

"The evidence in favor of a Masonic initiation previous to Napoleon's assumption of the imperial title is overwhelming: The initiation took place in the body of an Army Philadelphie Lodge of the — Ecosais — Primitive Rite of Narbone, the third initiation of the "Ecole Communique" being an advancement in that Rite; These initiations took place between 1795 and 1798." ²

[NAPOLEON I](#)

[THE FRENCH
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ARS QUATUOR CORONATORUM

TRANSACTIONS
OF THE
[QUATUOR CORONATI LODGE](#) No. 2076
LONDON

Napoleon I. and Freemasonry

THE question whether [Buonaparte](#) was a Freemason or not has never been decided. Rumour says he was made at Malta. Some writers incline to the belief that he was only "historically instructed." The only matter of certainty is that he countenanced the institution and astutely made it subserve his own purposes.¹

A recent letter to us from Bro. E. T. Carson, of Cincinnati, throws a little additional light on the question. This distinguished brother, whose Masonic library is as remarkable, or rather more so, for the priceless rarities it contains as for its size, is the fortunate possessor of a fine copy of Thory's *History of the Grand Orient of France*. A MS. note in it (French) describes it thus:—

"A textual copy of an autograph of Brother Thory, which was found in a copy of his work, "*History of the Grand Orient of France*," with his portrait. Bought at the sale after his decease."

Bro. Carson remarks: "The copy referred to is undoubtedly the one I have, as it contains the portrait and the following inserted MS. There was no portrait in the edition as published."

The following is Bro. Carson's translation of the French MS. As he says, there is no certainty as to whom Thory's letter was addressed to, "but inasmuch as Morand, the celebrated and well-known Paris Freemason and literateur, certifies to it as corresponding with the original letter in his possession, I am inclined to think the letter was addressed to him. "We also think there can scarcely be a doubt of it, and beyond thanking Bro. Carson for the important information so kindly placed at our disposal, we will only add the one comment, that the letter seems to favour the theory

that Napoleon never was a Freemason by initiation, but only "historically instructed." However, let the letter speak for itself. — EDITOR.

[*Translation from the French certified copy*].

Paris, 16th March, 1818.

"You ask me Sir, why it was that in my work on Free Masonry I did not say a word as to the secret motives which led Bonaparte to protect this association, when, as you say, his aversion to secret societies was well known to the world, he regarding the members as being opposed to his government.

"This is true Sir, but I did not believe it my duty then to make public the political intrigue which led to this result; if I had done so I would have compromised many persons, and might have endangered myself, but now when all or most of the parties to this affair with Bonaparte, are no more, I can give you the direct information; you may rely on the authenticity of the statement inasmuch as I was a confidential party to the whole affair.

"The Freemasons having been without a Grand Master since the death of the Duke of Orleans,³ conceived the idea of proposing to the Prince Cambaceres to accept this dignity. He mentioned it to Bonaparte and represented to him that the association of Freemasons properly directed, instead of being prejudicial to his interest, might be made very useful to him politically.

" Before deciding upon the matter, the Emperor required a memoir on the objects and principles of the association, especially as to what is called the Secret of the Freemasons. Cambaceres convoked the chiefs of the order at his hotel, and communicated to them the Emperor's answer. M. Pyron and some others were charged with the duty of preparing the memoir; they presented it a few days afterwards.

"In their report, these gentlemen declared that the Free Masons were the successors of the Templars ; that the ultimate object of the members was the restoration of the Order of the Temple, that all their allegories related to the death of Jacques De Molay, that the vengeance alluded to in the Elu degrees and in Kadosh was that which the Templars formerly swore to execute upon King Philip the Fair, the destroyer of the Order, and upon his successors, but this vengeance was accomplished by the accession of Napoleon to the imperial throne.

"Bonaparte, upon reading this memoir, was enchanted with an explanation so re-assuring. He determined to protect the Freemasons, he gave them his brother, then King of Spain, for Grand Master, and Cambaceres was named Grand Master Adjunct. He directed his generals, the members of his court, and all public functionaries to enter the lodges. It was thus that Cromwell favoured all the cotteries and societies of this kind.

"M. Pyron showed me the memoir before presenting it to the Archchancellor. I endeavoured to dissuade him from presenting it, by demonstrating to him its absurdity, and especially its falsehood and the atrocity of its conclusions; he would hear nothing.

"After these details you can readily see, Sir, why I could not speak in my book of the causes which induced Bonaparte to favour the Association with his protection, besides these matters are not good to be made public in the Lodges, and if some imprudent person

should do so, all good Frenchmen would desert them.

"Receive, Sir, the assurance of my distinguished consideration. —
THORY."

[Translation of the French attestation].

I, the undersigned, certify that the foregoing copy is literally
conformable to the text of the original which I have in my library.
— P. MORAND 33; 8th October, 1843.

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1. *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* vol. viii (1895). ed. [G. W. Speth](#). Margate: Lodge Quatuor Coronati, No. 2078, London. pp. 188-89. [^](#)
 2. J.E. S. Tucket, "Napoleon I and Freemasonry," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* vol. xxvii (1914) pp. 96-141. [^](#)
 3. Mackey notes his election in 1771 and the Grand Orient declaring his office vacant on 13 May 1793, almost six months before his death on the guillotine on 6 November. *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, Albert G. Mackey. Revised. vol. ii. Richmond, Virginia : Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, Inc., 1966. p. 745.

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