

office might be devised, such as conferring a distinguishing badge for all past officers, and this, I believe, has already been under consideration.

Among other objections raised against the present titles a prominent one is, "That the Order, under the present designation, tacitly assumes an identity with the Templars of old, which deprives it of its legitimate claim to be treated as an integral portion of the entire system of Freemasonry." Should this claim to represent the Ancient Order be set aside, the Craft, at the same time, ignoring it as a degree of masonry, what does it represent? It seems almost a sufficient and conclusive answer to such objection in England to refer to the last clause of the Articles of Union of the Grand Lodges of England in 1813, which provides for meetings of the degrees of Chivalry according to the constitutions of the said Orders, clearly implying that the Templar degree was then considered one of the Orders of Knighthood, albeit in connection with Freemasonry. As this objection goes to the very foundation of the present organization of the Temple, it is of the greatest importance that you should have the fullest information, and I will, therefore, briefly trespass on your time and patience by giving you a short sketch of the Order, which I trust will not be uninteresting, with my own impressions, gathered from my very varied readings and researches on the subject.

The Order commonly known as "Knights Templar" in connection with the Masonic Society, represents, and has always been admitted to represent the Ancient Order of Knighthood of that name which had its rise in the Crusades, and was instituted in 1118; violently but only outwardly suppressed in 1313 by Philip Le Bel, King of France, and Pope Clement the 5th, the Order was not entirely abolished; its formal dissolution by the Pope and the confiscation of its property could not and did not destroy all the brave and noble spirits who had been so long associated together; uniting themselves to other existing Orders of Knighthood they perpetuated their own, and thus preserving the memory, as well of their greatness as of their misfortunes, continued their assemblies without attracting attention. The accusations by which the suppression of the Order was sought to be achieved by the Papal power, united with nearly all the monarchs of Christendom, was but a cloak to conceal the actual motives which influenced their persecutors, and the pretences under cover of which they were arranged were utterly false and without foundation. When the holy land was lost and abandoned after the capture of Acre, the Templars, returning to their numerous wealthy preceptories spread over Europe, seemed to have given up all further thoughts of fighting for the Holy Sepulchre. The Order was no longer of use as a military body, and it was felt that their day was past. Between them and King Philip of France a bitter and undying hatred had been engendered by numerous acts of arrogance and insubordination against his authority. Their enormous wealth and great military power inflamed his avarice and roused his jealousy, as leading them to aspire to a jurisdiction independent of kings, considering themselves superior to monarchs and other potentates. On the other hand they arrogated to themselves a higher degree of knowledge in all things, and taught in their secret conclaves,—where none but the most trusted members were admitted, being careful to exclude all those who had entered the Order impressed only with its ancient and simple principles,—that the Papal power was a false and dangerous assumption of authority over the minds and consciences of men, and that very many of the dogmas of Rome were gross and childish superstitions; they also cultivated and assumed more liberal views of faith and religion than those current at the time, being well acquainted with the ancient mysteries, the learning, legends, and traditions of the people they had come in contact with in the East—hence the Order of the Temple was felt by both King and Pope to be highly dangerous to the perpetuation of their despotism over the souls as well as the bodies of mankind, and was followed by the most ruthless attempts utterly to destroy it.

Attempts have been made at different times to revive the Chivalric Order of the Temple and restore it to its former recognized position amongst the Orders of Knighthood, but without any satisfactory result, and various theories have been brought forward to account for the connection that exists between it and Freemasonry. The origin of this connection has always been, and I believe will continue, one of those enigmas which will never be satisfactorily cleared up, for there is no real connection between the Order and Freemasonry as regards aim, object, and ceremonial, still the Order as now known requires that Freemasons and Freemasons only can be admitted to its Chivalry, but it is an error to class it amongst the purely Masonic degrees, a classification for which there is no warrant, its Christian and Trinitarian character is sufficient proof of this, it merely claims to have traditionally preserved the dogmas and rites of the Templars from oblivion, perpetuating in a symbolic form the idea on which the original Order was founded. Amongst the many theories set forth as proofs of that legendary claim, some writers confidently assert that the Order in its present