The Persecution and Downfall of the Knight Templars in the Reign of Philip IV of France

Margaret Florence Bridges

College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

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The persecution and downfall of the Knight Templars in the reign of Philip IV of France

A THESIS PRESENTED AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

AS A PARTIAL REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE

OF

MASTER OF ARTS

BY

MARGARET FLORENCE BRIDGES

WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

1927
May 28, 1927.

Dean K. J. Hoke
College of W. & M.

Dear Dr. Hoke:-

A thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts has been submitted to me by Miss Margaret Florence Bridges. The title of the thesis is

The Persecution and Downfall of the Knight Templars in the Reign of Philip IV of France.

I approve this thesis without qualifications, it is, in my opinion, a fine piece of work.

Miss Bridges has had made three typewritten copies of the thesis. One of these I am sending to you for the official records of the College. One I am putting into the Library so that it may be referred to in case of need. The third copy I am keeping for myself. This has been the custom, I believe.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Professor of Modern Languages
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Never, in the course of history, has an order had a more glorious beginning and development than that of the Knight Templars, but never has one had a more tragic or sad an ending.

The history of the order of the Temple may be divided into three phases — a humble beginning, a marvellous growth, and a tragic end. The last of these three phases is to receive the most emphasis in this thesis.

In the year 1119, a certain Hugues de Payen, a knight of northeastern France, and eight companions bound themselves together for the purpose of rendering aid to pilgrims on journeys to the Holy Land against attacks of the Saracens. The oath was taken in the presence of the patriarch of Jerusalem, wherein they promised to guard the public roads around Jerusalem, to forsake worldly attractions, and to lead a life of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem, gave them as quarters a part of his palace, which is said to have been built on the site of the Temple of Solomon, close to the church of the Holy Sepulcher. Hence they took the title, "pauvres chevaliers du temple".

Poor indeed they were in those early years, being reduced to living on alms; then too, they were too few in number to render any valuable service except as escorts to pilgrims from Jerusalem to the banks of the Jordan. Their habit consisted only of old worn clothes that were given them. Truly, considering this extremely humble beginning, it is amazing how rapidly this modest order, in the course of a very few years, grew to such power and wealth.
In 1128, at the council of Troyes, the Templars adopted the Rule of St. Benedict which was sanctioned by the council. From this time on, recruits flocked to the new order, which rapidly grew in popularity due to the fact that it combined two great passions of the Middle Ages, religious fervour and material prouiness.

The order at first consisted of knights alone, but later as it grew in number it was divided into four groups - knights, all of which were of noble birth, chaplains, men-at-arms, besides mercenaries, retainers, and craftsmen affiliated and enjoying its protection. The knights, who were bound by life-long vows, were the only members of the organization who enjoyed the privilege of wearing the white mantle, symbol of purity, and the red cross on the left shoulder, ensign of the champions of the church - all the other members wore either brown or black robes.

The Grand Master of the Temple was the head of the order, and to him every member owed obedience. The knights had to go wherever he bade them without delay - "as if commanded by God", yet he was not absolute, for in matters of special importance he was compelled to consult the chapter.

The amplest privileges were soon heaped upon the order, both spiritual and temporal. They were taken under the immediate protection of the pope and were exempted from all other jurisdiction, episcopal or secular, their property was exempted from taxation, but later this led to serious conflicts with the clergy.

By 1158, the order had grown so that it had spread to nearly every kingdom of Christendom. Everywhere they were given vast estates and also fortified castles were placed at their disposal. In France especially the order flourished, men of the highest courage and purest devotion flocked to its ranks bringing their vast wealth. In their castles, which were
both monasteries and cavalry barracks, their life was full of contrasts -
they were stern and valiant knights while on the battlefield, but pious
monks while in the chapel, formidable to the enemies of Christ, gentleness
itself to its friends.

This was a picked body of men who, by their brave and noble example,
had a profound influence on the Christian world, particularly during the
earlier years of the order, before it fell into disrepute. What a blessing
it must have been to the weary pilgrim, travelling the dusty roads between
Jaffa and Jerusalem and every moment expecting an attack by a band of Arab
brigands, to meet one of these knights!

The Temple had an attraction other than its magnificent privileges -
and this was the atmosphere of mystery and vague terror that enveloped the
ceremony of initiation. This took place at night and behind closed doors,
and it is said that if the king of France, who once sought admittance to
the order, had found his way in, he would never have found it out again.

"The candidate (says Michelet) was introduced as a sinner, a bad
Christian, a renegade. He denied, after the example of St. Peter; and the
denial was expressed by the act of spitting on the cross. The order charged
itself with rehabilitating this renegade, and raising him the higher in
proportion to the depth of his fall. Thus, in the festival of fools, man
offered the homage of his own imbecility and infamy to the church which
was to regenerate him. These sacred comedies became daily less understood,
therefore, daily the more dangerous, and the more likely to scandalize a
prosaic age, which saw only the letter, and had forgotten the meaning of
the symbol."

Thus as time went on and the crusading spirit began to wane the
order drifted into idleness - the real success of the order depended on
its success in the East, and so long as the church centered its attention on the protection of the Holy Land the vital existence of the order was assured - and so it is for one hundred and forty years after its formation the history of the Templars is closely allied to the history of the crusades, and all the world is willing to acknowledge their valuable service. It has been estimated that more than twenty thousand Templars perished in war in less than two centuries. This great loss of men is thought by many to be one of the principal factors leading to the decadence of the true spirit of the order - for men were admitted who were not fit to become members, it is said that blind obedience was all required of a new member.

A fall, after great efforts, is ever a serious one. The soul which has soared so high in heroism and sanctity, falls all the more heavily on earth when it does fall. Such was the case of the Templars, that noble order which at one time was thought by all Christendom to incarnate the best in man, that had soared from man to God in the course of its flight, was now charged, and certainly with some justice, of having turned from God to dwell among the beasts.

There is no doubt in the world but that the order has been in many cases accused unjustly. It had grown to such power and wealth that naturally it had made bitter enemies, but even at that it is hard to conceive of all the accusations as being without foundation. It is not my task either to condemn or to uphold the order, but only to present some of the abuses with which they were charged and which finally led to their tragic downfall.

Had most of the impious charges brought against the Templars been true, even then it can not be said that their abolition was justified. An easy matter it might have been for the church to hush up such abuses, as often happened in other cases. There is another cause, and a much more potent one too, that may account for its speedy end. This cause was none
other than jealousy, jealousy of the vast riches and power of the order. It is said that it possessed more than nine thousand manors in Christendom and that in the kingdom of Valentia alone it owned seventeen fortified places. The Island of Cyprus had been purchased. With such vast wealth it was difficult indeed to remain humble.

During the reign of Louis VII the Templars were granted a piece of marsh land just outside of the city of Paris, here a temple was built and it soon became the headquarters of the order in Europe.

The Templars were recognized as being great financiers and bankers, and the Temple of Paris became a center of the world’s money markets. People throughout the kingdom often borrowed large sums from this source, and it was not an uncommon thing for the king himself to ask for an occasional loan. Not only were vast sums lent to various individuals, but the kings and even the popes deposited their revenues there, recognizing it as being a place of security.

Toward the end of the crusades the Templars were charged with unchristian conduct in the East. They were even charged with being in league with the infidels on more than one occasion. In their furious rivalries with the Hospitallers, they had even shot a flight of arrows into the Holy Sepulcher. Whether or not there be any truth in these statements, nevertheless, when the crusading spirit had finally died out and the Holy Land definitely lost, the knights returned home, no longer needed, formidable, hateful. They had accomplished their work. Now their wealth and pride only tended to sow fear and hatred.

Due to the fierce spirit of rivalry that had developed between the Templars and Hospitallers several attempts were made, but in vain, to bring about their amalgamation so as to put an end to this rivalry - one attempt
was made in 1293 by Pope Nicholas IV.

With the end of the wars in the Orient the Templars streamed home bringing their vast riches. To France alone they brought 150,000 gold florins and ten mules' load of silver. Then too, they possessed probably the best fighting corps in whole France. Was not this sufficient to make the king reflect? What was this powerful order going to do in the midst of peace with its military organization and wealth? Had the Templars and Hospitallers been on friendly enough terms to join forces, no monarch on earth would have been strong enough to defy them. An easy matter it would have been to create a kingdom for themselves had they entertained such a desire. There was no state in which they did not possess fortresses and they were allied with the noblest families of France.

Philip IV, that unscrupulous monarch, had no reason, of a public kind, to consider the Templars his enemies. True though it may be that a member of the House of France, Robert de Brienne, had been slain by them at Athens, and that they had refused to contribute towards the ransom of St. Louis. Philip, however, complained that they had given him only a merely qualified support on his appeal to the council against Boniface VIII, but this did not justify him in considering them his enemies. It is true the order was a strong one and conscious of its strength. The English Templars had dared to say to Henry III, "You shall be king as long as you are just," a saying which in their mouths was a threat. All this set Philip-le-Bel thinking. Personally, without a doubt, Philip did have a grudge against them. He had sought admission into the order and had been rejected, this was a humiliating fact to face. He also owed them money that he had borrowed on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter, Isabella, as well as loans made him at other times.
For some time Philip had cherished the idea of bringing the Templars and Hospitallers under the control of the French crown by amalgamating them into one order. Through the "Knights of Jerusalem", of which the grand master was always to be a prince of the royal house of France, he hoped to become the real head of the order with the title of king of Jerusalem, but in this cherished plan he only met defeat due to the rivalry existing between the orders. Philip probably realized then that the only means left to him to subjugate the order would be its utter destruction, and several years prior to 1306 this thought occupied much of his time, for he had to secure a legitimate and just cause of complaint on which to base his action.

The beginning of the fourteenth century found the king in acute pecuniary distress, and so strong the sentiment of the people against taxation that he dared not levy an additional tax, and even on one occasion he was forced to repeal one already existing. Some sweeping confiscation seemed the only means of extricating himself from this desperate state of affairs.

The Jews having been expelled some time before, there was no existing body in France at the time on which the blow could more plausibly fall than on that of the Temple, for Philip well knew that the order would not be defended by the clergy, for the enmity of the priests and monks had been incurred almost from the beginning of its existence because of the fact that the Templars came directly under the jurisdiction of the pope, and in no case could the lower church officials interfere, also at that particular time it was extremely doubtful whether the nobles would defend it.

The Templars had ample warning of the attempts being made in regard to their annihilation. But their pride destroyed them; they never once
seriously thought that the project would really be executed. And, in fact, the king did hesitate. He had at first tried indirect means, for instance, he had sought admission into the order. Had he been received he would probably have had himself made grand master, as Ferdinand, the Catholic, did of the military orders of Spain. There is no doubt but that he would have employed the revenues of the Temple for his own use, and thus the existence of the order would have been preserved.

While the Templars were thus proudly resisting all concessions, sinister rumors about them were gaining strength—partly, indeed, owing to their own imprudence. A Templar told Raoul de Presles, one of the most seriously disposed men of the times, "that in the chapter-general of the order there was one thing so secret, that if for his misfortune any one saw it, were it the king of France, no fear of tortures would prevent those forming the chapter from putting him to death". It has been said that once a newly-admitted Templar lodged a protest against the form of admission used by the order, this protest was lodged with the judge of the bishop's court of Paris. On another occasion a knight sought absolution from the order from a Franciscan friar, who enjoined him to fast every Friday for a year, without his shirt, as a way of penance. It is said of a third Templar who belonged to the household of the pope, that "he confessed to him all the evil he had witnessed in his order, in the presence of one of his cousins, a cardinal, who took down his deposition in writing on the spot". (Dupuy)

With the slightest whisper of the charges against the Templars, Philip at once set to work. He charged twelve men with the duty of seeking admittance into the order so as to act as his personal spies in reporting whether or not these rumors had any foundation. While these spies were at work trying to bring to light some charge on which the king
might be justified in the persecution of the order, Philip himself did not fail to use all his wiles and cunning — of which he possessed an abundant supply — to beguile the knights into believing that he was a staunch supporter and advocate of their principles.

While this secret work was being carried on ominous reports were spread abroad concerning the terrible prisons into which the masters of the order flung refractory members. One of the deposed knights even went so far as to say "that an uncle of his had entered the order healthy and light hearted, with dogs and falcons, and that in three days he was a corpse".

Such reports as these were eagerly swallowed by the ignorant and superstitious masses, it was like bread to their hungering mouths. The populace thought the order too wealthy and charged it with not contributing alms more liberally.

In 1306, during an uprising in Paris over certain obnoxious taxes that had just been levied, the king was compelled to take refuge in the Temple, behind whose gloomy walls he found ample protection against the angry mob outside. Had Philip sought refuge elsewhere other than within those formidable walls, probably the history of the Templars would read quite differently than it does to-day. Had he fallen into the hands of the angry populace, he no doubt, would never have lived to see the destruction that he so cunningly wrought. Then there is another question to be considered. If Philip had never entered the Temple and seen its vast treasures stored there, it is likely that he would not have acted so hastily in issuing the decrees that ended in the utter ruin of the order. This, however, is a debatable question.

Jacques de Molay, the grand master of the order, residing at Cyprus, was summoned by the pope and Philip to appear in France in 1306. To France
he came bringing with him the treasure that had been amassed in Cyprus. He had not the slightest notion that he was being summoned back to his native land to have ignominy and disgrace heaped upon him. He was beguiled into believing that there was some movement on foot concerning an expedition into the Holy Land. He walked blindly into the net set to entrap him, as the Protestants did at the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

Things were ripe for the affair. Philip had succeeded in 1305 in placing on the papal throne Clement V, a miserable creation of his own; then, too, he possessed in his minister, Guillaume de Nogaret, and the officers of the Inquisition, creatures willing to stop at nothing, if in so doing they might gain the king's pleasure.

That which probably made the deepest impression on the minds of men was the strange rumor that was being circulated abroad of an idol that the templars worshipped. The rumors were various. According to some it was a head with a beard, according to others it was a head with three faces, the eyes of which were said to glitter and sparkle. Still others claimed it was a human skull that was worshipped, while some maintained that it was a black cat.

Whether there be the slightest atom of truth or not in these strange reports, Philip-le-Bel certainly lost no opportunity in using them as means to secure his cherished end — namely their downfall.

For several months after Jacques de Molay was recalled to France he was loaded with favors, he was even asked to stand as godfather to one of Philip's children, and was pall-bearer at the burial of the king's sister-in-law. De Molay and several of the highest officials of the order were simply " lulled to sleep" and led blindly forward to their own destruction.

At a meeting in Poitiers in 1307, arranged between Philip and pope
Clement V to discuss some very important questions on which they had been at odds for some time, one of the foremost requests made by Philip of the pope was that of the abolition of the order of Templars. Clement could see nothing to be gained by such a step and also realized he had no legitimate grounds for such action. He managed, however, to keep out of the affair for the time being by saying that the matter could only be decided in a general council. The pope and Philip finally reached an agreement by which there was provision made to call a general council in Vienne in October, 1311.

No doubt Clement thought that matters would rest quietly until the meeting to be held in Vienne, but in this he probably failed to recognize the fact that he was dealing with a man who did not respect the papal authority any too much. At any rate he was not dealing with one who would so easily cast aside his most ardent wish for any length of time. Clement was made to believe, however, that Philip was entirely satisfied to let matters drift until after the council met. If Clement truly trusted Philip to live up to his side of the agreement, it must be said that his faith in the promises of mankind was sadly shaken a few months later when Philip of his own accord undertook to destroy the order without any real justification whatsoever.

Philip cared little about obtaining the sanction of the pope. Clement owed the papal crown to him. He had openly defied pope Boniface VIII in 1302 and even audaciously ordered his arrest. So on October 13, 1307, he issued a decree that all the leading Templars were to be arrested and thrown into prison.

At that particular time all France was under the jurisdiction of the Inquisition, and the Inquisition could act in such matters without consulting the pope. Fate played into the hands of Philip in more ways than one;
the grand inquisitor of France was Philip's confessor and creature, thus a way was opened for the king to carry out his plans by apparently legal means. Two degraded Templars openly denounced the order. Philip had already made an inquiry and on the strength of the so called revelations of a few degraded members, on September 14, 1307, issued writs to his bailiffs and seneschals throughout France directing them to make preparation for the arrest of the members on October 13, and to subject them to the most vigorous examination. It was made to appear that the king did this at the request of the ecclesiastical inquisitors, but in reality it was done without their cooperation.

Paris has been doomed time and again, throughout her history, to be the scene of many dark and gloomy tragedies, so on the morning of October 13, 1307, just as dawn was breaking over the city, the houses of the Templars were invaded by the officers of the king, and the Templars were arrested and cast into prison. The grand master of the order, Jacques de Molay, was among the one hundred and forty arrested in Paris on that particular day. Sixty were arrested at Beaucaire on the same day, as well as a host of others throughout the kingdom.

On the day of the arrest the citizens of the city were summoned to the royal garden in the city, and there monks presented to them the charges brought against the order.

There was practically no resistance to the arrests. The formidable fortresses of the Templars were not in a state of defense, and they had not suspected Philip's intentions, although they had heard of the rumor circulated about them.

In a royal letter published throughout France, Philip stated the main charges brought against the order. The following is taken from a part
of the letter: "A bitter thing, a deplorable thing, a thing horrible to think of, terrible to hear: a thing execrable for wickedness, detestable for infamy - a mind endowed with reason, compassionates and suffers in its compassion when beholding a nature which exiles itself beyond the bounds of nature, which forgets its principle, which does not recognize its dignity, which, prodigal itself, makes itself like unto the senseless brutes - What do I say? Which exceeds the brutality of the brutes themselves!" (Michelet)

When the news of what the king had done reached the pope, great was his wrath and indignation. He immediately issued a bull in which he suspended the powers of the ordinary judges, of the archbishops and bishops, and even those of the inquisitors. In issuing this bull Clement forgot for the time being his ordinary servility and his dependent and precarious position in the heart of the king's domains. He, nevertheless, claimed that he alone had the right to deal with the Templars and their wealth. The king's answer to this decree was rather brusque. He wrote Clement "that God detests the lukewarm, that to make delays of the kind is to connive at the crimes of the accused, that the pope ought rather to excite the zeal of the bishops. It would be a serious wrong to the prelates to deprive them of the ministry which they hold from God. They have not deserved this insult; they will not support it; the king could not allow it without violating his oath. Holy father, what sacrilegious wretch will dare to counsel you to despise those whom Jesus Christ sends - or rather, Jesus himself? If the inquisitors are suspended from their functions, the business will never be brought to an end. The king has not taken it in hand as an accuser, but as a champion of the faith and defender of the church, for whom he is accountable to God." (Dupuy)

Philip promised, however, to turn over the accused ones to the pope's commissioners and to consecrate their wealth to the recovery of the
Holy Land; but it was apparent that he had no intention whatsoever of keeping either of these promises. Of course, Philip thought by making these promises that he would induce the pope to remove the suspension from the bishops and inquisitors.

Philip did not rely on these means to any great extent, and hurriedly made preparation for the trial of the Templars before Clement could have time to carry out the suspension of the inquisitorial powers, in case he would decide not to retract the suspension. Consequently one hundred and forty Templars were quickly brought to trial, and by means of the most barbarous tortures confessions were obtained from them. Out of one hundred and forty examined in Paris within one month, one hundred and twenty-three confessed having committed the crimes with which they had been charged. Quite a number confessed that they had spit on the cross or near it. It is said that thirty-six died under the process of torture, and that many confessed being guilty of the crimes from fear of the terrible torture that they knew they would have to undergo. The most damming confession was that of the grand master, he claimed that he had been guilty of denying Christ and spitting on the cross. It is thought that his confession was partly due to fear of torture, and partly to secure the withdrawal of a specific charge of unnatural crime brought against him by the Templar, Guillaume de Glac.

Although Clement entered an energetic protest against the trial and had suspended the powers of the bishops and inquisitors, the crime had been confessed and remained the irrevocable basis for the entire following proceedings.

When news of the proceedings reached the pope he immediately sent two cardinals to Chinon to inquire of the leading Templars of that district whether all he had heard was true. The Templars were persuaded by the
cardinals to acknowledge that the charges were true. This was reported to Clement, and he immediately absolved them, thinking that by so doing he would save them.

In the beginning of 1308 Philip had the king of Naples arrest all the Templars in Provence. During all this time Philip had been proceeding without the consent of the pope, for Clement had not yet restored to the bishops and the grand inquisitor their powers. Finally the king decided that if Clement would not give his approval that he would force him to do so, therefore, Philip called the nation to his aid in order to force the hand of the pope, as he had called it together to combat Boniface VIII in 1302. He convoked the Estates General at Tours in May, 1308. At this meeting Philip had himself presented to the nation as the defender of faith, and had the following discourse addressed to him - "The people of France earnestly supplicate their king to recall to mind that the princes of the sons of Israel, Moses, the friend of God, to whom the Lord spoke face to face, when he saw the apostacy of the worshippers of the golden calf, said, 'put every man his sword by his side - and slay every man his brother' - nor did he ask for the consent of his brother, Aaron, who was made high priest by God's own order - Wherefore, then, should not the most Christian king proceed in like manner, even against all the clergy, should they err similarly, or support those who err?" (Michelet)

Moreover, Philip succeeded as a result of this discourse in having twenty-six princes and lords pledging themselves to appear as accusers of the Templars before the pope and king. Seventy-two Templars also were chosen and specially coached beforehand to appear as accusers of the order. Among those of high rank who were to act as accusers were the dukes of Burgundy and Brittany, the counts of Flanders, Nevers, and Auvergne, and the viscount of Narbonne.
With such an escort as this the king boldly set out to Poitiers where the pope was residing at that time. Philip was in no mood to listen to any compromise whatsoever, for a course of rigor was absolutely necessary if he were to retain the wealth of the order.

When Clement learned the true reason of Philip's mission he tried to flee from the city of Poitiers, and doubtless would have managed to slip away unmolested but for the fact that the desire to carry with him his money-bags was so strong that he took time to collect his baggage, and when he appeared at the city gates with mules laden with wealth, he was recognized and kept as a prisoner by order of the king. He made other attempts to leave the city, but each time with no more success than the first. Finally he yielded to the power of the merciless king, and on July 5, 1308, he issued a proclamation in which he returned to the grand inquisitor and bishops their legal powers, and instructed them to proceed in the cases of the Templars according to the manner the law required; that is by the common law. August 12 he named commissioners for the purpose of conducting the trials. The Archbishop of Canterbury was appointed commissioner of England, the Archbishops of Ments, Cologne, and Treves for Germany. Judgment was to be pronounced at the end of two years at a general council to be held in Vienne.

The pope only reserved for himself the privilege of the judgment of the grand master and the dignitaries of the order.

Philip, however, did not send the grand master and other officials to the pope as he had promised, although the pope protested against this violence Philip continued to keep them as prisoners.

Clement V had not yielded completely to the wishes of the king — he did not pronounce the suppression of the order.
November, 1309, the grand master was brought before the pontifical commission for trial. At first it was apparent that he was inclined to defend the order, in fact, he stated that it was his duty to defend the order which had so highly honored him. The king's commissioners realized if he were allowed to continue in this manner that it would greatly strengthen the defense and undoubtedly compromise the king, consequently they advised him to reconsider the matter. Flaisan, an agent of the king, was present at the hearing and conferred with Jacques de Molay on the subject. What took place between the two is not known exactly, but when De Molay appeared before the commissioners again a few days later he had altered his opinions entirely, he was a changed man. When he was again asked if he wished to defend the order he answered in the negative, but he did make three statements in regard to the order - First, that in no churches was divine service more honorably performed than in those of the Templars. Secondly, that he knew no religion in which greater alms were bestowed than in that of the Temple. Lastly, that so far as he knew, no manner of people had shed more blood for the Christian faith or were more feared by the infidels.

In spite of the desertion of the grand master and the threats of the agents of the king, there were still five hundred and forty-six Templars who were willing to maintain that the order was without stain, and that all its members, from the very beginning to the present time, had been faithful to their primitive rules. March 23, 1310, these Templars appeared before the commissioners in the garden of the bishop's palace in Paris. Great was their indignation when the indictments were read to them, first in Latin, then in French. It was requested that they appoint two to speak for them, for all were eager and clamoring to defend the order, which resulted in a perfect babel. Accordingly they appointed Raynand de Pruin and Pierre de
Boulogne to act as their spokesmen.

The prisoners had been kept in the Temple, in the church of St. Martin-des-Champs, in the Mansion of the Count of Savoy, and in several other private homes. To these places of abode the commissioners sent men to take down accounts of all the Templars who undertook to defend the order. That the most horrible tortures were used in order to compel them to acknowledge the guilt of the order is evidenced by the fact that the prisoners appeared before the commission, which had its sittings in the bishop's palace at Paris, with emaciated countenances and hideous marks on their bodies from the tortures that they had undergone. It is claimed that one of them, Humbert Dupuy, had been tortured three times, and had been kept for thirty-six weeks in a pit of an infectious tower on bread and water. Some were tortured by fire until the bones were exposed. (Michelet)

These were cruel sights indeed, and as the sight of these horrors spread it turned public opinion against the accusers and towards the unhappy victims.

Philip, however, had done too much and gone too far to withdraw and braved everything to the end. The commissioners of the pope did not seem any too enthusiastic over their task, yet they dared not weaken in their duty. One Templar had been put to torture simply to make him state the amount of treasure that had been brought from the Holy Land.

Philip, no doubt, had reason to be alarmed at having gone too far in the proceedings. When he remembered that most of the prominent Templars that had been arrested or tortured belonged to the noblest families of France, what would be the consequences should these suddenly turn against him? Then too, the decision of the councils of other European countries had been favorable to the Templars. They had been declared innocent by most of these.
All these made Philip realize the necessity of hurrying the trial on to an end.

In May, 1310, the Archbishop of Sens convoked a provincial council in Paris, and many Templars were brought before it. He treated as heretics all those who had formerly confessed the guilt of the order, and who later retracted their confessions. The Templars called on the commissioners of the pope, but these did not possess enough real courage to put up a real fight, but they did request the council to suspend the judgment of fifty-four Templars who were to be publicly burned. If the council acted according to this request it would be acknowledging the superiority of the commission, and as the king's orders had been imperative they would be violating his wishes if he acted differently.

The Templars were sentenced on May 11. Those who had made confessions were set at liberty; those who had denied the charges were imprisoned for life, but those considered relapsed heretics were sentenced to die. The next day fifty-four were burned at the stake in a field near the Abbey Saint-Antoine, or where today stands the hospital Saint-Antoine, on the rue du Roubourg. Those unhappy men faced death bravely and protested their innocence to the last until the flames choked the last vestige of life from their bodies.

The destruction of the Templars was mercilessly conducted by all the provincial councils, and numbers of knights were sent to the stake throughout the French kingdom. Not only were steps taken in France for their suppression, but in practically all the Christian nations it was one of the most momentous questions of the day. In most places the order was suppressed as being useless or dangerous. In Lombardy and Tuscany the Templars were condemned, in Ravenna, Castile, and Bologna, however, they
were acquitted, but nowhere were they shown as little mercy as in France. The monarchs of the various nations either seized the wealth of the order for themselves, or bestowed it on other orders of the day. Everywhere the Templars themselves were treated with a certain amount of respect, the severest treatment any one of them received, outside of France, was imprisonment in monasteries, and in many cases the monasteries formerly belonged to the order.

By 1310 the pope had yielded absolutely to the king's will. This is thought by many to be due either to the fact that Philip had assigned to him a share of the spoils, or that he had been given the privilege of deciding the final judgment in the case of Pope Boniface VIII. At least a compromise between the pope and king had been reached. As a result of this change of mind on the side of the pope he complained of the mildness of punishment used by other princes of Europe in regard to the Templars, he even went so far as to reproach the kings of England, Castile, Aragon, and Portugal because they had not resorted to torture.

The general council of Vienne assembled on October 16, 1311. Two important questions were to be finally settled by this body, namely, those of Boniface VIII and the Templars. Over three hundred bishops were present at this meeting, and due to the fact that the inquiries held in different countries of Europe could not satisfactorily prove that the Templars as a body professed any heretical doctrines, it soon became evident that the majority of the bishops were somewhat inclined to be lenient with the order, and it is very doubtful whether they would have voted for its destruction. However that may be, this lukewarmness of the council gave the pope and king some uneasiness, and when a discussion arose as to whether the Templars should be heard in their own defense Clement adjourned the meeting in order to avoid compliance.
In November, 1311, nine Templars presented themselves before the assembly of bishops and bravely offered to undertake the defense of the order, they declared that there were between fifteen hundred and two thousand brethren in and around the city of Lyon who were ready to come to their support. The pope became greatly alarmed at this inclination on the side of the Templars, and he immediately had the nine representatives thrown into prison and again adjourned the assembly. From that time on he feared to re-assemble the council and, therefore, kept the bishops idle the whole winter, hoping to tire them out, and trying to win them over one by one.

In the spring of 1312 the question was again resumed. Most of the bishops still protested that they could not pass judgment until the Templars were first heard. Clement also used the power he possessed to win them over one by one, finally on March 23, 1312, at a secret meeting made up of the most docile bishops and a few cardinals, he pronounced the abolition of the order of the Temple, and it was officially proclaimed on April 3, 1312, in the presence of the king and council, and not a soul protested, although the council as a whole had not been consulted. (Guizot)

The pope reserved for himself the judgment of the chiefs of the Templars, and the others were handed over to the provincial councils for judgment.

For more than six years Jacques de Molay and three other principal dignitaries of the order had been kept in the prisons of the king, finally in March, 1314, they were brought from their prisons to a platform erected in front of Notre Dame de Paris for the reading of their sentence. They had already previously declared their guilt, and so it was believed that the decree of life imprisonment was the fate that awaited them, but much to the astonishment of all present, at that supreme moment the grand master
recovered his courage and openly proclaimed the innocence of the Templars and the falsity of his own alleged confession, to atone for the deplorable moment of weakness when he had acknowledged the crimes with which the order was accused. He declared that he was ready to sacrifice his life to defend the Temple. The master of Normandy likewise declared the innocence of the order. The cardinals committed them to the custody of the provost of Paris to await further deliberations the next day.

When the news of the proceedings reached Philip, he, after communicating with the counsellors, declared them guilty of being relapsed heretics, and at nightfall of that same day, on the Isle of Juifs, in the Seine, between the royal garden and the church of the hermit brothers of St. Augustin, he had them slowly roasted to death. The firmness and resolution with which they met death and their final denials struck the multitude, gathered to witness the horrible spectacle, with admiration. The two other Templars were sentenced to life imprisonment.

A poet chronicler, Godfrey of Paris, who was a witness of the scene mentioned above, thus describes it, "the grand master, seeing the fire prepared, stripped himself briskly, he bared himself to his shirt, light-heartedly and with a good grace, without a whit of trembling, though he was dragged and shaken mightily. They took hold of him to tie him to the stake and were binding his hands with a cord, but he said to them, 'Sirs, suffer me to fold my hands awhile, and make my prayer to God, for verily it is time. I am presently to die, but wrongfully, God knows. Wherefore war will come, ere long, to those who condemn us without a cause. God will avenge our death.'" (Guizot)

It seems that the grand master spoke with the tongue of a prophet when within that same year both the pope and king were summoned to appear
before the great tribunal of God. Many remembered the dying words of
Jacques de Molay and said that it was indeed a summons fulfilled.

Thus, the order which was the most expressive type of symbolical
genius of the Middle Ages, met its tragic death. The true cause of its
ruin, the one that set all the other orders and the church against it,
was none other than the charge of having denied Christ and spitting on
the cross. Whether this denial was only symbolical of the denial of St.
Peter, as many of the Templars confessed it was, or whether there was
some deeper significance behind this denial, the truth remains that in
France there was not left, outside of the order, a single defender any­
where. This serious charge had kept all aloof from them. Therefore,
the order that had such a noble beginning and which rendered such a
wonderful service to Christendom during the early crusades met an un­
timely death, especially in France, thanks to the efforts of two
unscrupulous men - Philip-le-Bel and Clement V.