

THE TEMPLARS AND THE TURIN SHROUD*

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The disappearance of the relic known as the Turin Shroud between 1204, when the Latins plundered and seized Constantinople, and April, 1389, when it was put on display by Geoffroi de Charny, has been the subject of a recent investigation by Ian Wilson, the results of which were published in *The Turin Shroud* in 1978 (revised edition, 1979). If one grants that the cloth shown by the Charny family really was the same as today's "Turin Shroud," it still needs to be explained how the family came to possess it and to find reasons for the family's apparent reluctance to reveal the means by which it obtained that possession. If it is also conceded that both modern scientific evidence and historical research suggest that the Shroud is much older than the fourteenth century and thus undermine contemporary criticisms—especially those by Pierre d'Arcis, Bishop of Troyes—that the Shroud was a forgery, some other explanation needs to be sought for the behavior of the Charny family. In Chapters 19 and 20 of his book Mr. Wilson postulates that the relic had come into the possession of the Order of the Temple and thence, during or after the trial and suppression of the Order between 1307 and 1314, passed to the Charny family, possibly via Geoffroi de Charney, Preceptor of the Templars in Normandy, who was burned to death as a relapsed heretic in March, 1314. The Charny family was reticent about the Shroud's recent location, Mr. Wilson argues, both because it wanted "to suppress the family's association with a fallen order" and because the reigning Avignonese Pope, Clement VII, to whom the Charny family was related by marriage, feared that if "French passions about the reputed innocence of the Templars" were stirred again, the Pope's authority "would be worth nothing."¹

Mr. Wilson supports his theory with four main hypotheses: (1) that the cloth was taken to the West after 1204 and then "went underground" in the possession of the Templars, who, as a wealthy, exclusive, and secretive order, were able to resist the temptation to exploit it for monetary gain; (2) that it was not found during the Templars' trial because during "fierce resistance" put up in the course of the arrests, it was secretly taken away, and that its later possession

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by the Charny family was because of the connection with the Temple through the Preceptor of Normandy; (3) that the idols in the form of heads which, in the trial, the Templars were accused of having adored at receptions and chapter-meetings were really the Shroud and a number of copies of it and that this had become the center of a secret Templar cult; and (4) that the Charny family was reluctant to reveal its origins, despite contemporary accusations of fraud. This paper aims to examine the validity of these hypotheses.

There is no evidence to support point one independently of points two and three. Robert of Clari has a brief reference to the Shroud: "... there was another of the churches which they called My Lady Saint Mary of Blachernae, where was kept the *sydoine* in which Our Lord had been wrapped, which stood up straight every Friday so that the features of Our Lord could be plainly seen there. And no one, either Greek, or French, ever knew what became of the *sydoine* after the city was taken."^{*} Robert's translator, E. H. McNeal, suggests that he confuses the *sudarium* (the sweat cloth or napkin, the True Image of St. Veronica) with the *sindon* (the Shroud), and that he has wrongly identified their location as the church in the palace of Blachernae instead of the church of the Blessed Virgin in the Great Palace.[†] These mistakes suggest that Robert was writing from report rather than personal observation.² Robert, whether correct with the details of his identification or not, apparently had no idea what happened to it after the sack. The major Latin sources do not mention the presence of the Templars at the siege; so if it did come into the order's possession, it seems likely to have done so through a third party.³ Mr. Wilson does not suggest who this might have been, nor why no news of this emerged at the time, for as he himself points out, relics stolen from Constantinople were openly displayed once they had been brought back to the West.⁴

The account of the Cistercian Gunther of Pairis provides an example of contemporary attitudes. In 1207-1208 he described what he presented as the triumphs of his abbot, Martin, in snatching relics during the sack of Constantinople. Although such an action did not pass without criticism in the West, Gunther justified the translation of the relics to Pairis as God's will, for impious Greeks were not fit to hold them.⁵ Abbot Martin was no renegade clerk or unscrupulous adventurer. When he heard the Venetian plan for the crusade army to attack the Christian city of Zara on the Dalmatian coast in 1202, he was horrified, and unavailingly begged the papal legate who was with the army at Venice to release him from his crusade vow.⁶ Yet he was

^{*} See: "1204: Deadlock or Springboard", *Shroud Spectrum* #4, pg 24 ff. Ed.

[†] *op. cit.* pg. 27. De Clari writes that he saw the Shroud at the Blachernae; later documents place it in the Grand Palace. For de Clari, see Peter F. Dembowski, "Sindon in the Old French Chronicle of Robert de Clari", *Shroud Spectrum* #2, pg. 13. Ed.

proud of the relics which he had collected. The only evidence that the Templars, a respected and respectable order, contemporary criticisms notwithstanding, would have acted any differently had they obtained such relics, rests upon certain trial documents whose value in this context will be assessed below.

However, even if it is accepted that the Templars really did gain possession of the cloth, then the mystery of its concealment remains to be solved. It cannot be disputed that the Templars were often, although not invariably, secretive in their reception ceremonies and chapters.⁷ There had been good reason for such secrecy in the Holy Land, for it made little sense to allow information to pass freely to the enemy, and it is likely that the practice was also adopted in the western preceptories in imitation, perhaps even as a preparation for recruits about to be transferred to Outremer. The Templars also held chapter-meetings at night and their accusers made much of this, for it was a popular cliché that heretics held orgies under the cover of darkness. Nevertheless, too much should not be made of alleged night assemblies, for it was, after all, common practice for monks to observe the canonical hours, which necessarily involved some worship in the chapels during the hours of darkness. Moreover, it does not follow that the Templars were secretive in all their activities or that they would neglect opportunities for raising money for the cause of the Holy Land. Papal privileges granted them extensive rights for such purposes. The bull *Milites Ternpli* of January, 1144, which was confirmed many times afterwards refers to "the brothers of the Temple, who have been appointed for the purpose of receiving a contribution." So important was this function that when such brothers came to a city, castle, or village, even an interdict could be lifted once a year "for the honor of the Temple and reverence of their knighthood" and the divine offices celebrated.⁸

Just as they were for Abbot Martin, relics would be both objects of pride and power and a means of attracting devotion and thereby gifts to the order. The Christians in the Holy Land, including the Templars, followed the True Cross into battle with great devotion;⁹ for an order of Christian warrior monks to conceal an equally powerful relic such as the Shroud suggests behavior which, at the very least, can be described as inconsistent. An interesting illustration of the importance of relics in Templar possession does not, however, support this charge. This is a passage in the deposition of Antonio Sicci di Vercelli, an Italian notary who had worked for the order for forty years, and who, in March, 1311, appeared before the papal commission inquiring into the guilt of the order. Inquisitorial investigations have to be judged in the light of accusations that were made and pressures employed to produce confessions, but it does not follow that observations about everyday life need be rejected. Antonio Sicci described the role of relics as follows:

I saw many times a certain cross, which at first sight seemed to be of no monetary value, and was said to be from the tub or trough in which Christ bathed, which the said brothers kept in their treasury; and several times I saw that, when excessive heat or drought occurred, the people of Acre asked the brothers of the Temple that that cross should be carried in a procession of the clergy of Acre. Also I saw that whenever the patriarch of Jerusalem walked in processions of this kind with one of the knights of the order, the Templar carried the said cross with fitting devotion. When these processions were carried out in this way, by the co-operation of divine clemency, water came from the sky and moistened the land and tempered the heat of the air. Item, I saw many sick persons, both men and women, carried and brought to the church of the house of the Temple at Acre, vexed by a malign spirit. When at length this cross was brought before them, chaplains and clergy having given assent on oath, they replied in the vernacular as well as in Latin, saying to some of the chaplains and clergy sometimes: "How can you, who are such a son, speak?" and sometimes: "You have committed such crimes and sins," and seeing the cross by them, they shouted: "Lo the cross, lo the cross, we must not stay here any longer, but must go away." And thus the malign spirit spoke in them, so that at length these sick persons, lying as if completely dead, were afflicted by foaming mouths and freed from the malign spirits.¹⁰

A relic powerful enough to bring rain during a drought and drive out evil spirits from the sick was assuredly powerful enough to attract offerings from a grateful populace. The activities described by Antonio Sizzi were normal procedure for the period; there needs to be positive proof as to why the Templars should have acted abnormally in the case of the Shroud.

The second point is based upon an inference drawn from a mistake and backed by an assumption. Most of the Templars were caught by surprise by the arrests, which occurred in the early hours of the morning of October 13, 1307. About two dozen escaped.¹¹ Mr. Wilson agrees that the arrests were a surprise, but nevertheless postulates Templar resistance so that the Shroud could be smuggled away. However, contemporary French chroniclers fail to mention any resistance. For Jean de Saint-Victor it was "an extraordinary event, unheard of since ancient times," when all the Templars throughout France were unexpectedly (*ex improviso*) captured on the same day. Bernard Gui calls it "an astonishing thing" and says that they were captured "very unexpectedly" (*inopinately*). Amalric Auger describes how the royal officials, having opened their sealed orders,

armed themselves, and by night arrested all the Templars whom they could find, at which "the whole world was astonished."¹² Moreover, although during the trial several Templars referred to deaths and injuries caused by torture, they said nothing of any losses sustained actually during the arrests.¹³ In fact the trial depositions and the inventories of Templar property suggest that many Templars were not in any physical condition to offer "fierce resistance," nor were they heavily armed.¹⁴

If, however, it is accepted that the Templars were keeping the Shroud itself at the Paris Temple, then a case for defense can be made, for the building was a fortress, strong enough to keep out the mob in 1306 when Parisians rioted against the king who was hiding there.¹⁵ There is, nevertheless, no evidence for resistance here either. Jacques de Molay, the Grand Master, appears to have felt himself reasonably secure from arbitrary arrest, for he had persuaded the Pope to begin an inquiry into allegations circulating about the order, which it was hoped would satisfy the king.¹⁶ On the day before the arrests, October 12, Molay had been one of the pallbearers at a royal funeral, that of Catherine, wife of the king's brother.¹⁷ At this distance of time it is easy to underestimate the enormity of the step which the king took in instituting the arrests. Before the event it would have taken considerable evidence to convince contemporaries that the king was prepared to go that far, especially with an unfinished papal inquiry in existence. If the Templars had held the Shroud and its copies, it seems most unlikely that they would have had time to smuggle it away at the moment of the arrests, while if they had foreknowledge of the impending action it seems strange that they took no other precautions. The only action taken was the flight of a few individual Templars who may have been warned by friends among local royal officials or actually escaped at the moment of the arrest owing to local incompetence. In contrast, the Templars in Aragon, who did have advance warning, since they had seen what had happened in France, fortified castles, changed goods into gold which could be more easily concealed and, it was suspected, chartered a ship in which to make their escape.¹⁸

It is, of course, possible that the Shroud was not kept at the Paris Temple or indeed even in France, for if it was so important to the Templars that they had kept it secret for perhaps a century and had used it as the center of their own secret cult, it would surely have been preserved at the order's headquarters, where such a powerful relic would have been most efficacious in the war against Islam. These headquarters were in Cyprus and had not been transferred to France as Mr. Wilson assumes,¹⁹ for Molay, who had worked hard to revive enthusiasm for the crusade after the loss of Acre in 1291, had only come to France at the request of Clement V on a short-term mission to discuss crusading projects.²⁰ It seems improbable that he would have

brought the Shroud with him. This would certainly explain its absence from the inventories of Templar goods, but would hardly support the thesis that the Shroud was transferred to the Charny family or indeed Mr. Wilson's argument that various Templars had seen the Shroud during chapters held in Paris.²¹

This leads to Mr. Wilson's assumption that Geoffroi de Charney, Preceptor of the Templars in Normandy, belonged to the same family as Geoffroi de Charny of Lirey, killed at the battle of Poitiers in 1356, and father of the Geoffroi de Charny who exhibited the Shroud in 1389.²² According to Mr. Wilson no genealogical evidence has so far been found for this connection, and so his argument is based on the coincidence of name. Geographical links are equally inconclusive, for he suggests that the Preceptor of Normandy originated from Anjou, "a province just to the other side of Paris from Champagne" (where Lirey is to be found). This is really little different from saying that Somerset is just to the other side of London from Essex and is a fragile connection indeed for the transmission of a relic the location of which is totally unknown during this period.²³

Points one and two, therefore, are speculative; for the historian it is point three which must provide the foundation for the other arguments, for it relates to existing historical documents. Between October, 1307, and August, 1308, the Templars were charged with various heretical and obscene practices, among which was the worship of an idol in the form of a head.²⁴ Mr. Wilson is not inclined to believe most of the accusations, but does, however, accept the validity of the charge that the Templars worshiped a magic head in nighttime activities of a secret cult.²⁵ This cult he finds contained in the articles of accusation (August 12, 1308), and he groups together those which are relevant so that its elements can be discerned: that they venerated the idols in the form of heads as their God and Savior, that they said that the head could save them, that it had given the order its riches, that it made the trees flower and the land fruitful, and that they encircled or touched the idol with cords which they wore around themselves.²⁶ According to Mr. Wilson, "viewing of the head was the privilege of only a special inner circle."²⁷ He believes that the "head" was none other than the Shroud, displayed in the "disembodied" form favored by the Byzantines, together with a number of special copies.

Mr. Wilson uses five depositions from the trial to illustrate the existence of a head: those of Rainier de Larchant, a serving brother from the diocese of Sens; Jean Taylafer de Gene, a serving brother from the diocese of Langres; Raoul de Gizy, a serving brother who was preceptor of the houses of Lagny-le-Sec and Sommereux; Etienne de Troyes, a serving brother from the diocese of Meaux; and Robert of Oteringham, a Franciscan. In addition he quotes article 3 from the eleven articles of accusation against the Templars given in *Les Grandes Chroniques*

de France, a vernacular narrative emanating from the Abbey of St. Denis. "Clues" to the identity of the head as the "divine likeness" are (1) that it was regarded as having "fertility properties," for articles 56 and 57 of the accusations of August 12, 1308, charge that they worshiped an idol which they said could make the trees flower and the land germinate, which Mr. Wilson associates with the portrayal of the Templars as guardians of the grail in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*; (2) that "some accounts" speak of it being displayed just after the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul (June 29) which Mr. Wilson believes is significant because the next medieval feast was that "dedicated to the Holy Face, celebrated just two days later on 1 July"; and (3) that a remark attributed by Mr. Wilson to Deodatus, Abbot of Lagny, one of the papal inquisitors in the trial in England, should be noted, which was that Templar priests had nothing to do but repeat the psalm "God be merciful to us" (Psalm 67) at the end of a chapter-meeting, for it contains the line "and cause his face to shine upon us," which "is highly suggestive of the object of Templar adoration."²⁸ He backs this with evidence drawn from a painting in a Templar preceptory at Templecombe in Somerset and with an "idol" supposedly found by the Mameluk Sultan Baibars in the tower of the Temple at Jerusalem in 1277.

The four Templars whose depositions are quoted were not of the knightly class, nor were they among the leaders of the order. Only Raoul de Gizy held a post of any importance, for he was preceptor of two houses and had acted as a royal tax-collector. Etienne de Troyes claimed that he was no longer even a Templar; his deposition suggests that he was an apostate who appears to have harbored a grudge against Hugues de Pairaud, the Visitor and effective commander in the West. These seem inappropriate witnesses to use as evidence for the existence of a head which could only be viewed by a special inner circle. If these men had seen it or even knew of it, then the knowledge must have been widespread in the order, and it is therefore inconceivable that security could have been maintained throughout the whole order for more than a century, threats or no threats.

The circumstances in which the depositions were made do not encourage any greater confidence in their validity. Rainier de Larchant was only the second Templar to appear before the inquisitor, Guillaume de Paris, in the hearings which followed the arrests. The first had been a priest, Jean de Folliaco, who appeared on October 19. Folliaco seems to have been selected as the first witness because Philip the Fair's advisers had reason to believe that he would make an incriminating statement, for he claimed that he had previously tried to leave the order because it was "not pleasing to him" and that he had already spoken to the curia of the *prévôt* of Paris and to the Bishop of Paris before the arrests. It was imperative for Philip the Fair to obtain rapid confessions if the arrests were to be justified; he could not have intended to take any risks with the early witnesses. They must have

been chosen because they could be relied upon to confess the order's guilt, either because of a grudge or because of bribes or intimidation. The position of Rainer de Larchant in the hearings of October/November, 1307, therefore, puts him in the same suspect category. His later conduct during the trial certainly suggests that he was susceptible to pressure, for although he joined the defenders of the order at the height of Templar resistance in February and March, 1310, he rapidly retreated from this position following the burning of a number of Templars from the province of Sens as relapsed heretics on May 12.²⁹ Raoul de Gizy was not even prepared to join the defenders, but made a series of confessions between November 9, 1307, and January 11, 1311, when he anxiously stated that he in no way wished to retract his previous confession made before the bishop of Paris.³⁰ Raoul de Gizy made very full confessions, clinging to the hope that he might ingratiate himself with his accusers. Etienne de Troyes is a similar case to Jean de Folliaco. He claimed that he had already confessed before the arrests to the king and his confessor, and again to the bishops of Bayeux and Coutances.³¹ Moreover, together with Jean de Folliaco, he was among a group of seventy-two Templars picked by Philip the Fair to appear before the Pope during the meeting between the Pope and the king at Poitiers between May and July, 1308. The Pope had suspended the hearings against the Templars earlier in the year and the Poitiers meeting was the culmination of the pressure being brought by the French crown for them to be reopened. The seventy-two Templars were selected from the many hundreds in royal custody to appear between June 29 and July 2. These were the men whom the king hoped would make the most sweeping confessions and thus provide Clement V with an ostensibly respectable reason for reopening the proceedings. Jean Taylafer de Gene appeared before the papal commission inquiring into the guilt of the order as a whole on April 14, 1310. He can be placed within a group of Templars brought forward by the French government, together with some hostile outside witnesses, with the intention of countering the effects of the Templar defense which was at its height during April.³²

The fifth witness is Robert of Oteringham, a Franciscan, who claimed to know something of the activities of the Templars in Yorkshire. His observations are of little relevance as proof of the existence of an idol or the Shroud or its copy. He was simply one of sixty outside witnesses called during the trial in England in an effort to offset the denials of guilt by the Templars from the English preceptories. He had three main stories against them. He had heard at Ribston a Templar chaplain loudly rebuke some brothers saying, "The devil burn you," or similar words, and, hearing a tumult, he had seen, "as far as he could remember," a Templar facing west with his posterior turned toward the altar. Secondly, about twenty years before at Wetherby he had heard that, one evening, a grand preceptor of the order intended to show to the brothers various relics which he had

brought from the East. The witness had later heard noise coming from the chapel, and peering through the keyhole, had seen a great light from a fire or candle. When, the next morning, he had asked a certain brother whose feast they had been celebrating, the brother had turned pale, "as if stupified" and, "fearing that he had seen something of their acts," told him to be on his way and, "as you love me and your life," never to speak of it. Finally, the witness had seen, at Ribston again, a cross thrown upon the altar and he had told one of the brothers that it was improper that it should be lying in that way and should at least be stood up. The brother replied: "Put aside the cross and depart in peace."³³ Such tales are fairly typical of these outside witnesses, who had nothing of substance to contribute; it seems to stretch the evidence indeed to suggest that the second of these stories is evidence that the Templars were terrified that outsiders might discover that they possessed the Shroud.

The eleven articles reproduced in *Les Grandes Chroniques* are equally suspect, for the close association of St. Denis with the French kings suggests that their contents emanated from sources near to the French government and not from the members of the Temple. Material included in them should therefore be examined in the light of Capetian propaganda rather than viewed as a possible source for the Shroud.³⁴

To sum up: all four Templar witnesses had, within the context of the trial, strong motivation to invent their stories, while the Franciscan does not actually mention an idol at all. The article extracted from *Les Grandes Chroniques* has no direct connection with the Templars. These documents make very insecure foundations upon which to base the existence of a mystery cult centered on the Shroud which had been kept secret for more than a century.

Evidence identifying the idol head with the Shroud is no more convincing. The accusation of belief in an idol which could make the trees flower and the land germinate comes from the articles drawn up against the order. The accusations against the Templars have strong links with past and contemporary beliefs about heretics which colored the outlook of the inquisitors. In this case, it is implied that the order had been tinged with Catharism, which postulated an evil creator responsible for all material things. For instance, the Franciscan, James Capelli, writing c. 1240, interpreted this Cathar belief to mean that "they believe the devil divided the elements and gave fertility to the earth so that it might bear fruit."³⁵ The content of this accusation, therefore, perhaps tells the historian more about the inquisitorial mentality and Capetian propaganda than about the real practices of the Templars.

Little significance can be squeezed from the dating of the appearance

of the head. Only three witnesses seem to be pointing to a date on or near the Feast of the Holy Face: Rainier de Larchant saw it at a chapter in Paris on the Tuesday after the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul; Etienne de Troyes saw it at the end of a three-day chapter in Paris which began on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul; and Raoul de Gizy also saw it at Paris in the week after the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul. This may mean no more than that the Templars in France were accustomed to hold a major chapter-meeting at Paris in the middle of the year, and certainly cannot stand on its own as independent evidence of the existence of the Shroud among the Templars. Most witnesses are not so specific, although Guillaume de Giaco believed that it was between the Feast of Pentecost and the Nativity of John the Baptist (June 24) at Limassol, and four other Templars, who had seen a head at their receptions, gave particular dates for those receptions: the Feast of Circumcision (January 1),³⁶ the Feast of All Saints (November 1), on the Wednesday after Easter, and at Christmas. None of the other Templars who claimed to have seen the head identify any particular part of the year as the time when they saw it.

The remark that in Templar chapter-meetings the priest "stood like a beast, and intervened in nothing, except that he said the psalm 'God be merciful to us' at the end of the chapter" is not in fact by the Abbot of Lagny, but is taken from the deposition of a serving brother called Thomas de Thoroldeby during his confession on June 29, 1311.³⁷ He is claiming that in Templar chapters the master absolved them from "great sins" and therefore that the priest had no function to perform other than to close the chapter with the psalm. This is a reference to the charge that, in the order, laymen usurped the priestly function by granting absolution, an accusation which was particularly pressed in England because of the difficulties experienced by the inquisitors in gaining any more serious confessions. In this context it seems unlikely that the inclusion of Psalm 67 in chapters has any special significance which connects it with a Templar cult.

If as Mr. Wilson says, the majority of the charges were trumped up, why can the descriptions of idols or heads be accepted? Mr. Wilson would answer: there really was a Shroud in the possession of the Templars which would then distinguish their worship of a "head" from the other charges. But the evidence for this is based upon descriptions of idols by trial witnesses such as those above and upon the articles of accusation, so that the argument is circular.

It is necessary, therefore, to examine the descriptions of the Templar idols more closely. According to Mr. Wilson, "while there is a wide variation in the accounts of the 'head,' " the consistent picture is that it was "about the natural size of a man's head, with a fierce-looking face and beard."³⁸ It should be remembered too that the cult of the Shroud was supposed to be confined to an inner elite of the

order. It must, however, be considered doubtful that the picture is consistent even in the descriptions selected by Mr. Wilson. Rainier de Larchant said that it was a head with a beard "which they adored, kissed, and called their savior." Raoul de Gizey was struck by its terrible appearance, in that it "seemed to him that it was the figure of a certain demon, called in French *un maufé*, and that whenever he saw it such a great fear overcame him that he could scarcely look at it except with the greatest fear and trembling." They adored it since they had taken an oath denying Jesus Christ. On another occasion he thought that he saw the head brought in in a bag, but could not recall if it was as large as that of a man's, made of metal or wood, or that of a dead man. Etienne de Troyes claimed that it was brought into chapter with great ceremony, preceded by two brothers and carried by a priest, who placed it upon the altar upon a silk tapestry. It was bearded and seemed to be of flesh, although from the nape of the neck to the shoulders it was encrusted with precious stones. He thought that it was the head of Hugues de Payns, the first grand master of the order. Jean Taylafer thought that it was an effigy of a human face, colored red, but he did not know in whose veneration it was made. In *Les Grandes Chroniques* the idol had the skin of an old man, embalmed and polished with paste (*de cole polie*), with a beard and hollowed eyes in which carbuncles glowed "like the light of the sky." These descriptions do have some common features, but do not entirely accord. Where they are consistent they suggest not a piece of cloth with an effigy upon it, but a three-dimensional object shaped like an actual head.

Descriptions given by other Templars offer further variations. At the Parisian hearings of October and November, 1307, apart from the bearded version, it was referred to as "that head which they adored," as being made of wood, silver, and gold leaf with a beard or an imitation of a beard, as being painted on a beam, and as having four legs, two at the front and two at the back.³⁹ Hearings at Carcassonne in November, 1307, produced an "idol of brass in the shape of a man" dressed in what appeared to be a dalmatic, two figures called Bahomet, one of which was gilded and bearded, a black and white figure, and a wooden idol.⁴⁰ At Poitiers in June and July, 1308, it was "very foul and black, having the form of a human head," "a white head with a beard," and an idol with three faces.⁴¹ While before the papal commission between November, 1309, and June, 1311, it was "a certain painted board hanging in the chapel" on which was "an image of a man," a head resembling a Templar with a cap and a long, grey beard, a copper object, and "a small picture of base gold or gold, which seemed to be a picture of a woman."⁴² These descriptions suggest that some of the Templars, through fear or a desire to please questioners whom they believed wanted them to describe such a thing, supplied an imaginary head, some of them basing it upon various objects with which they were familiar such as reliquaries or panel

paintings. Guillaume d'Arreblay, Preceptor of Soissy, who appeared before the papal commission on February 5, 1311, identified the silver-gilt head seen on the altar at chapter-meetings as one of the eleven thousand virgins of Cologne, and only changed his description to a two-faced, bearded countenance under pressure, even then admitting that it was shown to the people, along with other relics, on feast days;⁴³ Bartholomew Bochier, who testified on April 19, 1311, betrays his source when he actually describes the "idol" as being next to the reliquaries on the altar;⁴⁴ Pierre Maurin told the papal commission on May 19, 1311, that, while at Chateau Merin in Outremer, he had heard of a head kept in the treasury of the Temple, adding however that his informant, Brother Pierre de Vienne, had said that the head was either that of St. Peter or St. Blaise.⁴⁵

Finally, if the four hearings surveyed are taken as a whole, it will be seen that twenty-eight different Templars claimed to have seen idols.⁴⁶ One, Hugues de Pairaud, was Visitor of the Templar houses in the West, second only to Molay, but none of the others can be seen as members of an inner circle. Three can be identified as knights and sixteen as serving brothers. While seven of these Templars were preceptors, one was a treasurer at Paris, and another an almoner of the king, such positions did not automatically mean high status, for such responsibilities often devolved upon serving brothers as well as upon knights. In nine cases the head was shown to recruits at their receptions. If the idol was indeed the Shroud or a copy of it, the Templars with knowledge of it or access to it seem an odd collection; they certainly do not suggest an exclusive, privileged elite.

Mr. Wilson brings forward two further pieces of evidence which could help to break the circular nature of his arguments. The first of these is that in 1951 a painting of a male bearded head was discovered in a building at Templecombe in Somerset, which he believes belonged to the Templars. He further believes that this was a copy of Christ's head as seen on the Shroud, a belief strengthened by the absence of the traditional halo. He expands the argument to suggest that copies were made of the original Shroud for use in Templar preceptories and that others existed which had not been recognized as such, there being four such copies in England, apart from Templecombe. The variations in the descriptions of the head could presumably be explained by this means, while the cords described in the articles of accusation as having encircled or touched the idols before being given to Templars to wear around themselves, could actually be a means of contact with the original.⁴⁷ This explanation, however, raises more questions than it answers and does not appear to be consistent with Mr. Wilson's argument that the cult was kept secret. How could this secrecy be maintained if copies had been made, even for places as peripheral to the mainstream of Templar affairs as Templecombe? Who made the copies? Does this imply a special cadre of Templar craftsmen sworn to

secrecy? Why were some copies in the form of a three-dimensional head, while others were painted, if so much care was taken to reproduce the original? Even if it is argued that the Templecombe head has similarities to the Shroud, which itself, Mr. Wilson claims, influenced the way that Christ was portrayed in Byzantium and the medieval West,⁴⁸ does this say anything more than that the Templecombe artist had also seen the traditional medieval representations of Christ? Indeed, unless it can be shown that the Templar idol was the Shroud, there is no reason to assume that the painting was intended to represent Christ in the first place. It was, after all, not unknown for medieval artists to copy portrayals of Christ both in appearance and pose, while representing other figures, such as saints. In the case of saints they simply omitted the cross within the halo.

The second prop to the argument which is independent of the trial evidence is the discovery by Baibars of an "idol" in the former "castle" of the Templars at Jerusalem in 1277. For Mr. Wilson this too could have been a copy of the Mandylion.⁴⁹ This seems to be a mistake, for the reference given indicates that the Sultan found the object at the castle of Safed in 1267.⁵⁰ Even so, the castle at Safed had belonged to the Templars and it might, therefore, be possible that the object concerned was of Templar origin. It is, however, difficult to take the argument much farther, for in Islamic terms almost any implement of Christian worship might be considered as an idol by adherents of a faith that forbids representational art of any kind.⁵¹

The fourth and last point concerning the reticence of the Charny family about the origins of the Shroud is based on speculation. There is no definite evidence to link the Geoffroi de Charny who was killed at Poitiers in 1356 with his namesake who was burnt as a relapsed heretic in 1314. But even if some connection were found it cannot be used as proof that Geoffroi was "a man struggling to regain some lost family honor"⁵² and, taking this one huge step further, that this lost family honor was none other than kinship with a condemned leader of the dissolved order. The connection is in no way strengthened by Mr. Wilson's argument that the association of Geoffroi de Charny of Lirey with the foundation of the secular knighthood known as the Order of the Star, may have been "an attempt to revive the Templars under a different name." Mr. Wilson places Geoffroi among "the founder knights" of the order, which is credible, but this is not the same as identifying him as its co-founder with "his similarly religiously minded king, John the Good," as he does in the next sentence.⁵³ The history of the Order of the Star has been reviewed by Professor Renouard, in whose opinion such secular knighthoods were founded in reaction against the failures of the religious orders, rather than being connected to them." In 1344, John the Good, at this time Duke of Normandy, and Eudes IV, Duke of Burgundy, put forward the idea of, a communion or congregation of 200 knights under the patronage

of the Virgin and St. George. This was confirmed by Pope Clement VI. Because of the French defeats during the 1340's, the plan was not implemented until 1351, by which time John had become king. Eudes of Burgundy had died the previous year. It was intended that the new order should consist of 500 knights, now with the patronage of the Virgin alone, since St. George had already been appropriated by Edward III's recently founded Order of the Garter. In fact the Order of the Star never reached anything like its planned recruitment, while the existing membership was virtually wiped out at Poitiers in 1356, a blow from which the order never recovered. It is difficult to see that the idea for this order came from Geoffroi de Charny or that it had any relationship to the Templars. Indeed, as a secular knighthood of the mid-fourteenth century it had much stronger roots in the Arthurian romances then fashionable than in the religious orders of the era of the Templars. Moreover, rivalry first with Edward III's Order of the Round Table and then with his successful Order of the Garter seems to have been a stronger impetus than nostalgic longing for a revived Temple. Clearly, the Order of the Star did have a devotional or religious character, for Clement VI seems to have welcomed it and encouraged the foundation of a collegiate church, served by canons and priests, as its centerpiece. Nevertheless, there were political and dynastic ends in mind too, particularly in the 1351 manifestation, for John II was attempting to group an elite knighthood around his person, both stressing his position as rightful king in the face of his competitors, especially Edward III, and creating a small and loyal army at the same time. The Order of the Star should be related to contemporary knightly values and political realities rather than connected with the defunct Templars.

Mr. Wilson's argument contains a further implication: that the fall of the Templars was still a live issue in the second half of the fourteenth century. But following the ravages of the Black Death and the French disasters of the Hundred Years' War, would the dissolution of an order, most of whose members were dead, still have been capable of raising passions? Papal interest in the matter seems to have petered out by the late 1320's, and it cannot be imagined that when the Shroud was exhibited in 1389 the Templars and their fate were a major consideration to the Avignonese Pope, Clement VII. Mr. Wilson argues that Clement was a party to the true facts of the Shroud's origin, but did not wish to reveal his knowledge," for if the issue of the Templars had been revived "the entire shaky foundations of the Avignon papacy" would be threatened.⁵⁶ This is a misunderstanding of the issues raised by the Schism. The scandal of the Schism endured because there was no easy solution, either politically or legally. The secular powers aligned themselves behind the two Popes, thus consolidating the political divisions of western Christendom, while existing canon law hindered the application of conciliar ideas which were put forward during this period.⁵⁷ The position of Clement VII was not

affected by the fact that an earlier Avignon Pope had played a prominent part in the suppression of the Templars.⁵⁸

However, even if it is accepted that the fate of the Templars retained a latent power to arouse deep passions as late as 1389, a number of unanswered questions remain. If the two Geoffroi de Charnys, father and son, really were related to the man who was burned in 1314, and the issue was still regarded as important in their time, then it would have been very difficult to suppress this association. Indeed, the fact of that association would have been generally known in the first place and, if it had mattered, would already have had some influence on the social standing of the Charny family. Perhaps, therefore, a better reason for hiding the origin and authenticity of the cloth was that the king of France might have claimed it for himself, arguing that the family had no legal or moral right to it. Equally, the Pope, who, Mr. Wilson argues, believed in its authenticity, might have claimed it, for the Templars had been an order directly responsible to the Holy See. If, on the other hand, the Pope did not know of its connection with the Templars, then what was he told when he asked about its history and why was he supposedly convinced that it was genuine, especially in the face of the pertinent and cogent attacks of Pierre d'Arcis, the contemporary bishop of Troyes, who believed so strongly that it was a fraud?⁵⁹ Finally, how did those who apparently knew that the Templars had the Shroud in the thirteenth century keep silent, for this involved a large number of people, including those Templars who survived the trial, the later members of the Charny family, Pope Clement VII and his confidants, and any descendants or relatives that any of these might have told?

This paper is not concerned with the debate about the authenticity of the Shroud, but only with a link forged in the chain of its history by Mr. Wilson. This link seems brittle since ultimately it depends upon the depositions of the trial of the Templars which, while a fascinating historical source, need to be handled with considerable care if they are not to be misinterpreted. Without the idols described in the trial, the other pieces of evidence gathered by Mr. Wilson have no central core, but remain a series of fragments with no coherence of their own, leaving the episode of the missing years still to be satisfactorily explained.

NOTES

1. Ian Wilson, *The Turin Shroud* (rev. ed.; Harmondsworth, 1979), p. 235.
2. Robert of Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, tr. Edgar H. McNeal (New York, 1936), p. 112.
3. Professional relic thieves appear throughout the Middle Ages. See Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra. Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1978), chap. 3.
4. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
5. Gunther of Pairis, *Historia Captae a Latinis Constantinopoleos*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. 212, Col. 233-234. See Francis R. Swietek, "Gunther of Pairis and the *Historia Constantinopolitana*," *Speculum*, LIII (January, 1978), 49-79, who shows the weaknesses of the *Historia* as a source for the Fourth Crusade, but accepts that the work was written partly to authenticate the relics, pp. 62-63. He also presents some contemporary arguments for and against Martin's action, pp. 70-71.
6. Gunther of Pairis, *op. cit.*, col. 232. See the comments of Donald Queller, *The Fourth Crusade. The Conquest of Constantinople, 1201-4* (Leicester, 1978), pp. 54-55, 78, 81. This is not, however, to argue that Martin's life was blameless, for he was later accused of some violations of Cistercian practices, see Swietek, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
7. See, for example, the witness of Imbert Blanke, Templar Preceptor in the Auvergne, during the proceedings in England. He agreed that the Templars had, as he now saw it, foolishly kept secrecy, but denied that anything occurred that "the whole world could not see," David Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, Vol. II (London, 1737), p. 338.
8. Marquis d'Albon (ed.), *Cartulaire General de l'Order du Temple, 1119?-1150* (Paris, 1913), Bullaire, no. VIII, p. 381.
9. See Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Peace Never Established: The Case of the Kingdom of Jerusalem," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 28 (1978), 89-93.
10. Jules Michelet (ed.), *Le Procès des Templiers*, I ("Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France" [Paris, 1841]), pp. 646-647. Occasionally in this deposition the witness seems to be referring to a house at Ancona, but the context suggests that this is a mistake by the notary for Acre.
11. For a discussion of this issue see Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 46-47.
12. *Chronique Latine de Guillaume de Nangis de 1113 à 1300 avec les Continuations de cette chronique de 1300 à 1368*, I, ed. Hercule Geraud (Societe de l'Histoire de France [Paris, 1843]), p. 360; Jean de Saint-Victor, in Etienne Baluze, *Vitae Paparum Avenionensium*, ed. Guillaume Mollat, I, p. 8; Bernard Gui, *Flores Chronicorum*, in Baluze, I, p. 63; Amalric Auger, in Baluze, I, p. 95.
13. See, for instance, the statements of Ponsard de Gizy and Jacques de Soci. Ponsard said that thirty-six brothers died through the effects of jail and torture in Paris, while many others died elsewhere, *Proces*, I, p. 36. Jacques said that twenty-five brothers had died on account of torture and suffering, *ibid.*, I, p. 69. However, neither of them refers to resistance and bloodshed at the time of the arrests, nor do the many other Templars who claimed that they had been tortured after the arrests.
14. For the age-structure of the Templars in France in 1307 and the nature of their preceptories, see Barber, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54. See also Leopold Delisle, *Etudes sur la condition de la classe agricole et l'état de l'agriculture en Normandie au moyen-âge* (Paris, 1903), pp. 721-728, who gives five examples of inventories taken on Templar estates in Normandy. These were predominantly "granges" which the

Templars farmed to produce livestock, grain, and fruit, and not military establishments.

15. Jacques Hillairet, *Evocation du Vieux Paris, I: Moyen Age et Renaissance* (Paris, 1951), pp. 295-298, described the Temple as a fortified enclosure, within which was a large keep, fifteen meters square. The Paris Temple was not quite so close to the Louvre as Mr. Wilson assumes, p. 212. For its location to the north of Philip II's walls, see the map in Hercule Géraud, *Paris sous Philippe-le-Bel* ("Collection de documents inédits" [Paris, 1837]).
16. Baluze, *op. cit.*, III, ed. Mollat (Paris, 1921), p. 60.
17. *Cont. Nangis*, I, p. 360.
18. Heinrich Finke, *Papsttum and Untergang des Templerordens*, II (Münster, 1907), pp. 52-53, 54-55, 60-63, 121-122.
19. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 212. Among the Templars arrested in Cyprus on the pope's orders were the marshal, the preceptor, the turcopolier, the draper, and the treasurer. See Clement V's account of a letter received from Amalric, lord of Tyre, the governor of Cyprus, August 20, 1308, Baluze, *op. cit.*, III, p. 85.
20. Clement, V, *Regestum Clementis Papae V... cura et studio Monachorum Ordinis S. Benedicti*, year I (Rome, 1885), no. 1033, cols. 190-191, for the request to the Grand Master of the Hospital, which must have been similar to that received by Molay, although the latter is not extant. For Molay's efforts on behalf of the crusade after 1291, see Barber, "James of Molay, the Last Grand Master of the Order of the Temple," *Studia Monastica*, 14 (1972), 94-96, 98-100.
21. Wilson, *loc. cit.*
22. Mr. Wilson believes that the Shroud had already been exhibited by Jeanne de Vergy, Geoffroi de Charny's widow, in c. 1357 (p. 226). This is possible, but is not directly relevant to the argument in this paragraph.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 216; *Procès*, II, pp. 295-296. According to his deposition, the Templar Geoffroi de Charney was received into the order "*apud Stampas*," which probably means Etampes (Seine-et-Oise, Ar. Rambouillet). This is nearer to Lirey (south of Troyes) than the province of Anjou and perhaps makes a family connection a little more likely. This is the identification given in *Orbis Latinus*, ed. Graesse, although there is also an Etampes-sur-Marne, near Château-Thierry (Aisne).
24. Georges Lizerand (ed. and tr.), *Le Dossier de L'Affaire des Templiers* (Paris, 1923), pp. 16-24; *Procès*, I, pp. 89-96.
25. Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 211, 202. He believes that St. Bernard, who drew up the Rule of the Templars and sent them encouragement in the form of the tract "In Praise of the New Knighthood," unwittingly laid the basis for this cult in that he "may have intended the Templars as an elite, privileged to enjoy a fleeting foretaste of the 'newness of life' upon earth," p. 210. However, he must first prove that a later cult existed at all before St. Bernard's Rule becomes of any relevance and for this he is forced to use unreliable trial depositions.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202; *Procès*, I, p. 92, articles 46-61.
27. This idea derives from an allegation in Philip IV's order for the arrest of the Templars (September 14, 1307) that the Templars wore cords around their waists which had touched or encircled "an idol which is in the form of a man with a large beard" and that they kiss and adore this head in their provincial chapters, "but this not all the brothers know, except for the Grand Master and the older members," Lizerand, *op. cit.*, p. 28. However, accusations which derive from this document cannot be accepted as evidence for the activities of the Templars without convincing, independent corroboration.
28. Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-206.
29. *Procès*, II, pp. 278-279; L pp. 78, 115, 283. *Ibid.*, II, p. 364; I, pp. 36, 82, 394-402.

30. Finke, *op. cit.*, II, p. 336.
31. *Procès*, I, pp. 187-193.
32. Wilkins, *op. cit.*, II, p. 359.
33. *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, ed. Jules Viard (Société de l'histoire de France, Vol. 8 [Paris, 1934]), p. 274.
34. James Capelli, *Summa contra haereticos*, in *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, tr. Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans (New York and London, 1969), p. 305. This seems a more likely origin for this idea than Wolfram von Eschenbach's Templars guarding the Grail, which is unique to Wolfram.
35. It is perhaps frivolous to draw attention to the connection of this date with heathen and idolatrous practices against which Christian writers often inveighed.
36. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 206. The deposition is in Wilkins, *op. cit.*, II, p. 386. Mr. Wilson brings in H. C. Lea to support his hypothesis, claiming that Lea said that it was strange to find such a chant among men alleged to be idolaters. So it is, but it does not indicate that the object of their adoration was the Shroud either. Incidentally, the comment seems to have come from Charles G. Addison, *The History of the Knights Templar* (London, 1842), p. 265, and not Lea.
37. Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-203. The reference for this quotation is from Jean Taylafer de Gêne, *Procès*, I, p. 190, but, although he says that it was about the size of a human head, he does not describe it as fierce-looking or bearded.
38. *Procès*, II, pp. 290, 299, 300, 313, 315, 363, 364, 367.
39. Finke, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 322-324.
40. Konrad Schottmuller, *Der Untergang des Templer-Ordens*, Vol. II (Berlin, 1887), pp. 28-29, 30, 50, 59, 68, 70.
41. *Procès*, I, pp. 257, 597; II, 192-193, 203, 212, 240, 249.
42. *Ibid.*, I, p. 502.
43. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 192-193.
44. *Ibid.*, II, p. 240.
45. This excludes the depositions of Antonio Sicci, Hugues de Faure, and Guillaume April, which refer to a popular myth about the destructive power of a magic head, which has no direct connection with Templar receptions or chapters.
46. However, the accusation concerning the cords may be an attempt to associate the Templars with the Cathars or the Moslems or both; see Barber, *Trial*, p. 188.
47. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 208.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 207, 362, n.21.
49. Reinhold Riihricht, "Etudes sur les derniers temps du Royaume de Jerusalem. Les Combats du Sultan Baibars contre les Chrétiens en Syrie (1261-1277)," *Archives de l'Orient latin*, Vol. II (Paris, 1884), pp. 388-389. See Charles F. Defremery, *Mémoires d'Histoire Orientale*, seconde partie (Paris, 1862), pp. 363-364, where a French translation of the relevant passage from Noweiri is given.

50. See, for instance, 'Imad ad-Din's description of those Christians trying to defend the True Cross at the battle of Hattin as idolaters, 'Imad ad-Din, in Francesco Gabrieli (ed. and tr.), *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, tr. E. J. Costello (London, 1969), p. 136.
51. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 216.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223.
53. On the reasons for the foundation of the Order of the Star, see Yves Renouard, "L'Ordre de la Jarretiere et l'Ordre de l'Etoile," *Le Moyen Age*, LV (1949), 281-300.
55. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 231.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
57. See, for instance, the comments of Walter Ullmann, *Origins of the Great Schism* (London, 1967), especially Chapters I and X.
58. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 235.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.