. 695.

³¹ *Le Procès*, ii. 342; *Processus*, i. 659.

³² Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 41; *Processus*, i. 457.

³³ *Processus*, i. 528.

³⁴ *Le Procès*, ii. 356.

³⁵ Apart from them, one Templar heard in Paris in 1307 (*ibid.* i. 378) and one in Brindisi in 1310 (Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 133) mentioned the penance.

about shorter or longer fasting (in total seventy-three instances)³⁶ or about saying basic prayers from the psalter for a specific time or singing masses.³⁷ Others, as part of penance, were told to wear a cord³⁸ or a cilice³⁹ on their naked body, or alternatively were ordered not to wear any shirt⁴⁰ or linen clothes.⁴¹ Alms were also mentioned.⁴² The testifying brothers spoke about more serious penance much less frequently. Only two brothers claimed that the confessor told them to flagellate themselves in secret,⁴³ while one was whipped by the confessor.⁴⁴ Three were told to go to the Holy Land,⁴⁵ while four others were asked to disclose the transgressions of the order.⁴⁶ These statements not only make the testimonies of the Templars unreliable, but also show complete and universal ignorance with respect to church proceedings in cases related to heresy and its penalties. That would explain why so many of them provided information to the investigators which not only seems unreliable to modern researchers, but which would probably carry little weight with their contemporaries, especially those who were expert in inquisitional proceedings. It is also interesting to note that even chaplains in the order manifested an equal ignorance.⁴⁷

Everything indicates that the Templars lied when talking about prior confession. So why did they do it? The answer is not hard to find. When talking about confessing their sins to clerics outside the order, they justified themselves and simultaneously encumbered other representatives of the Church with liability. If they had received absolution, their transgressions could not have been serious enough to consider them heretics or to conduct inquisitional proceedings against them. From this perspective,

³⁶ Some Templars said that the confessor ordered them to fast for three days: *Processus*, i. 531, 545, 627, 655. Sometimes they were told not to wear a shirt (i. 620) or sing specific masses, Psalms or say specific prayers (i. 639, 732). Others said that they had to fast on designated days, for several months (i. 329, 383, 423, 436 and *passim*) and sometimes even years: Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 41; *Processus*, i. 420, 599, 616 and *passim*. Only one talked about fasting on every Saturday until death: *Processus*, i. 300.

³⁷ Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 40; *Processus*, i. 388, 398, 426, 507f and *passim*.

³⁸ *Processus*, i. 388, 591, 693.

³⁹ Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 331; *Processus*, i. 546, 618, 695.

⁴⁰ *Processus*, i. 289, 558, 606, 620 and *passim*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* i. 393, 454, 528, 550, 747.

⁴² *Ibid.* i. 398, 440.

⁴³ *Ibid.* i. 481, 548.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* i. 620.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* i. 300, 467, 834. One of them also claimed (i. 467) that he had to wear chain mail over a shirt.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* i. 605, 642, 647, 651.

⁴⁷ Only two Templar chaplains claimed that confessors did not initially want to absolve them: *ibid.* i. 393, 828. Others declared that they received absolution, and as part of their repentance they were supposed to fast for, for example, thirteen Fridays and were only allowed to have bread and water, to read the psalter nine times (i. 403), to fast on bread and water for five Saturdays (i. 545), and to wear a cord tied to their naked body for a year (i. 591).

mentioning a prior confession was a convenient individual defence. Even though it laid an additional burden on the order, it also offered hope for improving the situation of individual brothers.

The testifying Templars were probably aware of the threat that was involved in identifying the alleged confessors, who could verify, or otherwise, their statements. Most probably this is why some of them avoided providing details that would enable identification. Some brothers claimed that they did not know or did not remember the name of the confessor⁴⁸ or they provided information that was too enigmatic to find him.⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that in the minutes there is no record that investigators tried to learn something more about the confessors. Over the course of time, the Templars also started to make use of another technique. During the proceedings before the papal commission in Paris, some witnesses (forty out of 170) claimed that their confessor was already dead⁵⁰ or listed a deceased church dignitary as their confessor.⁵¹ Several brothers listed high-ranking dignitaries who were alive, yet resided in other countries, which made it difficult for them to be reached or questioned.⁵² In this context, the testimony of Raoul de Gizey is exceptional; in 1311, in Paris, he said that

⁴⁸ Such information was provided by 26 Templars heard at various stages of the trial: Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 57; *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne*, 129, 149, 172, 191; *Processus*, i. 397, 454, 547, 550 and *passim*.

⁴⁹ For example, some brothers said that they confessed to 'a certain Franciscan': *Le Procès*, ii. 342; *Processus*, i. 419; 'Dominican brother Nicholas': *Le Procès*, ii. 356; 'a Franciscan and others': *Processus*, i. 647. A large group of brothers testifying in Clermont only said that they confessed their sins to 'lay persons and clergymen': *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne*, 146, 159, 174f, 204 and *passim*. Others said that their confessor was a 'brother chaplain': *Le Procès*, ii. 399; Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, 24, 39f, 60; Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 338; *The Trial of the Templars in the Papal State and Abruzzi*, ed. A. Gilmour-Bryson, Città del Vaticano 1982, 195, 219; B. Frale, 'L'interrogatorio ai Templari nella provincia di Bernardo Gui: un'ipotesi per il frammento del Registro avignonese 305', in *Dall'Archivio Segreto Vaticano: miscellanea di testi, saggi e inventari*, i, Città del Vaticano 2006, 245, 261.

⁵⁰ Such information was provided by the brothers participating in the Paris proceedings between 1310 and 1311: *Processus*, i. 426, 430, 457, 510 and *passim*.

⁵¹ During various hearings, information was provided about twelve deceased bishops: *Le Procès*, ii. 360; *Processus*, i. 300, 354, 383, 393, 467, 546, 774, 947; Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 36, 46f; Frale, 'L'interrogatorio', 261, 263. One of the dignitaries of the order, interrogated in Chinon in 1308, claimed that he had confessed to the bishop of Carpentras (Frale, *Il Papato*, 200f), but did not provide any more detailed information. He was accepted into the order in 1265, so he could have confessed to any of four subsequent bishops. Three of them were already dead; the last one, Bérenger II de Mazan, held the position until 1317.

⁵² One of the Templars testifying before the papal commission listed the Italian Cardinal Guglielmo Longhi as the confessor: *Processus*, i. 299. Others talked about confessing to the patriarch of Jerusalem: Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 59; Frale, *Il papato*, 204f; *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne*, 143, 188. One witness stated twice that he confessed to the bishop of Gibelet, Pierre de Chartres: *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne*,

he had confessed to the papal penitentiary, Jean de Dijon, adding that he was allegedly staying at the papal Curia and could be asked about the confession.⁵³ Even more surprising are the declarations of Jean de Fouilloy, who spoke about his confession three times. He was interrogated for the first time in Paris in October 1307. Back then, he mentioned that he had confessed to the current bishop of Paris, Guillaume Baufet (1304–19): it is interesting to note that he was the only one among the Templars interrogated during the entire trial to say that he had shared his doubts as to the functioning of the order with a lay official from the ‘curia of the *prévôt* of Paris’.⁵⁴ However, he did not reiterate this piece of information in any later testimonies. A few days after the first hearing, together with several other brothers, he stood before the representatives of Paris university. He said then that he had confessed first to the bishop of Meaux and later to the bishop of Paris, who at that time was only *electus confirmatus*.⁵⁵ In another testimony, made several months later before the cardinals in Poitiers, he did not mention the confession to the bishop of Paris but only the bishop of Meaux, who by then was dead.⁵⁶ It is impossible to conclude what guided Jean de Fouilloy in naming his first confessor as Guillaume Baufet. Baufet could have countered his statement at any moment. One can only supposed that he was intentionally planning to burden him with joint liability for heresy or maybe he was not aware of the possibility of verifying his confession. Nevertheless, he clearly became aware of the weakness of this strategy and that is why in Poitiers he only spoke of one, already deceased, confessor.

The testimony of Jean de Fouilloy made before the inquisitor in Paris in 1307 deserves attention for one more reason. He was one of the first Templars to decide to mention prior confession during the trial in an attempt to improve his situation. During the interrogations carried out in

194; *Processus*, i. 931. The date of the bishop’s death is unknown, but the testifying brother assumed that he was still alive. ⁵³ *Processus*, i. 481.

⁵⁴ *Le Procès*, ii. 278. In relation to mentioning a Parisian official, Malcolm Barber even considered Jean de Fouilloy to be one of the informants of Philip the Fair: *The trial*, 66, 79. It is hard to verify this assumption.

⁵⁵ Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 311f. Guillaume Baufet was elected bishop on 18 September 1304 and consecrated on 17 January 1305; B. Hauréau, ‘Guillaume Baufet, évêque de Paris’, in *Histoire littéraire de la France*, xxii, Paris 1897, 469–74. Thus, the suggestion of Alain Demurger that Jean de Fouilloy confessed to the bishops between the first and the second hearing is untrue: ‘Johannes de Folheyo’, in A. Demurger, *Le Peuple templier, 1307–1312: catalogue prosopographique des templiers présents ou (et) cités dans les procès-verbaux des interrogatoires faits dans le royaume de France entre 1307 et 1312*, Paris 2019, 177.

⁵⁶ Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 36. When talking about the bishop of Meaux, Jean de Fouilloy could have meant Jean de Monterolles or his successor, Nicholas Volé, deceased on 18 April 1308: J. Marion, ‘Liste des archevêques et évêques de France, distribuée par provinces ecclésiastiques’, *Annuaire historique pour l’année 1849 publié par la Société de l’histoire de France*, xiii, Paris 1849, 27–168.

the first months after the arrests, a similar strategy was applied by only nine other brothers out of 280 testifying in various parts of the kingdom of France.⁵⁷ This was probably an effect of the first shock of the arrests, but it also reflected their intellectual potential and probable lack of contact with persons who could have advised them about the best line of defence. However, in the course of time the situation changed. Looking more closely at the chronology of the trial, it turns out that a key moment was the hearings carried out by the cardinals in Poitiers in the summer of 1308. It was then that many brothers mentioned prior confession and the interrogators asked them about it. It follows from the minutes that such a question was not asked at the beginning of the hearings and thus had not been planned in advance, yet, when several brothers mentioned it, the cardinals started to ask others about it.⁵⁸ Hence, it seems that at this stage some Templars were already aware of the potential benefits that mentioning prior confession could offer to them. Among them were brothers who, testifying in Paris in 1307, had not mentioned this issue, but later decided to do so.⁵⁹ However, we do not know where they drew their knowledge about this potential line of defence from. They could have been advised about it by Jean de Fouillois, who was present in Poitiers, or by somebody outside the order. In one way or another, the cardinals interrogating the brothers definitely strengthened this conviction and, consciously or not, suggested that other witnesses also mention this issue. Even though not all Templars then adopted the stratagem – three testifying brothers answered the question about the prior confession negatively⁶⁰ – yet at the subsequent stage of the trial, they mentioned prior confession of sins multiple times. Furthermore, a definite majority of them later brought this issue forward of their own volition, without any encouragement from the interrogators, and only two testifying brothers stated that they had not confessed earlier.⁶¹ This raises the question of how the brothers learned about using prior confession in their own defence. The minutes preserved from the subsequent hearings at least partially indicate how this information was disseminated.

⁵⁷ On this question see Demurger, *La Persécution*, 61.

⁵⁸ The interrogations were carried out over three days, from 29 June to 1 July 1308. The first information about the confession appeared in the testimonies from the first day; however, the cardinals started to ask about it only on the second day. In total, they asked 10 out of 40 testifying brothers about earlier confession: Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 39–69 passim.

⁵⁹ *Le Procès*, ii. 298, 306f, 317f, 344, 381f; Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 39–41, 59–62.

⁶⁰ Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii. 62; Finke, *Papsttum*, ii. 333, 336.

⁶¹ In the course of hearings carried out between 1309 and 1311, only two brothers said that they did not confess earlier the sins they had committed during the reception ceremony: Frale, 'L'interrogatorio', 243; *Processus*, i. 525f.

Brothers who had earlier testified in Paris (seven of them) had taken part in the interrogations in Poitiers in 1308.⁶² One of them was Jean de Foulloy, together with five other Templars who had not mentioned confession earlier. In Poitiers, four of them discussed this issue, one at his own initiative and three in response to the cardinals' questions.⁶³ Two years later, in the spring of 1310, nine Templars interrogated in Poitiers,⁶⁴ as well as a group of sixty-four brothers imprisoned in the Temple of Paris,⁶⁵ stood before the papal commission, declaring a desire to defend the order. Apart from them, almost 600 members of the order who had been kept in various prisons in the kingdom of France arrived in Paris. Among them were also thirty-two brothers who had participated in the inquisitional proceedings in Clermont in June 1309, during which the issue of confession was mentioned several times.⁶⁶ It is not clear from the surviving sources whether any of them was present in Poitiers earlier. Yet since we know only the names of forty out of at least seventy-two Templars interrogated then, it cannot be ruled out.⁶⁷ In one way or another, it is known that over one hundred brothers took part in the Paris proceedings who had earlier used the defence of prior confession or who had heard about it.

At the very beginning of the trial the papal commissioners allowed all the Templars to hold consultations and to set up a joint line of defence. To achieve this all the brothers who were then back in Paris and who declared their desire to defend the order (547)⁶⁸ were brought together; the list of charges was read out to them and then they were left alone to discuss it. It is also known that in the ensuing weeks individual groups of brothers, in spite of being placed in various prisons, had other opportunities to be in

⁶² Apart from the Templars interrogated in 1307 in Paris, four brothers who previously testified in Carcassonne (Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii, 50) and in Cahors (Finke, *Papsttum*, ii, 317, 319f) were present in Poitiers. It is unknown whether and where the other Templars from the group that testified before the cardinals had been interrogated earlier.

⁶³ Schottmüller, *Der Untergang*, ii, 39–41, 59, 60f.

⁶⁴ On the participation of the brothers interrogated in Poitiers in the Paris proceedings see Demurger, *La Persécution*, 113.

⁶⁵ In total, 86 Templars imprisoned in the Temple testified before the commissioners, yet 22 refused to defend the order, and therefore did not participate in further proceedings and in the meetings of brothers organised in relation to it: *Processus*, ii, annexe 2, 967–1167. See also Demurger, *Le Peuple templier*, passim.

⁶⁶ On the participation of Templars testifying in Clermont in 1309 in the Paris proceedings see *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne*, 65–70.

⁶⁷ Minutes from hearings of forty brothers have been preserved. However, it follows from the document that testimonies were made by seventy-two Templars. See, for example, Demurger, *La Persécution*, 112f.

⁶⁸ On the number of brothers who took part in the meeting organised by the commissioners see *Processus*, i, 15.

contact.⁶⁹ This is probably when the Templars exchanged knowledge about the trial, determined their defence strategy and worked out how to use prior confession. However, very soon they lost chance to use this knowledge. After the Council of Sens formally ended the inquisition proceedings carried out in the local archdiocese on 11 May 1310, condemning fifty-four Templars to death – among them a large group of participants in the Paris investigation – a definite majority of the brothers who previously declared a desire to defend the order changed their minds, and the commissioners decided to suspend work. New Templar groups had also started to arrive in Paris in April and they did not take part in the discussions pertaining to the new line of defence. Their testimonies incriminated the order. After a break of several months, proceedings resumed in December 1310, both for those Templars who had taken part in the first part of the procedure and those who were not interrogated before the commission. Prior confession was mentioned in the testimonies of both groups.

Out of four witnesses who formed a part of the first group that arrived in Paris in 1310, two talked about confession.⁷⁰ In the second and last group giving testimony before the suspension of the work of the commission, there were both Templars who had already testified before it and newly arrived ones. Among seven who testified, two mentioned earlier confession of sins. Both had taken part in the first part of the trial.⁷¹ After the resumption of hearings in December 1310, significantly more brothers mentioned the issue of prior confession. Among eighty-eight witnesses testifying during the ensuing two months, fifty-six mentioned it.⁷² Among Templars sworn in at that time, there were fifty-six brothers who had already been heard by the commissioners and thus had the opportunity of participating in the exchange of information about possible defence strategies. Thirty-nine of them discussed the issue of confession, and definitely set an example for other Templars.⁷³

⁶⁹ For the meeting of all brothers who arrived in Paris which was held on 28 March 1310, and other forms of contact, see M. Satora, 'Information flow between the Templar brothers during their trial in France (March–April 1310)', *Ordines militares: Colloquia Torunensia Historica: yearbook for the study of the military orders* xxv (2020), 95–108. On the course of the trial carried out by the commissioners in Paris see also Barber, *The trial*, 139–201, and Demurger, *La Persécution*, 151–262.

⁷⁰ *Processus*, i. 289, 299f. The first group that stood before the commission, on 11 April, comprised seven Templars (i. 253f), yet only four of them testified.

⁷¹ In the group that was sworn in on 5 May (ibid. i. 313f), there were four brothers in total who had testified before the commissioners earlier. Two had talked about confession (i. 354).

⁷² Between 17 December 1310 and 17 February 1311, eleven groups of Templars testified before cardinals: ibid. i. 371–665.

⁷³ The Templars who did not participate in the earlier proceedings were present in almost all groups making testimonies at that time. The only exception was a group of three sworn in on 9 January: ibid. i. 449.

In the subsequent months of the commission's work, the brothers made fewer remarks about the prior confession of sins. Out of seventy-three witnesses heard in the last ten days of February and in March, only twenty-three did so.⁷⁴ At that time, definitely fewer participants in the first part of the proceedings than in earlier months (thirty-one) stood before the commissioners. They too mentioned prior confession less frequently – only eleven of them. Furthermore, testimonies in this period were made by several Templars who – during the inquisitional proceedings in 1307 and 1309 – talked about confession and later did not.⁷⁵

Later the Templars ceased to bring this issue up at all. This was the case of six groups (thirty-five brothers) testifying between the beginning of April and mid-May 1311.⁷⁶ Among them were only four Templars who had taken part in the first part of the proceedings. In the last weeks of the work of the commission, sixteen brothers were interrogated,⁷⁷ and only two of them mentioned prior confession: the first, Pierre Maurin, took part in the trial in Clermont and talked about confession there;⁷⁸ the other, Guillaume de Cardeilhac, stood before the commissioners earlier as a defender of the order.⁷⁹ No other Templar followed suit, even though there were other brothers who had participated in the first part of the trial,⁸⁰ as well as those who talked about the confession during the earlier inquisition proceedings.⁸¹ It may thus be assumed that it was an

⁷⁴ Between 25 February and 29 March 1311, ten groups of Templars were sworn in, comprising both participants in the first part of the proceedings and brothers testifying before the commission for the first time: *ibid.* i. 665–847. Among them were two groups in which nobody mentioned confession (a group of six brothers who arrived on March 8: i. 713–30; and a group of six brothers who arrived on March 26: i. 808–18). Apart from them, testimonies were made by two other brothers: one of them arrived on his own (i. 786), the other one stood before the commissioners with a group of Templars convicted and sentenced to lifetime imprisonment by the Council of Sens and who gave testimony as the only one (i. 717). None of them mentioned confession.

⁷⁵ One testifying brother mentioned confession during a hearing in Paris in 1307 (*Le Procès*, ii. 378). However, he did not do it in the testimony of 1311: *Processus*, i. 736–8. The situation was similar with respect to three brothers participating in the inquisitional proceedings in Clermont in 1309, heard by the commissioners between 30 March and 1 April 1311: *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne*, 126, 146, 159; *Processus*, i. 830–2, 840–2, 843–5.

⁷⁶ *Processus*, i. 847–924.
⁷⁷ Between 19 and 26 May, three groups of Templars testified before the cardinals: *ibid.* i. 924–57.

⁷⁸ *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne*, 194; *Processus*, i. 931.
⁷⁹ *Processus*, i. 947; ii, annexe 2, 1022. Out of ten witnesses sworn in on 19 May (i. 924f), confession was mentioned only by one (i. 931). The second testifying Templar who did so (i. 947) belonged to the group of three brothers who stood before the commissioners on 22 May (i. 945). The last three brothers arrived on 26 May (i. 951f). None of them mentioned confession.

⁸⁰ Together with Guillaume de Cardeilhac, two brothers participating in the earlier proceedings testified before the commissioners: *ibid.* ii, annexe 2, 984f, 1074f.

⁸¹ Together with Pierre Maurin, nine more Templars testified before the commissioners on 19 May who had earlier taken part in the trial in Clermont. At Clermont

individual initiative on the part of two witnesses, not discussed with other Templars from the groups with which they testified before the commissioners. It did not affect the other testifying brothers.

It seems that in the course of time information about the possibility of using information about the prior confession of sins to improve one's own situation reached a decreasing number of testifying Templars or that their conviction about its potential significance was reduced. Either way, incorporating the issue of confession in their testimonies depended on the point in the proceedings at which a brother was interrogated and the group with whom he stood before the commissioners.

This is reflected not only by the decreasing number of references to prior confession, but also the changing content of the Templar testimonies. The best example is the accounts about penance that the brothers were instructed to complete. The first ones to testify mentioned various types of penance, yet in subsequent groups appearing before the commissioners from December 1310 onwards it is possible to observe a tendency for brothers, following one after the other, to supply similar or even identical information. Thus, the Templars sworn in in two subsequent groups on 17 and 31 December repeated the information about fasting, which had to be observed on several Fridays.⁸² Later, such fasting was mentioned by only one more witness who testified in the middle of February.⁸³ Brothers sworn in on 19 January were the only ones to mention the 'Pater Noster',⁸⁴ while in the group that arrived on 26 January, several Templars, testifying one after the other, claimed that they were given the same penance – they were told to fast on every Friday for a year.⁸⁵ Some witnesses heard in the middle of February declared that the confessors asked them to reveal the transgressions of the order.⁸⁶ Other groups did not mention such a penance.

All these convergences show that the members of individual groups had an opportunity to discuss the content of their testimonies before standing before the commission or that, testifying one after another, they were influenced by earlier statements. It is known that the Templars arriving together from various parts of France communicated, among other things, with respect to whether or not to wear coats and beards symbolising

four of them had spoken about confession: *Le Procès des Templiers d'Auvergne*, 132f, 191, 202, 207; *Processus*, i. 925–29, 938–41.

⁸² Two brothers said that they fasted for thirteen Fridays (*Processus*, i. 393, 403), one fasted for seventeen or eighteen Fridays (i. 423), while two others for twelve Fridays: i. 426, 436.

⁸³ Ibid. i. 625.

⁸⁴ Such penance was mentioned by three out of five brothers who spoke about the confession: *ibid.* i. 507f, 510, 515.

⁸⁵ Ibid. i. 560, 564, 568, 572, 580.

⁸⁶ Ibid. i. 605, 632, 642, 647, 651.

their attachment to the order.⁸⁷ It is therefore probable that they also agreed on their answers to the commissioners' questions.

Minutes from hearings carried out in 1307 and 1310–11 allow for investigation of one more issue. Many brothers discussed confession for the first time only before the papal commission. The documents allow for comparing the content of testimonies made at two stages of the trial by twenty-seven brothers. Twenty-one of them mentioned confession only during the later investigation. This confirms earlier conclusions pertaining to the chronology of hearings and the spreading of information about a possible mode of defence among the Templars, but it also shows that at this stage (after the end of most of the inquisition proceedings) these brothers still saw the sense of introducing a new issue into their testimonies. Although almost all brothers testifying before the commissioners in Paris were earlier absolved and at least since the decision of the Council of Sens had no hope of protecting the order, they were still trying to present themselves in the best possible light, even if this meant providing false information. What, therefore, induced some of them to make testimonies before the papal commission? It cannot be ruled out that at least some witnesses came to Paris hoping to improve their situation and possibly mitigate the earlier judgements made in the inquisitional proceedings.

Extensive and complete documentation from the work of the papal commission allows for in-depth tracking of the flow of information among the members of the order during this part of the trial and indicates its impact on the content of the brothers' testimonies. Unfortunately, similar source materials are not available from other trials held after 1308; it is impossible to state whether and in what way ideas of incorporating the issue of prior confession into their testimonies reached the Templars. Obviously, it cannot be ruled out that some of them came up with the idea of using such a defence strategy or that somebody outside the order suggested it to them, irrespective of the suggestions of cardinals in Poitiers and later discussions of brothers in Paris. However, it seems most probable that they were in contact with the participants of some of these two trials. This was probably the case of Drouet de Paris, who alone among the brothers interrogated in Alès-Nîmes in 1310 and 1311 mentioned prior confession. He had left the order a few years earlier and was probably arrested after the first hearings in 1307, in which he did not participate. During the interrogation of 1310 he declared that he did not want to have any contact with other brothers.⁸⁸ That would explain the uniqueness of his testimony.

⁸⁷ On this question see M. Satora, 'Mantle and beard as symbols of the Templars in the records of the Paris proceedings against the order (1309–1311)', in J. Sarnowski, K. Kwiatkowski, H. Houben, L. Pószán and A. Bárány (eds), *Studies on the military orders, Prussia, and urban history: essays in honour of Roman Czaja on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday*, Debrecen 2020, 105–15.

⁸⁸ Ménard, *Historie civile*, I: *Preuves*, 176f.

It is not possible to ascertain whether the attempts at defence on the part of the Templars achieved anything. The sources on the final judgements in inquisitional proceedings are too limited and too fragmented⁸⁹ to enable comparison with the minutes from hearings and answer the question whether the situation of Templars who mentioned confession in their testimonies differed in any way from those who did not do so.

In his conclusion to his *La Persécution des templiers* Alain Demurger concluded that members of the order were not simply passive participants in events; they were also trying to fight the charges, not admitting guilt during subsequent hearings and attempting to defend their order before the papal commission in Paris, as well as during the Council of Vienne.⁹⁰ It seems that they were also trying to save themselves in a slightly different way, one which damaged their order and implicated other representatives of the Church in the sin of heresy. Even though the strategy selected by them was risky because it could be challenged, the Templars decided to use it more often in the course of time, even when they had already been absolved by inquisitional tribunals. This was primarily the result of suggestions from other brothers, which shows the importance of the flow of information for the course of the trial. It also demonstrates that, irrespective of the stage of the trial, the Templars believed that they could improve their situation by their actions. It is possible that at least some of them managed to do so.

⁸⁹ On the results of the inquisitional processes see A. Forey, 'Templars after the trial: further evidence', *Revue Mabillon* xxiii (2012), 89–110.

⁹⁰ Demurger, *La Persécution*, 289–93.