

# Knights Templar no heretics, Vatican confirms

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**Seven centuries after the secretive medieval order the Knights Templar was destroyed under charges of heresy, the Vatican's Secret Archives has unveiled a book confirming their innocence.**

The book covers all aspects of an investigation carried out by envoys of Pope Clement V in 1308 in Poitiers, France, into accusations of heresy by King Philip IV 'The Fair' against the Templars, the monk warriors who protected Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem.

The book, titled 'Hearing Against the Knights Templar', contains facsimiles of all the documents from the probe with a critical introduction, and "no scoop," admitted the prefect of the Secret Archives, Sergio Pagano.

The Holy See has printed 799 numbered copies of the leather-bound book, priced at 5,900 euros (\$).

The tome was unveiled with great fanfare, first to journalists and then to the public, in the Vatican's Old Synod Hall, a room of the papal palace usually reserved for meetings of bishops and cardinals.

"All the texts were already known," Pagano said, stressing the "artistic value" of the work produced by Scrinium, the trust company of the Vatican Secret Archives.

Among the texts is the Chinon Parchment, which established that Pope Clement V absolved the order of heresy.

Researcher Barbara Frale says the document has long been neglected by historians.

The Knights Templar order was founded in the 12th century to protect Christians on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. After Jerusalem fell to Muslim rule in the 13th century, its members retreated to Europe, and the seat of the Grand Master was in France.

In 1307, Philip the Fair had them arrested and staged the heresy trial. Thirty-nine of their leaders were burned at the stake in 1314 despite the pope's misgivings.

The order's dissolution allowed the king to seize their considerable assets.

Legends have grown up around the Templars - including that they guarded the Holy Grail - fueled by the mystery surrounding their secret initiation rite and a "treasure" left by the order.

The documents contained in the Vatican Secret Archives were closed to outsiders from the 17th to the 19th centuries, but are now accessible by historians.

**-AFP**

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