



**THE PAPAL BULL
"VOX IN EXCELSO"**

By Philip Grammata

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*Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name, give the glory ,
for your dignity, and truth.*

(Salm 115)

NON NOBIS, DOMINE, NON NOBIS, SED NOMINI TUO DA GLORIAM

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The Council of Vienne

The *affair* of the dissolution of the Order of the Temple was at the centre of negotiations between Pope Clement V and King Philip IV of France, which, from 26th May to 24th June 1308, lived in Poitiers, the temporary See of the Papal Court, to induce the Pope to abolish the Order of the Temple.



The arrest of Jacques de Molay

Evidently under pressure by the king and his trusted minister William de Plaisians¹, on 12th August next, during a consistory, the pope announced that, four days before, he had signed (on 8th August 1308) a Bull ("*Faciens misericordiam*") with which all the Templars kept in custody in France, including the leaders of the Order, were assembled before the general

1 The negotiations were led by William de Plaisians and not by the Keeper of the seals William de Nogaret because, the latter was excommunicated for having caused offense to Boniface VIII (slap of Anagni), and so he could not appear before the pope.

council that would take place, starting from 1st October 1310, in Vienne, in Dauphiné, to discuss important issues related to the Order itself.

By this act, and the other bulls "*Faciens misericordiam*" and "*Regnans in coelis*", both dated 12 August 1308², the pope also ordered the start of diocesan inquiries to judge the individual Templars held in the territories of competence and the establishment of a pontifical commission that would investigate the Order as a whole. The commission was formally established in early 1309, it was composed of eight prelates³ whose names were imposed by the king, and it was chaired by Gilles Aicelin, archbishop of Narbonne, known for the aversion felt towards the Templars.



Pope Clement V

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- 2 The two bulls bear the date of 12th August 1308 but, at the end of the respective texts, it is stated that the leaders of the Order were acquitted of heresy and therefore, from that moment no one could question them without the permission of the pope. Since the delegates of the pope acquitted the high dignitaries of the Order imprisoned in the fortress of Chinon on 20th August 1308, it is clear that the two bulls were purposely backdated, probably to give the impression that they had been taken into account in the consistory of 12th August 1312.
 - 3 The pontifical commission was composed of: Gille Aicelin, archbishop of Narbonne, who presided; William Durant, bishop of Mende; William Bonnet, bishop of Bayeux; Renaud de la Porte, bishop of Limoges; Matthew of Naples, apostolic notary; Jean de Montlaur, archdeacon of Maguelonne, John of Mantua, archdeacon of Trento, John Agarni, provost of the church of Aix.

The final acts of the diocesan inquiries, those of the Pontifical Commission and those of similar commissions established in other states where there were Templars, were to be sent to the Holy See, that would be submitted them to the council to be held in Vienna.

Since the inquiries were going slowly (the pontifical commission began its first session on 8th August 1309, in the monastery of Sainte-Geneviève in Paris), on 4th April 1310, the pope issued the bull "*Alma mater*", with which the beginning of the council was deferred for one year.



Vienne Cathedral

On 5th May 1311 the French Pontifical Commission stopped works and their acts were sent to the Papal Court, where in the meantime continued to arrive even the pleadings of the diocesan commissions and those of the processes carried out by France.

Approaching the start date of the Council of Vienne, the pope took up residence at the priory of Grazean, for weeks he examined, along with some cardinals and some learned colleagues, procedural documents, of which he arranged the "*rubricae*" or "*summaries*" to be put at the disposal of the Council Fathers.

The "*summaries*", judging from that relating to proceedings British, are full of gossip and rumours; instead they do not contain the indignant refusals of accusations by the Templars brought to justice.

The council began its work on Saturday, 16th October 1311, in the cathedral of Vienne⁴, the papal city that was not part of the kingdom of France. The pope opened the first session with a solemn sermon, during which he pointed out the three issues that the council should have dealt with: the question of the Templars, the situation in the Holy Land and the reform of the Church.

According to the pope the council was to be ecumenical and therefore injunctions were sent to participate to 161 prelates, their suffrages and to the clergy of the Papal Court. The other prelates, if they wanted to, they could participate or to send their delegates. The kings of France, England, Portugal, of the Spanish kingdoms of Sicily, Hungary, Bohemia, Cyprus and Scandinavia were also invited. In fact, 20 cardinals, 4 patriarchs, about 100 between bishops and archbishops and some abbots and priors were present at the council. More than a third of the prelates did not appear in person, an attorney represented them; and 114 did not answer to the meeting. No ruler intervened in the council, except the king of France and his son Louis, King of Navarre, that attended the reading of the bull "*Vox in excelso*" on 3th April 1312.



**Jacques de Molay at the audience
with Clemente V before the arrest**

A question, which occupied for some time the activity of the council, was that relating to the defence of the Order. Someone, in fact, believed

4 In 1030 the county of Vienne was commissioned by the Emperor Conrad II to the Archbishop of Vienne. Therefore, the city fell into imperial territory even if the surrounding territory belonged to the kingdom of France.

that the Templars had the right to defend themselves, while others felt that the Order would go immediately suppressed on the basis of the evidence already acquired.

The Council Fathers were aware that they had received some simple summaries of pleadings and that the time available did not allow a close consultation on the original and integral verbal of the various processes. And yet, they granted the request of Clement V, who, to be able to exercise greater control over their guidelines (and possibly to guide their definitive choices), he asked to put in writing their views about the measures to be taken against the Order.

In this context, at the end of October 1311 seven Templars presented themselves in the cathedral of Vienna, offering to defend the Order and saying that there were from 1,500 to 2,000 brothers ready to support them around the city.



"Rubricae" of the Council Fathers.

Pope's only answer was to arrest and imprison the innocent Templars who, in answer to his call, had imprudently presented to defend the Order. The story, however, shook the council fathers and slowly they became convinced that it was right to recognize the Templars the right to defence within the council.

During and after the first session of the council the attitude of the pope indicates clearly that, in his heart, he had decided to abolish the Order of the Temple, although this was due to pressure from the royal court. And to

put in place his intentions he announced that, given the impossibility to discuss the issue of the Templars in the plenary, it was better to entrust the examination of evidence to a commission of prelates present at the council. The commission was formed and for several days its members, in Vienne Cathedral, examined the evidence and the "*summaries*" prepared by the pope.

Since it became clear that not even the newly established commission could achieve concrete results in the short term, the Pope proposed to the council to elect, from the members of the committee, a small group of prelates presided over by the patriarch of Aquileia, believing that, having to deal with a small number of people, it would be easier to convince them to accept the abolishment of the Order.

Meanwhile, the atmosphere grew more and more gloomy because a number of serious illnesses and deaths struck the council fathers. In fact the Cardinal of Albano and Cardinal Etienne de Suisy died, while "*the Cardinal of Sabina laid as if he were dead, with no hope of recovery*". The same thing happened to Cardinal Frèdol Berènger, "*but God saved him*", and there were even those who came to prophesy that not later than Easter ten cardinals and the pope in all likelihood would be dead⁵.

However he believed that the first session of the council could be concluded by 20th January 1312 with a final decision about the Templars, but he did not take into account the fact that day by day there was an increase of the number of council fathers, who leaned toward the creation of a new order instead of transferring the goods of the Templars to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

It was evident that Clement V was losing control of the council. This put the project at risk of suppression of the Order, which by now he had fully adhered, because the pressure of the king pushed him.

The Aragonese delegates, present at the Council, with their dispatch signalled that on 17th February they had received a delegation composed directed by Louis d'Evreux, the counts of Saint-Pol and Boulogne, the prime minister of King Enguerrand de Marigny, and the royal ministers William de Nogaret and William de Plaisians. For twelve days on end they had secret meetings with the pope, who was assisted by four cardinals, including the nephew Berènger Frèdol. Evidently, exerting a constant pressure on the Pope, the royal delegation agreed with the Pope about the

5 We learn from a letter that the Englishman Henry Ffykeis, procurator at the Papal Court, sent John Salmon to the Bishop of Norwich on 27th December 1311.

initiatives to be taken to abolish the Order and to transfer the goods to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

But Clement V continued to be uncertain about the decisions to be taken in order to obtain recognition of the right to defence to the Templars, to establish a new Order to which transfer the Templars' goods, to transfer the goods to the Order of the Hospitallers Knights Templar to be used for a new crusade and to recognition the instances of the Iberian Peninsula rulers, who demanded the transfer of the Templars' goods, falling within their territories, to their respective crowns, or to the Orders connected to them.



Philip IV by side with his sons and brothers

On 20th March, the pope made it know that he was still uncertain about the decisions to be taken against the Templars, but on the same day, as soon as Philip IV arrived in Vienne accompanied by the brothers Charles and Luis, his three sons, the representatives of the States-General of the city Lyon and a powerful armed retinue, his doubts vanished.

And so, after two days since the arrival of the king, Clement V summoned a secret consistory that was attended by members of the royal delegation and some of the cardinals of his confidence.

The same day, certainly with the active intervention of lawyers who were part of the royal delegation, it was prepared the text of the bull "*Vox in excelso*" which, in fact, bears the date of 22th March 1312, with which the Order of the Temple was abolished. Then you will know by this bull that four-fifths of those present at the consistory voted in favour of the abolition of the Order of the Temple.

The bubble was read publicly, and in a solemn way, on Monday, 3th April 1312 in the Vienne Cathedral on the occasion of the second session of the council. Walter of Hemingborough gives us the following description of the scene:

"The pontiff took place to pass judgment; at his side there were the king of France on the one hand and the king of Navarre with his son the other hand. A cleric stood up and he forbade all present, on pain of excommunication, to say a single word, except with the permission or at the invitation of the Pope".

By the anonymous follower of the "Chronicle of William of Nangis " we learn that, before having to read out the bull "*Vox in excelso*" to prevent anyone from interfering with the reading, the pope addressed to council fathers in the words of the psalms "*The ungodly shall not participate in the judgment nor sinners in the assembly of the just.*"

Imposing silence to the Council fathers during the reading of the bull, the pope had certainly achieved the goal of abolishing the Order without condemning it, but he was falling back on his person all the responsibility of the measure, even if the text bears the words "*sacro concilio approbante*", meaning "*with the approval of the sacred council*".

To complete the work of abolishment of the Order, on 2nd May, Clement V issued the bull "*Ad Christi providam vicarii*", with which he ruled that the goods of the Order, which only nominally had been made available to the Apostolic See, they would be transferred to the Hospitallers, which they would have used for the defence of the faith in the Holy Land.

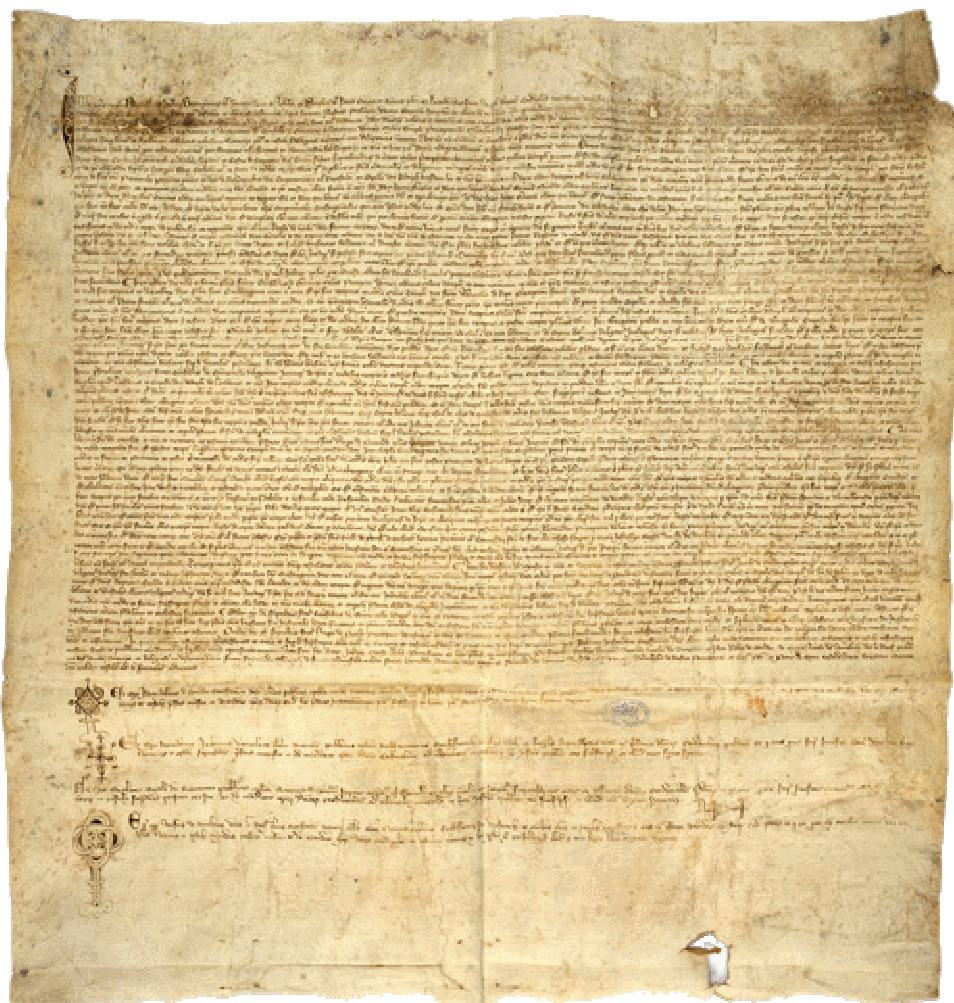
Finally, on 16th May 1312 the bull "*Nuper in general*" was issued; with this bull it was confirmed the transfer of the Templar's goods to the Hospitallers Knights. This was arranged with the bull "*Ad providam Christi vicarii*", but it should be noted, except for those that fall out of the realm of France and those who are in the kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, Portugal and Majorca. The pope defers them to the apostolic See, pending a future decision on their use for the benefit of the Holy Land.

The text of the bull

The text of the papal bull begins by quoting a number of biblical references that are used to create the atmosphere of loss occasioned by criminal knowledge of the events attributed to the Templars. Then it lists the horrendous crimes attributed to the members of the Order, it is stated in

the document, they have been brought to the attention of the pope not only on the occasion of his elevation to the papacy, but also later, when he was crowned in Lyon.

They are also enumerated all the events that characterized the entire prosecution that followed the arrest of the Templars, starting from the interrogation where 72 of them were subjected in Poitiers right from the pope, to the story of Chinon and the relative absolution of heresy given to dignitaries of the Order. However, from the confessions acquired, all made in writing and confirmed by the parties, the pope concluded that the dignitaries of the Temple had severely missed.



The parchment of Chinon

Then the document passes in review the problems that have characterized the work of the council, including those caused by the inability to examine the numerous pleadings in the plenary assembly and the consequent decision to entrust the examination and evaluation of the acts to a committee of the council fathers elected by the council itself

representing all the states first and, subsequently, to a small group of members of that committee, chaired by the patriarch of Aquileia.

Reconstructed the chronology of events, the final blow settles resorting to absurd claims based on formal, legal and administrative contradictions, that were illogical even for the time.

In fact, it is stated that, as a result of the bad reputation acquired by the Order, no person would be more willing to enter and the postponement of any decision would have caused serious damage to the faith and the Holy Land, although they can not declare the Order heretic on the basis of the processes carried out (although from the statements said, each friar had committed such a crime), it was decided also to abolish the Order, " ... *not with a final judgment, but with measure or disposals of the Apostolic See,*, *with the approval of the sacred council, with perpetual and definitive regulation, ..* ".

So the order is cancelled not for ascertained guilt of its members, but for the bad reputation acquired in the course of the processes and for the confessions made by the individual friars; no matter whether these confessions, by express admission of the Inquisitor of France, William Imbert, have been extracted under torture.

Abolition or suspension?

There are still those who argue that the Order has been suspended and is not abolished. The controversy, which was activated in the nineteenth century, always finds new supporters. Actually the Order has been deleted, as it can be read in the passage of the bull "*Vox in excelso*" which is shown below.

"Recalling that in other cases, though without fault of the friars, the Roman church sometimes put an end to other orders of far greater importance for reasons incomparably more modest than those mentioned, with bitterness and pain, not with a final judgment, but with a measure or apostolic available, we, with the consent of the sacred council, we abolish the Templars order with perpetual and definitive regulation, and we abolish its rule, its dress and its name, and we subject to perpetual ban, strictly forbidding anyone to enter that order, to receive and bring the dress and present themselves as Templar. If anyone does the opposite, he will incur the sentence of excommunication immediately".

In the original Latin text, in fact, it is used the term "*tollimus*", which translated into English it means: *we abolish, we eliminate, and we destroy*.

This verb was also used in subsequent bulls like "*Ad providam Christi vicarii*" and "*Considerantes Dudum*" and therefore, since the meaning of the term used in the bull "*Vox in excelso*" leaves no doubt about the will of the Pope, it is legitimate to say that the Order was abolished and not suspended.

It is worth taking note of the contents of two successive passages of the papal bulls in which it was deemed appropriate to point out and remember what has already been placed with the bull "*Vox in excelso*" about the abolition of the Order.

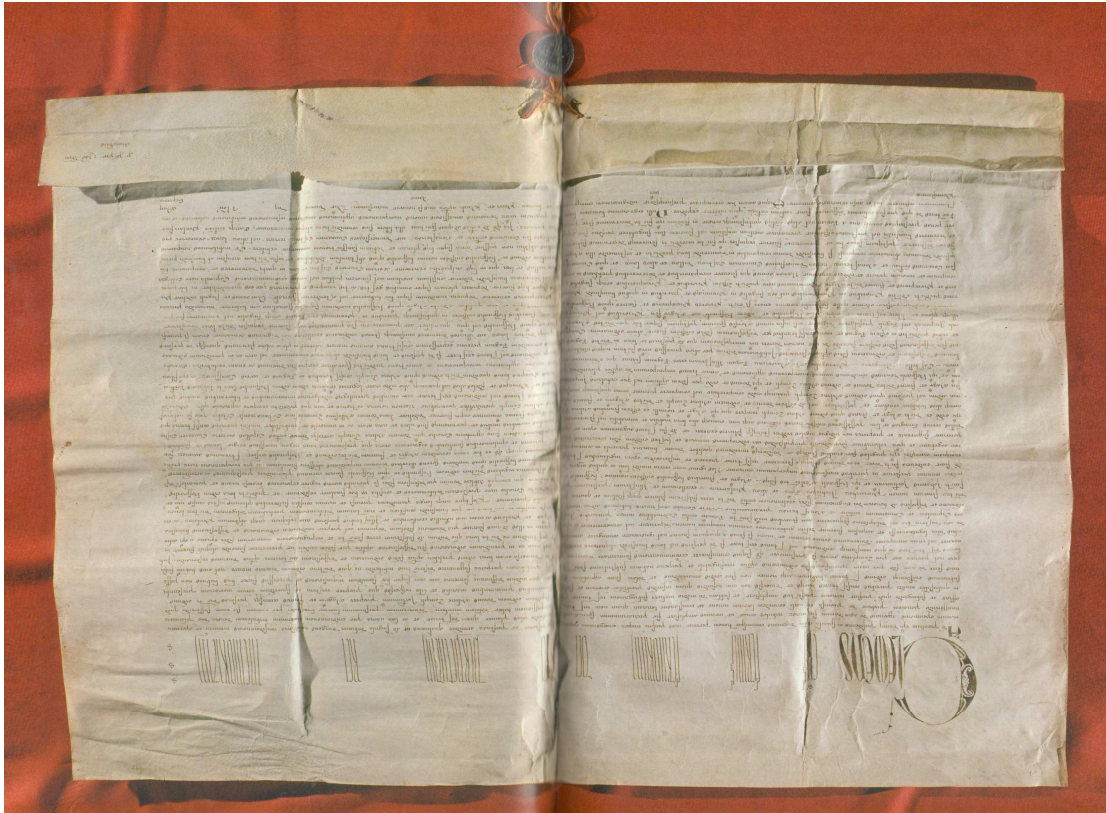
"Ad providam Christi vicarii":

".....with the approval of this sacred Council, we have recently abolished, not without bitterness and pain of our heart, the order of the house of the Militia of the Temple of Jerusalem, because of his master, monks and other people of that order, which, in every part of the world, are guilty of many different mistakes and sins, we do not say heinous, but, alas, unmentionable, wickedness, blemishes and ignominy, that in this letter we want to keep quiet because they are a sad and dirty memory; and we have also abolished the state, the dress, and the name of the same order. This didn't happen by means of a final judgment, because we cannot pronounce it legally on the basis of investigations and trials conducted against them, but by measure or apostolic disposal, with absolute and perpetual value. We also banned so strictly that someone, in the future, enters into such an order, he takes and wears the suit, and intends to live as Templar"

"Considerantes dudum":

"....and considering many other good reasons and causes which have led our hearts to this decision, which is discussed in the relevant process, albeit with great bitterness and pain of our heart, not by final judgment, that we could not legally issue on the current status of the investigation and the aforementioned processes, but in the process of administrative decision by the apostolic See, with the consent of the saint council, we have suppressed, abolished, removed and subjected to perpetual

prohibition what was already the order of the Temple, its status, dress and name, reserving to the Apostolic decision about the persons and property of the order, without intention, however, to renounce with this, as we have already ordered other times the processes made or to be made by the diocesan bishops and provincial councils against individuals or friars of that order, ... ".



The Bull “*Ad providam Christi vicariū*”

Excommunication

With the Bull “*Vox in excelso*” the Order was suppressed, but it was not sentenced nor excommunicated. The excommunication, referred to in the text of the bull, means imposed to those who, after the suppression, had violated the papal ban to enter the Order, to receive and wear the dress and present themselves as Templar.

But, ironically, after only seven years after the abolition of the Order, this prohibition was violated by the successor of Clement V, John XXII who, with the Bull “*Ad ea ex quibus*” of 14th March 1319, authorized the king of Portugal to found in his kingdom the Order of the Knights of Christ, in whom flowed all the Templars on Portuguese territory; they were imposed the Benedictine rule of Calatrava (very similar to the Latin rule of the Templars approved by the Council of Troyes in 1129), its dress, symbols, privileges and assets that once belonged to the Templars. In fact,

the Order of Templar was allowed to rebirthon Portuguese land, thus also the excommunication with the bull "*Vox in excelso*" was cancelled automatically.

In any case, in more recent times, on 17th August 1893, by decree of the Holy Office, approved by Pope Leo XIII, Catholics were forbiddento be part of the *Ordo Indipendens Bonorum Templariorum* because it was of Masonic origin. This decree was abolished by the subsequent decree issued by Pope Paul VI in Congress held on 15th July 1965: "*Waiting for the current circumstances of the Association, the Holy Office does not insist on the prohibition earlier givento Catholics to join the Order*".

Legal illegitimacy of the abolition

The dogmatic bull, and therefore definitive, "*Dignum esse conspicimus*" promulgated by Pope Clement IV on 8th June 1265, it forbade all ecclesiastics to pronounce each and every sentence of excommunication or interdiction against members of the Order of the Temple, better known as "*Ordo pauperes commilitones Christi templique Salomonici*".

With the bull "*Vox in excelso*", the Pope, could not repeal a dogmatic bull what was the "*Dignum esse conspicimus*".

Maybe he could make it through ecumenical council, but from what we know, the Council of Vienne is not true ecumenical because of the low participation of prelates and representatives of Christianity, and in any case the council has not rated the bull "*Vox in excelso*", indeed the Council fathers were forbidden to speak. Instead as the same bull says:

" ... *notwith a final judgment, but with a measure or apostolic provision, with the approval of the sacred council, we abolish the order of the Knights Templar with definitive and perpetual standard...*", it is due entirely to the sole will of the Pope and not the council.

But all the legal action, which led to the suppression of the Order, is full of a long series of unlawfulness. In fact:

- The king could not issue, as he did on 14th September 1307, warrants of arrest of the French Templars on charges of heresy, because it was not state jurisdiction but it was church jurisdiction;
- If the Templars were accused of heresy, the royal officials could not question them immediately after their arrest (which, however, they did), but they had to bring them to church, and throughtit, to the tribunals of the Inquisition;

- The king could not sequester and put under royal protection Templars' property (fulfilment that instead is provided in the operational arrangements that accompanied each warrant of arrest), because they belonged to a religious Order ;
- William de Nogaret, already excommunicated for the facts of Anagni, could not interrogate Templar leaders personally on the affairs of the church;



Philip IV assists the burning of the Templars

- William Imbert, great inquisitor of France and confessor of the king, could not initiate judicial investigations and interrogate and torture the Templars without the express permission of the pope, as the Order of the Temple, since 1139, had been placed under the direct and exclusive authority of the pope;
- The king could not continue to hold prisoners the Templars after that, in the month of August 1308, the pope had issued a number of measures with which the investigations on individual Templars relied to the diocesan ecclesiastical courts, and those on the Order in general relied to a pontifical commission composed by eight prelates;
- The pope could not enter exclusively prelates, of which it was known aversion for the Templars, in to the pontifical commission;
- The royal officials could not participate in the work of the Pontifical Commission, which took start in August 1309, (who intervened heavily during interrogation of the Templars) because the investigation was all inside the church, and for this reason the prisoners had been invited to tell the whole truth without fear of retaliation;

- Philippe de Marigny, the archbishop of Sens who was not part of the pontifical commission, could not condemn 54 Templars to the stake on a charge of relapsi before the work of the Pontifical Commission ended;
- The pope could not arrest the seven knights who, at the end of the month of October 1311, presented in the cathedral of Vienne to defend the Order, because they had adhered to a specific and peremptory call given by the pope himself with the bull "*Faciens misericordiam*";
- The pope could not impose silence to the Council fathers while reading the bull "*Vox in excelso*" because the council was initially convened exclusively to decide on the fate of the Order;
- The king could not subordinate the delivery of the Templars' goods to the Hospitallers to payment by the latter of a large sum that exceeded the value of the transferred assets;
- The commission of prelates, made after the council of Vienne, could not convict to life imprisonment the leaders of the Order without subjecting them to a real process;
- The sentencing to death of Jacques de Molay and Geoffrey de Charny, performed at dusk on 18th March 1314, could not be issued by the royal authority because the two men were still formally religious (their monastic vows were never put into discussion) and therefore they were subject to the authority of the church.

All these unlawfulness appear in a clear manner from the legal proceeding savailable to scholars today; they demonstrated that the Templars stood a proper politic process.

Conclusions

The text of the bull "*Vox in excelso*" is not contained in the "*Histoire dell'ordre militaire des Templiers*" by Pierre Dupuy⁶, which, in fact, gives the bull "*Ad providam Christi vicarii*" the suppression of the Order.

Strangely, the text of the bull "*Vox in excelso*" is not even listed in the "*Regestum Clementis Papae V*"⁷, which also contains almost all of the orders issued by Pope Clement V in the nine years of his pontificate.

6 Pierre Dupuy, born in Agen in 1582, died in Paris in 1651. He was a State Councillor and a Keeper of the Royal Library from 1545; later it became the National Library of Paris.

7 The "*Regestum Clementis Papae V*", literally "*The registers of Pope Clement V*", is a work in ten volumes commissioned by Pope Leo XIII and published with the

The Latin text of the bull, that is reported here, is taken from "*Conciliarum Oecumenicorum Decreta*"⁸. Given that the wording of the text is similar to that used for the preparation of administrative acts or verbal questioning of witnesses (which tends to leave little room for the elegance of the literary form), the English translation, that is proposed in the translation of the bubble, is not perfectly literal: in fact, it would result a little understandable text to the modern reader. In the translation of the bubble, we intended to give preference to the inherent sense of the content of the document itself, reported - as far as possible - in a consistent manner with the language and the modern forms of exposition.



The Temple of Paris

help of the Benedictine monks. It contains about 20,000 of bulls, privileges and recommendations penned by Clement V during his pontificate and preserved in the Vatican Library and the Vatican Secret Archives. The Vatican Press, between 1885 and 1892, published the volumes in Rome.

8 Dehoniane Editions, Bologna, 2002, p. 336 and seq.

Latin text of the bull "*Vox in excelso*"

Clemens episcopus servus servorum Dei, ad perpetuam rei memoriam. *Vox in excelso audita est lamentationis, fletus et luctus, quia venit tempus, tempus venit, quo per prophetam conqueritur Dominus: In furorem et indignationem mihi facta est domus haec. Auferetur de conspectu meo propter malitiam filiorum suorum, quia me ad iracundiam provocabant, vertentes ad me terga et non facies, ponentes idola sua in domo, in qua invocatum est nomen meum, ut polluerent ipsam. Aedificaverunt excelsa Baal, ut initiarent et consecrarent filios suos idolis atque daemoniis. Profunde peccaverunt, sicut in diebus Gabaa. Ad tam horrendum auditum tantumque horrorem vulgatae infamiae - quod quis umquam audivit tale? quis vidit huic simile? - corruui cum audirem, contristatus sum cum viderem; amaruit cor meum, tenebrae exstupefecerunt me. Vox enim populi de civitate, vox de templo, vox Domini reddentis retributionem inimicis suis. Exclamare propheta compellitur: Da eis Domine, da eis vulvam sine liberis et ubera arentia. Nequitiae eorum revelatae sunt propter malitiam ipsorum. De domo tua eice illos, et siccetur radix eorum, fructum nequaquam faciant, non ultra domus haec offendiculum amaritudinis et spina dolorem inferens. Non enim parva est fornicatio eius immolantis filios suos, dantis illos et consecrantis daemoniis et non Deo, diis quos ignorabant. Propterea in solitudinem et opprobrium, in maledictionem et in desertum erit domus haec, confusa nimis et adaequata pulveri, novissima deserta et invia et arens ab ira Domini, quem contempsit; non habitetur sed redigatur in solitudinem et omnes super eam stupeant et sibilent super universis plagis eius. Non enim propter locum gentem, sed propter gentem locum elegit Dominus. Ideo et ipse locus templi particeps factus est populi malorum, ipso Domino ad Salomonem aedificantem sibi templum, qui impletus est quasi flumine sapientia, apertissime praedicante: Si aversione aversi fueritis filii vestri, non sequentes et colentes me sed abeuntes et colentes deos alienos et adorantes ipsos, proiciam eos a facie mea et expellam de terra quam dedi eis, et templum quod sanctificavi nomine meo a facie mea proiciam, et erit in proverbium et in fabulam et populis in exemplum. Omnes transeuntes videntes stupebunt et sibilabunt, et dicent: quare sic fecit Dominus templo et domui huic? Et respondebunt: quia recesserunt a domino Deo suo, qui emit et redemit eos, et secuti sunt Baal et deos alienos et adoraverunt eos et coluerunt. Idcirco induxit Dominus super ipsos hoc malum grande. Sane*

dudum circa nostrae promotionis ad apicem summi pontificatus initium, etiam antequam Lugdunum, ubi recepimus nostrae coronationis insignia, veniremus, et post tam ibi quam alibi secreta quorundam nobis insinuatio intimavit, quod magister, praeceptores et alii fratres ordinis Militiae Templi Hierosolymitani et etiam ipse ordo, qui ad defensionem patrimonii domini nostri Iesu Christi fuerant in transmarinis partibus constituti et speciales fidei catholicae pugiles et Terrae sanctae praecipui defensores ipsius Terrae negotium gerere principaliter videbantur, propter quod sacrosancta Romana ecclesia eosdem fratres et ordinem specialis favoris plenitudine prosequens, eos adversus Christi hostes crucis armavit signaculo, multis exaltavit honoribus et diversis libertatibus et privilegiis communivit, et tam ipsius quam cunctorum Christi fidelium manus cum multiplici erogatione bonorum sentiebant multifarie multisque modis propter hoc adiutrices contra ipsum dominum Iesum Christum in scelus apostasiae nefandae, detestabile idolatriae vitium, execrabile facinus Sodomorum et haereses varias erant lapsi. Sed quia non erat verisimile, nec credibile videbatur, quod viri tam religiosi, qui praecipue pro Christi nomine suum saepe sanguinem effuderunt ac personas suas mortis periculis frequenter exponere videbantur, quique magna tam in divinis officiis quam in ieiuniis et aliis observantiis devotionis signa frequentius praetendere videbantur, suae sic essent salutis immemores, quod talia perpetrarent, praesertim cum idem ordo bonum et sanctum initium habuerit et a sede apostolica gratiam approbationis perceperit et per sedem eandem ipsius ordinis regula utpote sancta, rationabilis atque iusta meruerit approbari, eiusmodi insinuationi et delationi ipsorum, eiusdem Domini nostri exemplis et canonicae scripturae doctrinis edocti, aurem nolumus inclinare.

Deinde vero carissimus in Christo filius noster Philippus, rex Francorum illustris, cui eadem fuerant facinora nuntiata, non typo avaritiae - cum de bonis Templariorum nihil sibi vindicare aut appropriare intenderit, immo ea in regno suo dimisit, manum suam exinde totaliter amovendo - sed fidei orthodoxae fervore, suorum progenitorum vestigia clara sequens, accensus, de praemissis quantum licite potuit se informans, ad instruendum et informandum nos super his, multas et magnas nobis informationes per suos nuntios et litteras destinavit. Infamia vero contra Templarios ipsos et ordinem eorundem increbrescente validius super sceleribus antedictis et quia etiam quidam miles eiusdem ordinis magnae nobilitatis, et qui non levis opinionis in dicto ordine habebatur, coram nobis secrete iuratus deposuit, quod ipse in receptione sua ad recipientis

suggestionem praesentibus quibusdam aliis militibus Militiae Templi negavit Christum et exspuit super crucem sibi a dicto recipiente ostensam. Dixit etiam se vidisse, quod magister Militiae Templi, qui vivit adhuc, recepit in conventu dicti ordinis ultramarino quemdam militem eodem modo, scilicet cum abnegatione Christi et exspuitione super crucem, praesentibus bene ducentis fratribus eiusdem ordinis, et audivit dici, quod sic in receptione fratrum dicti ordinis servabatur, quod ad recipientis vel ad hoc deputati suggestionem qui recipiebatur Iesum Christum negabat et super crucem sibi ostensam expuebat in vituperium Christi crucifixi, et quaedam alia faciebant recipiens et receptus, quae non sunt licita nec christianae conveniunt honestati, prout ipse, tunc confessus exstitit coram nobis. Urgente nos ad id officii nostri debito, vitare nequivimus, quin tot et tantis clamoribus accomodaremus auditum.

Sed cum demum fama publica deferente ac clamosa insinuatione dicti regis necnon et ducum, comitum et baronum et aliorum nobilium, clericorum quoque et populi dicti regni Francorum, ad nostram propter hoc tam per se quam per procuratores et syndicos praesentiam venientium, ad nostram - quod dolenter referimus - audientiam pervenisset, quod magister, praeceptores et alii fratres dicti ordinis et ipse ordo praefatis et pluribus aliis erant criminibus irretiti, et praemissa per multas confessiones, attestaciones et depositiones praefati magistri, visitoris Franciae ac plurium praeceptorum et fratrum ordinis praelibati coram multis praelatis et haereticae pravitate inquisitore, auctoritate apostolica praecedente, in regno Franciae factas, habitas et receptas et. In publicam scripturam redactas, nobisque et fratribus nostris ostensas, probari quodammodo viderentur; ac nihilominus fama et clamores praedicti in tantum invaluisse et etiam ostendissent tam contra ipsum ordinem quam contra personas singulares eiusdem, quod sine gravi scandalo praeteriri non poterat nec absque imminente fidei periculo tolerari, nos illius, cuius vices licet immeriti in terris gerimus, vestigiis inhaerentes, ad inquirendum de praedictis ratione praevia duximus procedendum multosque de praeceptoribus, presbyteris, militibus et aliis fratribus dicti ordinis reputationis non modicae in nostra praesentia constitutos - praestito ab eis nihilominus iuramento et eis cum affectione non modica per Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum sub obtestatione divini iudicii ac interminatione maledictionis aeternae in virtute sanctae oboedientiae adiuratis, quod tunc in loco tuto et idoneo constituti, ubi nihil eos timere oportebat non obstantibus confessionibus per eos coram aliis factis, per quas eisdem confitentibus nullum fieri praeiudiciū, volebamus, super

praemissis meram et plenam nobis dicerent veritatem - super his interrogavimus et usque ad numerum septuaginta duorum examinavimus, multis ex fratribus nostris nobis assistentibus diligenter eorumque confessiones per publicas manus in authenticam scripturam redactas illico in nostra et dictorum fratrum nostrorum praesentia, ac deinde interposito aliquorum dierum spatio in consistorio legi fecimus coram ipsis et illas in suo vulgari cuilibet eorum exponi, qui perseverantes in illis eas expresse et sponte, prout recitatae fuerant, approbarunt.

Post quae cum generali magistro, visitatore Franciae et praecipuis praeceptoribus praefati ordinis intendentes super praemissis inquirere per nos ipsos, ipsum generalem magistrum et visitatorem Franciae ac terrae ultramarinae, Normanniae, Aquitaniae ac Pictaviae praeceptores maiores, nobis Pictavis existentibus mandavimus praesentari. Sed cum quidam ex eis sic infirmabantur tunc temporis, quod aequitare non poterant nec ad nostram praesentiam commode adduci, nos scire volentes de praemissis omnibus veritatem et an vera essent quae continebantur in eorum confessionibus et depositionibus, quas coram inquisitore pravitatis haereticae in regno Franciae supradicto praesentibus quibusdam notariis publicis et multis aliis bonis viris dicebatur fecisse, nobis et fratribus nostris per ipsum inquisitorem sub manibus publicis exhibitas et ostensas, dilectis filiis nostris Berengario tunc tituli Nerei et Achillei nunc episcopo Tusculano et Stephano tituli sancti Cyriaci in Thermis presbytero et Landulfo titulo sancti Angel diacono cardinalibus, de quorum prudentia, experientia et fidelitate indubitata fiduciam obtinemus, commisimus et mandavimus, ut ipsi cum praefatis magistro generali, visitatore ac praeceptoribus inquirerent tam contra ipsos et singulares personas ipsius ordinis generaliter quam contra ipsum ordinem super praemissis, cum diligentia veritatem et quidquid super his invenirent, nobis referre ac eorum confessiones et depositiones per manum publicam in scriptis redactas nostro apostolatu deferre ac praesentare curarent, eidem magistro ac visitatori et praeceptoribus beneficium absolutionis a sententia excommunicationis, quam pro praemissis si vera essent incurrerant, si absolutionem humiliter ac devote peterent ut debebant iuxta formam ecclesiae impensuri.

Qui cardinales ad ipsos generalem magistrum, visitatorem et praeceptores personaliter accedentes, eis sui adventus causam exposuerunt. Et quoniam personae ipsorum et aliorum Templariorum in regno Franciae consistentium nobis traditae fuerant, quod libere absque metu cuiusquam plene ac pure super praemissis omnibus ipsi cardinalibus dicerent

veritatem, eis auctoritate apostolica iniunxerunt. Qui magister, visitor et praeceptores terrae Normanniae, Ultramarinae, Aquitaniae et Pictaviae coram ipsis tribus cardinalibus, praesentibus quatuor tabellionibus publicis et multis aliis bonis viris ad sancta Dei evangelia ab eis corporaliter tacta praestito iuramento, quod super praemissis omnibus meram et plenam dicerent veritatem, coram ipsis singulariter, libere ac sponte, absque coactione qualibet et terrore deposuerunt et confessi fuerunt inter cetera Christi abnegationem ac exspuionem super crucem, cum in ordine Templi recepti fuerunt, et quidam ex eis se sub eadem forma scilicet cum abnegatione Christi et exspuione super crucem fratres multos etiam recepisse. Sunt etiam quidam ex eis quaedam alia horribilia et inhonesta confessi, quae subticemus ad praesens. Dixerunt praeterea et confessi fuerunt ea vera esse, quae in eorum confessionibus et depositionibus continentur, quas dudum fecerant coram inquisitore praefato. Quae confessiones et depositiones dictorum generalis magistri, visitoris et praeceptorum in scripturam publicam per quatuor tabelliones publicos redactae, in ipsorum magistri, visitoris et praeceptorum et quorundam aliorum bonorum virorum praesentia ac deinde interposito aliquorum dierum spatio coram ipsis eisdem lectae fuerunt de mandato et in praesentia cardinalium praedictorum et in suo 'vulgari expositae cuilibet eorumdem.

Qui perseverantes in illis, eas expresse et sponte, prout recitatae fuerant, approbarunt. Et post confessiones et depositiones huiusmodi ab ipsis cardinalibus ab excommunicatione, quam pro praemissis incurrerant, absolutionem flexis genibus manibusque complexis humiliter et devote ac cum lacrimarum effusione non modica petierunt. Ipsi vero cardinales, quia ecclesia non claudit gremium redeunti, ab iisdem magistro, visitatore et praeceptoribus haeresi abiurata, expresse ipsis secundum formam ecclesiae auctoritate nostra absolutionis beneficium impenderunt ac deinde, ad nostram praesentiam redeuntes, confessiones et depositiones praelibatorum magistri, visitoris et praeceptorum in scripturam publicam redactas per manus publicas, ut est dictum, nobis praesentarunt et quae cum dictis magistro, visitatore et praeceptoribus fecerant, retulerunt. Ex quibus confessionibus et depositionibus et relatione invenimus, saepe fatum magistrum, visitorem Terrae Ultramarinae, Normanniae, Aquitaniae et Pictaviae praeceptores in praemissis et circa praemissa, licet quosdam ex eis in pluribus et alios in paucioribus, graviter deliquisse. Attendentes autem, quod scelera tam horrenda transire incorrecta absque omnipotentis Dei et omnium catholicorum iniuria non poterant nec

debebant, decrevimus de fratrum nostrorum consilio, per ordinarios locorum ac per alios fideles ac sapientes viros ad hoc deputandos a nobis contra singulares personas ipsius ordinis necnon et contra dictum ordinem per certas discretas personas quas ad hoc duximus deputandas, super praemissis criminibus et excessibus inquirendum. Post haec tam per ordinarios quam per deputatos a nobis contra singulares personas dicti ordinis et per inquisitores, quos ad hoc duximus deputandos, contra ipsum ordinem per universas mundi partes, in quibus consueverint fratres dicti ordinis habitare, inquisitiones factae fuerunt et illae quae factae contra ordinem praelibatum fuerant, ad nostrum examen remissae, quaedam per nos et fratres nostras sanctae Romanae ecclesiae cardinales, aliae vero per multos viros valde litteratos, prudentes, fideles, Deum timentes et fidei catholicae zelatores et exercitados, tam praelatos quam alios, apud Malausanam Vacionensis dioeceseos fuerunt valde diligenter lectae et examinatae solerter. Post quae dum venissemus Viennam et essent iam quamplures patriarchae, archiepiscopi, episcopi electi, abbates exempti et non exempti et alii ecclesiarum praelati necnon et procuratores absentium praelatorum et capitulorum ibidem pro convocato a nobis concilio congregati, nos post primam sessionem, quam inibi cum dictis cardinalibus et cum praefatis praelatis et procuratoribus tenuimus, in quo causas convocationis concilii eidem duximus exponendas, quia erat difficile immo fere impossibile, praefatos cardinales et universos praelatos et procuratores in praesenti concilio congregatos ad tractandum de modo procedendi super et in facto seu negotio fratrum ordinis praedictorum in nostra praesentia convenire, de mandato nostro ab universis praelatis et procuratoribus in hoc concilio existentibus certi patriarchae, archiepiscopi, episcopi, abbates exempti et non exempti et alii ecclesiarum praelati et procuratores de universis christianitatis partibus quarumcumque linguarum, nationum et regionum, qui de peritioribus, discretioribus et idoneioribus ad consulendum in tali et tanto negotio et ad tractandum una nobiscum et cum cardinalibus antedictis tam solemne factum sive negotium credebantur, electi concorditer assumpti fuerunt.

Post quae praefatas attestaciones super inquisitionem ordinis praelibati receptas coram ipsis praelatis et procuratoribus, per plures dies et quantum ipsi voluerunt audire, publice legi fecimus in loco ad tenendum concilium deputato videlicet in ecclesia cathedrali, et subsequenter per multos venerabiles fratres nostros, patriarcham Aquileiensem, archiepiscopos et episcopos in praesenti sacro concilio existentes, electos et deputatos ad hoc, per electos a toto concilio cum magna diligentia et sollicitudine, non

perfunctorie sed moratoria tractatione dictae attestaciones ac rubricae super his factae, visae, perlectae et examinate minatae fuerunt.

Praefatis itaque cardinalibus, patriarchis, archiepiscopis et episcopis, abbatibus exemptis et non exemptis et aliis praelatis et procuratoribus, ab aliis, ut praemittitur, electis propter praemissum negotiurn, in nostra praesentia constitutis, facta per nos propositione et consultatione secreta, qualiter esset in eodem negotio procedendum, praesertim cum quidam Templarii ad defensionem eiusdem ordinis se offerrent, maiori parti cardinalium et toti fere concilio, illis videlicet qui a toto concilio ut praemittitur sunt electi et quoad hoc vices totius concilii repraesentant vel parti multo maiori, quinimo quatuor vel quinque partibus eorundem cuiuscumque nationis in concilio existentium indubitatum videbatur, et ita dicti praelati et procuratores sua consilia dederunt, quod ipsi ordini defensio dari deberet et quod ipse ordo de haeresibus, de quibus inquisitum est contra ipsum, per ea quae hactenus sunt probata, absque offesa Dei et iuris iniuria condemnari nequeat; aliis quibusdam e contra dicentibus, dictos fratres non esse ad defensionem dicti ordinis admittendos nec nos dare debere defensionem eidem, si enim ut dicebant praemissi, eiusdem ordinis defensio admittatur vel detur, ex hoc ipsius negotii periculum et non modicum Terrae sanctae subsidii detrimentum sequeretur et altereatio et retardatio ac decisionis ipsius negotii dilatio, ad haec multas rationes et varias allegantes. Verum licet ex processibus habitis contra ordinem memoratum ipse ut haereticalis per diffinitivam sententiam canonicè condemnari non possit; quia tamen idem ordo de illis haeresibus, quae imponuntur eidem, est plurimum diffamatus, et quia quasi infinitae personae illius ordinis, inter quas sunt generalis magister, visitator Franciae et maiores praeceptores ipsius, per eorum confessiones spontaneas de praedictis haeresibus, erroribus et sceleribus sunt convictae, quia etiam ipsae confessiones dictum ordinem reddunt valde suspectum, et quia infamia et suspicio praelibatae dictum ordinem reddunt ecclesiae sanctae Dei et praelatis eiusdem ac regibus aliisque principibus et caeteris catholicis nimis abominabilem et exosum, quia etiam verisimile creditur, quod amodo bona non reperiretur persona, quae dictum ordinem vellet intrare, propter quae ipse ordo ecclesiae Dei ac prosecutioni negotii Terrae sanctae, ad cuius servitium fuerant deputati, inutilis redderetur, quoniam insuper ex dilatione decisionis seu ordinationis dicti negotii, ad quam faciendam vel sententiam promulgandam terminus peremptorius fuerat in praesenti concilio praefatis ordini et fratribus assignatus a nobis, bonorum Templi quae dudum ad subsidium Terrae sanctae et impugnationem

inimicorum fidei christianae a Christi fidelibus data, legata et concessa fuerunt, totalis amissio, destructio et dilapidatio, ut probabiliter creditur, sequeretur; inter eos qui dicunt, ex nunc contra dictum ordinem pro dictis criminibus condemnationis sententiam promulgandam, et alios qui dicunt, ex processibus praehabitis contra dictum ordinem condemnationis sententiam iure ferri non posse, longa et matura deliberatione praehabita, solum Deum habentes prae oculis et ad utilitatem negotii Terrae sanctae respectum habentes, non declinantes ad dexteram vel sinistram, viam provisionis et ordinationis duximus eligendam, per quam tollentur scandala, vitabuntur pericula et bona conservabuntur subsidio Terrae sanctae.

Considerantes itaque infamiam, suspicionem, clamosam insinuationem et alia supradicta, quae contra ordinem faciunt supradictum, necnon et occultam et clandestinam receptionem fratrum ipsius ordinis differentiamque multorum fratrum eiusdem a communi conversatione, vita et moribus aliorum Christi fidelium, in eo maxime quod recipientes aliquos in fratres sui ordinis, receptos in ipsa receptione professionem emittere faciebant et iurare, modum receptionis nemini revelare nec religionem illam exire, ex quibus contra eos praesumitur evidenter, attendentes insuper grave scandalum ex praedictis contra ordinem praelibatum subortum fuisse, quod non videretur posse sedari eodem ordine remanente necnon et fidei et animarum pericula et quamplurimorum fratrum dicti ordinis horribilia multa facta et multas alias rationes iustas et causas, quae nostrum ad infrascripta movere animum rationabiliter et debite potuerunt, quia et maiori parti dictorum cardinalium et praedictorum a toto concilio electorum, plus quam quatuor vel quinque partibus eorumdem, visum est decentius et expedientius et utilius pro Dei honore et pro conservatione fidei christianae ac subsidio Terrae sanctae multisque aliis rationibus validis sequendam fore potius viam ordinationis et provisionis sedis apostolicae, ordinem saepe fatum tollendo et bona ad usum, ad quem deputata fuerant, applicando, de personis etiam ipsius ordinis, quae vivunt, salubriter providendo, quam defensionis iuris observationes et negotii prorogationes, animadvertentes quoque, quod alias etiam sine culpa fratrum ecclesia Romana fecit interdum alios ordines solemnes ex causis incomparabiliter minoribus, quam sint praernissae, cessare, non sine cordis amaritudine et dolore, non per modum diffinitivae sententiae sed per modum provisionis seu ordinationis apostolicae praefatum Templi ordinem et eius statum, habitum atque nomen irrefragabili et perpetuo valitura **tollimus** sanctione ac perpetuae prohibitioni

subicimus, sacro concilio approbante, districtius inhibentes, ne quis dictum ordinem de cetero intrare vel eius habitum suscipere vel portare aut pro Templario gerere se praesumat. Quod si quis contra fecerit, excommunicationis incurrat sententiam ipso facto. Porro nos personas et bona eadem nostrae ac apostolicae sedis ordinationi et dispositioni, quam gratia divina favente ad Dei honorem et exaltationem fidei christianae ac statum prosperum Terrae sanctae facere intendimus, antequam praesens sacrum terminetur concilium, reservamus, inhibentes districtius, ne quis, cuiuscumque conditionis vel status existat, se de personis vel bonis huiusmodi aliquatenus intromittat vel circa ea in ordinationis sive dispositionis nostrae per nos, ut praemittitur, faciendae praeiudicium aliquod faciat, innovet vel attentet, decernentes exnunc irritum et inane, si secus a quoquam scienter vel ignoranter contigerit attentari. Per hoc tamen processibus factis vel faciendis circa singulares personas ipsorum Templariorum per dioecesanos episcopos et provincialia concilia, prout per nos alias exstitit ordinatum, nolumus derogari.

Datum Vienna, XI calendas aprilis, pontificatus nostri anno septimo.



Examination of the Jacques de Molay

English text of the bull "Vox in excelso"

(Written by) Clement, bishop, servant of the servants of God, in perpetual memory of the event. *A voice of wailing, weeping and mourning was heard in the high⁽¹⁾, until the time comes, and the time has come, when the Lord complains through the prophet: This city has created fury and indignation in me. It will be taken from my sight because of the wickedness of his sons, because they led me to anger, since they have turned their back and not their face to me, placing even their idols in the house where my name is called, to defile it. They built high places in Baal, to start and to consecrate their children to idols and demons⁽²⁾. They have sinned deeply, as in the days of Gibeah⁽³⁾.*

Because of this horrible news and the horror of so much ignominy - whoever heard of such a thing? Who has seen such a thing? - *I fell hearing it, I was stunned to see it; my heart became discouraged and darkness took over on me⁽⁴⁾.*

In fact people's voice (comes up) from the city, one (comes out) from the temple, it is the voice of the Lord who presents the bill to his enemies⁽⁵⁾. The prophet is compelled to exclaim: Give them, O Lord, a barren womb and dry breasts⁽⁶⁾. Their wickedness was made manifest for their destruction. Turn them out from your house and their lineage extinguishes⁽⁷⁾, they do not reproduce, this house is no longer cause of bitterness and plug that produces pain⁽⁸⁾.

It is no slight, in fact, the infidelity of whom sacrifices her children, entrusting them and consecrating them to demons and not to God, to gods they did not know. Therefore this house will fall abandoned and forgotten, in the curse and in the desert, confused and reduced to powder, last wilderness without roads and made barren by the wrath of God, who despised; no longer it is inhabited but reduced in solitude so everybody is surprised at it and whistles on his wounds. The Lord, in fact, did not choose the people for the place, but he chose the place for the people⁽⁹⁾. So the place of the temple was made partaker of the sufferings of the people, which the Lord said to Solomon clearly when the latter built the temple, which, as if it were a river, was filled with the wisdom: *If your children were to be away from me, not following me and not worshipping, but following and honouring the gods of others, worshipping them, I would drive them out of my sight, and would turn away from the land that I gave them, I would cast out of my sight the house which I have sanctified by my*

name ,and spreading by word of mouth, it will be an example to the people . All that passer-by, seeing it, will surprise and hiss saying: Why did the Lord do this to the temple and to this house? And they answer: because they moved away from their God, who had bought and redeemed them, and they followed Baal and other gods, and they honoured and worshiped them. For this reason the Lord has plunged this great calamity on them⁽¹⁰⁾ .

Really long time ago, roughly from the beginning of our elevation to the supreme pontificate, but even before we goto Lyon, where we received our coronation⁽¹¹⁾, and then again, both there and elsewhere, some confidential report informed us that the master⁽¹²⁾, the preceptors and other friars of the Order of the Militia of the Temple of Jerusalem and even in the same order - just that they had been placed in the overseas lands to defend the heritage of our Lord Jesus Christ, and like special and main defenders of the Catholic faith and of the Holy Land , they seemed to treat mainly what concerned the holy Land itself, so the holy Roman church, dealing with the friars and the order in a particular benevolence, armed them against the enemies of Christ, with the sign of the cross, it exalted them with many honours and gave them various exemptions and privileges, many times and in many ways⁽¹³⁾, for this reason they had been helped by it and by all the believers of Christ, with many donations of goods - against the same Lord Jesus Christ they had fallen into a wicked and abominable apostasy, in a detestable vice of idolatry, in the execrable crime of the Sodomites, and in various heresies.

And since it was not likely, nor it seemed credible, that men who are so religious, who often had shed their blood in the name of Christ and who exposed frequently their people to a constant danger of death, and who showed many and great signs of devotion both in divine offices, in fasting and observance of religious obligations, oblivious to their condition could perpetrate these things, especially when you consider that this order has had a good and holy start, and had the grace of the approval of the Apostolic See, and that the rule of that order, as holy , worthy and just, has earned the approval of the same (apostolic) seat⁽¹⁴⁾, we did not want to lend an ear to these insinuations and accusations, in what taught by the examples of the Lord himself and from the doctrines of the canonical scriptures .

But then our dear son in Christ, Philip, the illustrious king of the French, which had been revealed the same offenses, not for fever of avarice – in fact, he has no intention to claim or to take possession of Templars' property, on the contrary he neglected them in his kingdom and

he kept himself completely away from this deal - but turned on by the zeal of the true faith, following in the footsteps of his illustrious ancestors, wanting to instruct and inform on these issues, he has given us many serious information through his embassies and letters.

The defamatory rumours against the Templars and their order were becoming more consistent in order to the above misdeeds, and even a soldier of the same order⁽¹⁵⁾, belonging to the high nobility, and who enjoyed respect within that order, secretly and under oath, he deposed in front of us that, at the time of its acceptance in the order, at the suggestion of those who welcomed him and the presence of the Templars, he had denied Christ and spat on the cross that was shown by those who received him.

He also said that he saw the master of the Militia of the Temple, still alive, into a chapter of that order (required) in overseas lands, get a soldier in the same way, i.e. with the denial of Christ and spitting on the cross, in the presence of well- two hundred friars of the same order, and said he had heard that this was the normal way observed in admitting the friars of the same order: that, at the suggestion of those who welcomed or who was appointed to this function, the one who was accepted was to deny Jesus Christ and spit on the cross that was displayed, as a sign of disrespect to Christ Crucified; in addition, both those who received and those who were accepted made other illicit actions, which were improper to the Christian honesty, as he confessed in front of us then.

Since, therefore, the duty of our office impelled us thereto, we could not help listening to so many and so great clamour. But ultimately, the public voice and the resounding denunciation of the said kings, dukes, counts, barons, and other nobles, the clergy and the people of the kingdom of France, came to our presence just this purpose, both personally and through attorneys or representatives, has come to our ears - we say this with pain - that the teacher, tutors and other friars of that order and the same order, were involved in these and several other crimes, and that this is proved by many confessions, attestations and depositions of the same master, the visitor of France⁽¹⁶⁾ and several tutors and friars in front of many prelates and the inquisitor of heresy, depositions made and received in the kingdom of France upon involvement of apostolic authority, written in public documents and shown to us and to our brothers; in addition, this fame and these clamours had become so insistent, and they had thus testified against the order itself and against the individual members, that you could not defer further without imminent danger to the faith, so

following in the footsteps of one of whom, though unworthy, we take the place into the ground, we decided to conduct an investigation on these facts.

So, we let many priors priests, soldiers and other friars of this order of no small renown came to our presence; acquired their oath, we have conjured them urgently for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, invoking the divine judgment and the threat of eternal condemnation, that in virtue of holy obedience - since they were now in a safe and fit place, where there was absolutely nothing to fear, despite the confessions that they had made to others and for which we did not want any harm derived on them - they tell the simple truth on the issue mentioned.

So we asked them questions about this matter and we have examined seventy-two of them⁽¹⁷⁾. Many of our cardinals watched over us carefully, we did prepare their confessions in an authentic document written by a notary to the presence of us and our brothers and then, after a few days, we made them read to their presence in the consistory and we made to expose each of them in their own language, and these, confirming expressly and spontaneously, approved them as they had been exposed.

Then, wanting to investigate personally on this matter with the general master, the visitor of France and the main preceptors of the order, we ordered the same general master and the visitor of France and the overseas land⁽¹⁸⁾, and the greater preceptors of Normandy⁽¹⁹⁾, Aquitaine and Poitou⁽²⁰⁾ to show us that we were in Poitiers.

But at that time, however, many of them were so sick that they could not ride, nor be led easily to our presence; however, we wanted to know the truth about everything and if they were true or not the things contained in their confessions and statements made to the inquisitor of heresy in the said kingdom of France, in the presence of some public notaries and many other worthy people, and publicly presented to us and our brothers from the same inquisitor, we hired and sent to our beloved children Berengar, at that moment a cardinal of the title of S.S. Nereus and Achilleus⁽²¹⁾, now bishop of Frascati, Stephen, cardinal of the title of S. Ciriaco in Termis⁽²²⁾, and Landulf, cardinal of the title of Sant'Angelo⁽²³⁾, on whose prudence, experience and loyalty we have unlimited confidence, because, with the said general master, with the visitor and the preceptors, they investigate both against them and some individuals of the order, either against the order as such, they diligently seek the truth and they refer to us whatever they find on them and show our apostolic authority their confessions and depositions made in writing, by means of public notary, we are ready to

grant to the same master, the visitor and the preceptors, in the manner provided by the church, the benefit of absolution from the sentence of excommunication which would be incurred if these crimes had resulted true, if they had asked humbly and devoutly, as they should.

After going in person to the general master, the visitor and the preceptors, these cardinals expounded the reason for their coming⁽²⁴⁾.

And since these people and other Templars, who were in the kingdom of France, were taken to our presence, freely and without fear, to tell the truth to the Cardinals of all mentioned facts, in the name of apostolic authority they enjoined to do so.

Then the general master, the visitor and the preceptors of the lands of Normandy, Overseas, Aquitaine and Poitou swore on the Holy Gospels of God, in front of the same three cardinals, with four public notaries and many other people worthy of respect and then they said that they would have said the sheer and utter truth about all the facts mentioned above, and in front of them, one by one, freely and spontaneously, without any compulsion or fear, they deposed and confessed, among other things, the denial of Christ and spitting on the cross at the time of acceptance to the order of the Temple, and that some of them had also received many friars in the same way, i.e. with the denial of Christ and spitting on the cross.

Some of them also confessed other horrible and shameful facts that we do not refer now. They said also and confirmed that it was true what was contained in the confessions and depositions made by them before the mentioned inquisitor.

These confessions and depositions of the general master, of the visitor and the preceptors, written in the public document by four public notaries, in the presence of the master, the visitor, tutors and other trustworthy people, were read to them each in their own language by order and in presence of the cardinals after a few days. They recognized them as their own and, voluntarily and expressly, they approved them, as they were recited.

And after these confessions and depositions, on their knees and with folded hands, humbly, prayerfully and with abundant outpouring of tears, they asked the cardinals absolution from excommunication in which they were incurred for the above-mentioned crimes.

Indeed, because the church does not close its womb to whom comes back, as soon as the master, the visitor and the preceptors had expressly abjured heresy, these cardinals granted them the benefit of absolution, for our authority and in the manner provided by the church, and then they

returned to our presence, they presented the confessions and depositions of the master, visitor and preceptors, written, as it has been said, in public document from the public purse, and they told us what they had done with the above mentioned master, the visitor and the preceptors⁽²⁵⁾.

From these confessions, depositions and report we have deduced that often the master, the visitor and the preceptors of the lands beyond the sea of Normandy, Aquitaine and Poitou had failed badly, although someone more and others less.

And considering that such horrendous crimes could neither had to go unpunished without causing injury to almighty God, and all Catholics, on the advice of our brothers we have determined to initiate an investigation on these crimes and excesses, by means of local ordinaries and other faithful and wise people, to depute to that, both against the individual members of that order and against the said order itself.

After that, both the ordinaries and the ones we deputed against individual members of the order and the inquisitors, for the order as a whole, conducted investigations in every part of the world where friars of that order resided, and they have referred everything to our examination. Of these, some were read with all diligence and carefully examined by us in person and by our brothers the cardinals of the holy Roman church, others were read by many other well educated, prudent and faithful men, they had the holy fear of God in the heart, they were zealous for the Catholic faith and competent, both prelates and no prelates, at Malaucène, in the diocese of Vaison.

After we arrived in Vienne⁽²⁶⁾, being already many patriarchs, archbishops, bishops elected abbots, exempt and non-exempt, and other prelates, and also procurators of absent prelates and of chapters, all gathered there for the council convened by us, after the first session with the aforesaid cardinals, prelates and procurators, in which we thought it over to expose the causes of the convocation of the council, as it was difficult, indeed impossible, that the cardinals and all the prelates and procurators assembled in the said council could gather to our presence to deal with on the way forward with respect to the problem of the friars of that order, for us, of all the prelates and prosecutors present at the council, there were chosen unanimously some patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, abbots, exempt and non-exempt, and procurators and other prelates of every part of Christendom, of any language, country, region, among the most experienced, discreet and appropriate to give advice on such and so

important issue and deal with us and with those cardinals such an important issue.

So, in the cathedral church of the Council⁽²⁷⁾, before the prelates and procurators, for several days, until they wanted to hear, we did read publicly the above statements regarding the investigation on the aforementioned order, and then these same claims and the related summaries have been seen, read and studied carefully by many venerable cardinals, by the Patriarch of Aquileia⁽²⁸⁾, by archbishops and bishops present at the council, chosen and allocated to this task by those that the whole council had chosen with great care and concern.

Therefore, these cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops and bishops, exempt and non-exempt abbots and other prelates and procurators, when they were in our presence, during a secret consultation, they were also asked about how to proceed in this deal, so more than a few Templars offered themselves to defend their order.

The majority of the cardinals and almost the whole council, even those that, as we have said, had been elected by the council or represented it for this issue, in fact the vast majority, about four-fifths of those who were at the Council representing from every nation, (they) thought beyond any doubt - and the prelates in question and procurators gave their views in this regard - that should be granted the right to defend themselves to that order, and that it could not be condemned, with no offense to God and contempt of law, based solely on evidence gathered so far in the investigation of heresy made against it; and some others, however, said that those monks should not be allowed to defend that order, or you had to grant the defence thereof; in fact, they said, if the defence of order were allowed and granted, it would follow a danger to the question itself, and much damage to the aid to the Holy Land, as well as discussions, delays and prejudicial delays about the decision to be made on that deal, adding many and varied reasons to these considerations.

Now, it is true that from the processes carried out against the said order, it can not be canonically declared a heretic by final judgment, but because of those heresies attributed to it, the said order received a bad reputation, and because many of his members including the generalmaster, the visitor of France and the most famous preceptors, for their spontaneous confession are found guilty of these heresies, horrors and abominations, and also because these confessions make such order very suspect, and this infamy and this distrust make it even abominable and odious to the holy church of God, to his prelates, to kings, to Christians princes and other

Catholics, you can believe that, from now on, you would not find any more person willing to enter into this, so it would become useless to the church of God and the continuation of the company of the Holy Land, in whose service it had been destined.

In this council we had assigned a deadline to our brothers for the resolution or promulgation of a judgment on the aforementioned order. But the postponement of the decision or definition of this question would have caused the total loss, destruction and depletion of goods of the Temple, which for some time have been offered, bound, granted by the faithful of Christ to the aid of the Holy Land and to fight the enemies of the Christian faith. Some of them say that, because of the aforementioned crimes, we should immediately enact the sentence against the said order, and others say that legally we cannot issue a sentence of that order on the basis of trials held. So, after long and careful consideration, having before our eyes only God and having regard only to the usefulness of the question of the Holy Land, without tilting to the right or to the left, we have privileged the way of the provision and the disposal, by means of which scandals will be removed, dangers avoided and goods preserved in favour of the Holy Land.

Therefore, considering the infamy, the suspicion, the clamour and the other things which were spoken, all to the detriment of that order, and also the hidden and illegal admission of the friars of the same order, the difference in behaviour, way of life and customs of many of these friars compared to the other Christian faithful, especially for the fact that admitting new members, at the same time of admission they did declare and swear not to reveal the conditions for approval or to leave the order, by all these things we are led to think badly of them.

And thinking that from all this matter a grave scandal is born against this order, which could hardly be silenced if the order continued to exist, and bearing in mind the dangers for the faith and for the souls, the many horrible misdeeds by most of the friars of that order, and many other right reasons and causes, duly and properly we had to make decisions that follow, that most of mentioned cardinals and of the others elected by the whole council, roughly four-fifths of them, considered it more convenient, beneficial and useful to the honour of God, for the preservation of the Christian faith, for help in the Holy Land and many other valid reasons, it was appropriate to follow the way of the provision and disposition of the Apostolic See - abolishing the order and assigning the property to the use for which they were intended, providing salutary to persons of the same

order that they are still alive - rather than the respect of the right to defence and the deferral of the matter; and remembering that, in other cases, though no fault of the friars, the Roman church sometimes made suspend or prohibit orders greater importance⁽²⁹⁾ for reasons incomparably less than those mentioned, with pain and bitterness of the heart, not by final judgment, but with measure or provision of the Apostolic See, with the approval of the sacred council, with definitive and perpetual standard, we suppress the above-mentioned order of the Temple and its state, the rule, the dress and the name, and we subject to perpetual ban, strictly forbidding anyone to enter such order or to receive or wear their dress and present themselves as Templar. If then anyone does the opposite, he will incur the sentence of excommunication immediately.

As for the people and the same goods, we reserve them at our disposal and Apostolic See, we will provide, with the help of divine grace and before the end of this sacred council, for the honour of God, the exaltation of the Christian faith and prosperity of the Holy Land, and we absolutely forbid that anyone, no matter what condition or state owned, intrude in any way in what concerns such persons or such goods, make, innovate, try anything that would prejudice our provisions or measures, establishing that even now be null and void what anyone, consciously or unconsciously trying to do in this regard.

With this, however, we do not want to derogate from the processes both done or to be done to individuals of the same Templars by diocesan bishops and provincial councils, in accordance with other provisions we ordered.

Given at Vienne, the eleventh day before the Kalends of April, in the seventh year of our pontificate (22 March 1312)

Translation: Philip Grammauta and Giuseppina Perriera



NOTES TO THE TEXT OF THE BULL

- 1) **Jeremiah, 31, 15** - *"A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping". (The Bible, by the CEI, ed., 1971, Newton Compton Publisher).*
- 2) **Jeremiah, 32, 31-35** - *"For cause of my wrath and my indignation was this city since I built it up to date; so I will cut off from my presence, because of all the evil that the Israelites and the children of Judah committed to provoke me, they, their kings, their princes, their priests and their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They turned me their back instead of their face, and I taught them with continuous care, but they did not listen and did not learn the correction. They built the high places of Baal in the valley of Ben- Hinnon, to pass through the fire their sons and their daughters in honour of Moloch - which I had not commanded, in fact I had not even thought of establishing an abomination - to induce Judah to sin". (The Bible, by the CEI, ed., 1971, Newton Compton Publisher) .*
- 3) **Hosea, 9, 9** - *"They are deeply corrupted, as in the days of Gibeah". (The Bible, op. Cit.).*
- 4) **Isaiah 21: 3-4** - *" ... I'm too upset to hear, too startled to see. My heart is lost, I am filled with dismay, ... ". (The Bible, op. Cit.).*
- 5) **Isaiah 66, 6** - *"There comes a noise, a noise from the city, a voice from the temple: it is the voice of the Lord who pay recompense to his enemies". (The Bible, op. Cit.).*
- 6) **Hosea, 9, 14** - *"Lord, give them ... What will you give? A barren womb and dry breasts". (The Bible, op. Cit.).*
- 7) **Job, 18, 16** - *"Below, its roots will dry up, above, its branches will be cut".*
- 8) **Ezekiel, 28, 24** - *"There will be more a sting stinging for the Israelites, a painful thorn among all its neighbours that despise it: they will know I am the Lord". (The Bible, op. Cit.).*
- 9) **Jeremiah 50, 12-13** - *"Our mother is full of confusion, the woman who gave you birth is full of shame. Here is the last of the nations; it shall be a wilderness, a parched and steppe. Because of the wrath of the Lord, it shall not be inhabited; it will be a whole desolation. Anyone who passes by Babylon will be astonished, and he will hiss at all her plagues". (The Bible, op. Cit.).*
- 10) **The Kings, 9, 6-9** - *"But if you and your children turn aside from me, if you do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you, if you go and serve other gods and bow down to them, I will take Israel from the land I have given them, I will reject from me the temple I have consecrated for my name; Israel will become a proverb and a byword for everybody. About this temple, already so excelled, anyone who passes by will be surprised and will hiss, wondering: Why has the Lord done so to this land and to this temple? They will reply: Because they forsook the Lord their God who brought their fathers out of Egypt, they have tied to foreign gods, bowing down to them and serving them for this reason the Lord made this evil come upon them". (The Bible, op. Cit.).*

- 11) Clement V, born Bertrand de Got, former Archbishop of Bordeaux, was elected pope on 5th June 1305 and he was consecrated pope in Lyon on 14th November 1305.
- 12) It is Jacques de Molay, 23^o and final General Master of the Order of the Temple. Elected to that office in Cyprus in 1293-1294.
- 13) These include of course the bull "*Omne datum optimum*" issued by Pope Innocent II on 29th January 1139, the bull "*Milites templi*", issued by Celestine II on 9th January 1144, the bull "*Militia Dei*", issued by Eugene II on 7th April 1145 and the bull "*Dignum esse conspicimus*", issued by Clement IV on 8th June 1265.
- 14) In 1135, at the Council of Pisa, Pope Innocent II recognized and ratified by its own act the latin Rule, already approved by the Council of Troyes, adding to the list of religious holidays that the Templar Knights should have followed with particular care.
- 15) This is probably Hugues de Perraud, Visitor of France.
- 16) Hugues de Perraud.
- 17) These are the 72 Templars that Philip IV, to give a sign of easing tensions in the difficult game that was open, he transferred to Poitiers, where the papal curia was located, to be interrogated directly by the pope.
- 18) Raymbaud de Caron.
- 19) Geoffroy de Charny.
- 20) Geoffroy de Gonneville.
- 21) Fredol Berenger (Cardinal 1305-1323, nephew of Clement V).
- 22) Etienne de Suisy (cardinal 1305-1311).
- 23) Landulf Brancacci (cardinal 1294-1312).
- 24) This is the royal fortress of Chinon, where there were detained in 1308 the dignitaries of the Order, Jacques de Molay, Hugues de Pairaud, Raymbaud de Caron, Geoffroy de Charny and Geoffroy de Gonneville, while others, who were part of the group of 72 Templars, went on to Poitiers, to be interrogated by the pope.
- 25) This is the parchment document known as "*The Chinon parchment*", found in the Vatican Secret Archives in 2001 among the acts of the diocesan inquiry held in Tours. It contains the text of the interrogations, which were subjected, at Chinon, the leaders of the Order between the 17th and 20th August 1308.
- 26) Vienne, in Dauphiné, the papal city is not part of the kingdom of France.
- 27) Cathedral of San Maurizio.
- 28) Ottobonus Razzi (1302-1315).
- 29) The reference is not clear. We know for certain that then the Holy See abolished two other important orders, that of "*Plato*", which in some ways was close to that of the Templars, and that of the "*Giudecca Canal*"

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