



Alain Demurger, *La Persécution des Templiers. Journal (1307–1314)*, Éditions Payot & Rivages, Paris 2015, 400 pp., ISBN: 978-2-228-91407-9.

The trial of the Templars has been discussed so many times by various historians that it might appear impossible find a new angle on the subject. However, Alain Demurger, an accomplished specialist in the military-religious orders, attempts to do precisely that in a book which moves away from the traditional themes of the political issues connected to the trial and the much discussed question whether the Templars were guilty of the charges brought against them. Rather, the aim of his work is to provide an account of the reality in which the French Templars found themselves after the arrests of 1307, interrogated numerous times by royal officials, inquisitors and papal delegates and then judged by provincial synods or, in the case of the highest dignitaries of the order, by Papal representatives. Providing such a perspective is a valuable addition to current research which tends to focus on the political background and the actions of the leading personalities, rather than the realities faced by the common brethren. Demurger bases his study on protocols from the interrogations carried out over the course of a few years in France, other Western countries and Cyprus. Of course, analysis of these sources requires the historian to assess the reliability of the evidence given by the Templars and thus to take a stand on the existing debate about the value of the testimonies given during the trial. The author agrees with the view held by many modern scholars, namely that the evidence given by the Templars is completely unreliable.

In the introduction Demurger also takes a stand on the actual reasons and motivations behind the trial. Here too he leans towards the widely accepted interpretation of recent years, namely that the reason behind the trial of the Templars was King Philip IV's ambitions to expand royal power at the expense of the Church, and his wish to finalise the conflict between him and the recently deceased Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303).

Working on the basis of these assumptions, Demurger considers the different phases of the Templar trial to analyses the most important events which shaped it. He focuses first on the activities of the French court and Pope Clement V (1305–1314), which proceeded the arrests of the Templars, interpreting the source material as a clear example of a show of strength between the crown and the papacy, which was connected with events during the pontificate of Boniface VIII. The following chapters concern the actual arrests of the Templars and the first interrogations of the members of the order in various regions of France. Demurger

focuses on the numbers and the origins of the arrested Templars, the places and conditions of their imprisonment and finally the process of interrogation, inquisitorial methods and the use of torture, all of them issues which often receive only brief discussion in scholarly work concerning the trial.

The next section of the work focuses on the conflict between the papacy and the French crown resulting from the retraction of confessions by some Templars and from Clement's decision to suspend the proceedings against the order. The detailed analysis of the events surrounding the meeting between the French king and the Pope in Poitiers in 1308 is especially interesting, providing insights on the Templars who confessed to the cardinals and to Clement himself, and on the content of, and reasons for, the bull *Faciens misericordiam* which was crucial in the trial. Demurger also considers the events that took place in Chinon, which are one of the most unclear aspects of the trial.

The next chapters provide a discussion of the activities of the diocesan commissions which led the interrogations of individual brothers, as well as the papal commission, which met in Paris in 1309–1311 and dealt with the inquiry into the order as a whole. This is the longest section of the book and it significantly expands on previous research concerning this part of the trial. The practical aspect of the functioning of the commissions is also discussed, for example the time, place and interrogation techniques, as are details of the proceedings of the commission. Demurger provides an in-depth explanation of the events surrounding the defence of the order organised by the brothers and their changing approach, devoting a separate chapter to the prisons in which the Templars were held. The last chapter describes the final stages of the trial, the council of Vienne and the death of the Grand Master, emphasising the final attempt to defend the order by the Templars themselves and the debates connected to it.

Demurger draws a number of interesting conclusions from his study. He argues that the members of the order played an active part in the trial and thus were not merely passive victims of the power struggle between the Papacy and French crown. He also notes the complexity and ambiguity of the pope's stance towards the Templars, stressing how Clement was not convinced of their innocence and did not attempt to defend them at each stage of the proceedings. This is a shift from the traditional interpretation according to which the struggle between papal and royal power was the main motivation behind the trial.

Finally, the appendices included in the book are an important element complementing the discussion, for example: a complete list of the Templars interrogated by the Paris commission, a list of dioceses from where the Templars originally came, and a list of Templars interrogated by the synods of Sens and Rheims. These were all compiled on the basis of Jules Michelet's transcripts of the protocols from

the trial. Demurger's work is an important step towards a final clarification of the issues surrounding the Templar trial. His new approach shows that even despite the attention the trial of the Templars has already received, more work and deeper analysis is needed.

Magdalena Satora (Warszawa)

ORDINES MILITARES
COLLOQUIA TORUNENSIA HISTORICA
Yearbook for the Study of the Military Orders

vol. XX (2015)



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Printed in Poland

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Toruń 2015

ISSN 0867-2008

NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY PRESS

EDITORIAL OFFICE: ul. Gagarina 5, 87-100 Toruń
tel. (0) 56 611 42 95, fax (0) 56 611 47 05
e-mail: wydawnictwo@umk.pl

DISTRIBUTION: ul. Mickiewicza 2/4, 87-100 Toruń
tel./fax (0) 56 611 42 38
e-mail: books@umk.pl
www.wydawnictwoumk.pl

1st. ed. 300 copy

Print: Nicolaus Copernicus University Press
ul. Gagarina 5, 87-100 Toruń

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