

THE
SCOTTISH RITE
FOR SCOTLAND

R. S. LINDSAY, 33°,
Grand Secretary General for Scotland



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X. THE INSTITUTES AND GRAND CONSTITUTIONS OF THE
A. AND A. S. RITE

There is much loose talk of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite being governed by Grand Constitutions having a shorter French and a longer Latin version.

What it has got are these:

(a) In some countries a short set of Constitutions, given by the founder of the Supreme Council at the time of its erection in that country, based on the Grand Constitutions of the Rite but judged by the founder to be sufficient for the regulation of that Supreme Council within its own jurisdiction. In such a case the Supreme Council concerned has to supplement its own private Constitutions by the Grand Constitutions of the Rite on all points relative to other jurisdictions and on any matter concerning which its own private Constitutions are silent.

When Dr Charles Morison of Greenfield in 1846 set up the Supreme Council for Scotland, he gave it a set of such Constitutions for its own private use, so that it is not only erroneous to refer to such Constitutions as “Grand” Constitutions but also to refer to them as “French” as if they were all in that language. The reason for them being referred to as “French” is that the first set of such private Constitutions to be published in 1832 in the *Recueil des Actes du Suprême Conseil de France* happened to be the set given by de Grasse-Tilly to the Supreme Council of France erected by him in 1804, and it was then found that these corresponded in terms with the private Constitutions of the Supreme Council at Charleston and also the private Constitutions given by de Grasse-Tilly to the Supreme Council of Belgium erected by him in 1817.

(b) Overriding these private Constitutions, the Rite has two associated documents which, whatever may be said or thought of their alleged date and genesis, are admitted by the Supreme Council for Scotland and all Supreme Councils recognised by it to be the principal regulations governing the Rite universally. These were first published in 1834 and are both in Latin and bear date 1786. The first of them is The New Secret

Institutes purporting to have been signed at Berlin on 1st May 1786 by Frederick the Great of Prussia using the signature “Fredericus”. In these, Frederick claims to be “Supreme Grand Master, Grand Commander, Universal Grand Master and Defender of the Rite”. They refer to the disjunction by 1786 of Ecossais Masonry into several branches represented by the Rite of Perfection, a Philosophic Rite, and, later than both, the Primitive Rite of Namur. They recount that though Frederick had long ago consulted the most eminent of the Fraternity as to how these Rites were to be combined, the busy events of his reign had hitherto delayed the project, which, however, was now to be achieved in a Rite of 33 Degrees on the following design:

- 1°–18° As in the Rite of Perfection.
- 19° Not mentioned at all, though since assumed to be the 19° of the Rite of Perfection (“Grand Pontiff”).
- 20° That of “Grand Master ad vitam of Symbolic Lodges”, for which the Ritual was to be that of the 19° and 23° of the Primitive Rite of Namur, in combination.
- 21° That of “Noachite or Prussian Knight”, for which the Ritual was to be either that of the 20° Rite of Perfection or of the 16° Primitive Rite of Namur.
- 22° Not mentioned at all, though since assumed to be the 22° Rite of Perfection (“Prince of Libanus or Knight of the Royal Axe”).
- 23°–27° The Philosophic Degrees of Chief of the Tabernacle, Prince of the Tabernacle, Knight of the Brazen Serpent, Prince of Mercy, and Grand Commander of the Temple—in that order.
- 28° That of “Prince Adept” (23° Rite of Perfection).
- 29° That of Ecossais “Knight of St Andrew” (24° Primitive Rite of Namur).
- 30° That of “Grand Elect Knight KH.” (24° Rite of Perfection).
- 31° That of “Grand Inspector Inquisitor Commander” (the origin and Ritual of which not being mentioned caused the difficulties in Dr Dalcho’s *Orations* referred to on p. 42 and seems to point

to the fact that no Ritual for it had been devised by 1803 when these *Oration*s were first published).

- 32° That of “Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret” (25° and last of Rite of Perfection).
- 33° That of “Sovereign Grand Inspector General” (in absence of any origin or Ritual being suggested for this Degree, see pp. 40 and 42 for the Ritual eventually selected and the earliest date by which it could have been selected).

The other of the associated documents, the Grand Constitutions, declares that after Frederick’s death his powers were to be vested in Supreme Councils of the Rite all over the world, and lays down regulations to be observed by these Supreme Councils as regards the various Degrees of the Rite. It declares that there shall be one such Supreme Council in each Empire, Kingdom or State in Europe, Africa and Asia, but two Supreme Councils (as far apart as possible) in the continent of North America, including its islands, and a similar two Supreme Councils in the continent of South America, including its islands. It bears two docquets. The first docquet declares that the Grand Constitutions were determined, done and sanctioned in a Grand and Supreme Council of the 33rd Degree duly instituted, convoked and held at Berlin on 1st May 1786, Frederick being present and approving. This docquet purports to be signed “D’Esterno”, “Stark”, “R. Willelm” and “Woellner”, all of whom will be referred to later. It is also said to have had three other purported signatures, which, except for the initial letter “D” in one case, the publishers of the Grand Constitutions in 1834 declared to be illegible on the document by attrition or sea-water! The second docquet below these purported signatures is signed “Fredericus” and runs, in English, “Approval given at our Royal Seat in Berlin 1st May in the year of Grace 1786 and the 47th of Our Reign”.

Prior to the publication of these Grand Constitutions in 1834, the Supreme Council at Charleston had no knowledge of them, and, indeed, up to 1859 continued to work only under the set of private Constitutions adopted at its erection. From whom did it get them? Clearly from de Grasse-Tilly, who had already set up, on paper, his Supreme Council for the French West Indies commenced by him in 1796, and who subsequently gave private Constitutions in the same terms to the later

Supreme Councils for France and for Belgium erected by him. Now it will be remembered that in its circular of 1802 announcing its start and completion, the Supreme Council at Charleston declared that it had been completed “agreeably to the Grand Constitutions”, of which none of its members in 1802 had any knowledge until they were first published in 1834. On the other hand, its private Constitutions received from de Grasse-Tilly at its erection—and indeed all other private Constitutions issued by him—not only have a heading referring to the alleged Supreme Council at Berlin on 1st May 1786, when Frederick was present in person, but in their articles, so far as they go, tally so closely with the Grand Constitutions that, but for one detail, it might be argued that the Grand Constitutions were, notwithstanding their alleged date, a later elaboration from de Grasse-Tilly’s private Constitutions. That one detail is that in all of his private Constitutions de Grasse-Tilly allows two more Supreme Councils than are permitted by the Grand Constitutions, viz. his own Supreme Council for the French West Indies started by him in 1796 and completed on paper by 1801, and a further Supreme Council for the British West Indies, which he seems to have erected in 1803 or early 1804. If the Grand Constitutions had been a subsequent elaboration, they would have provided for these two Supreme Councils. Alternatively, if the Grand Constitutions had already been in existence but known only to de Grasse-Tilly, he could have suppressed them. If, however, de Grasse-Tilly in 1801 gave the Charleston Supreme Council a set of private Constitutions clearly based on a knowledge of the Grand Constitutions by that time, and if de Grasse-Tilly felt, as he did, that in these private Constitutions and others following later he must provide for his two West Indian Supreme Councils not authorised by the Grand Constitutions, what is the natural conclusion to be drawn in the event of de Grasse-Tilly having knowledge of the Grand Constitutions but of the only copy of these Grand Constitutions being in the hands of someone other than himself? Surely it is that de Grasse-Tilly had some association with that other person by which he could be reasonably sure that the other person would not publish the terms of the Grand Constitutions until such time as the publication of them would neither damage de Grasse-Tilly nor any Supreme Council set up by him in excess of the number permitted by these Grand Constitutions. As will now be shown,

there was a person who could have been in touch with de Grasse-Tilly in San Domingo in 1795 before de Grasse-Tilly fled thence to Charleston in 1796 and at once there started to form his Supreme Council for the French West Indies on paper. Further, as will now be related from a letter that person wrote, he not only claimed to have had the earliest known copy of the Grand Constitutions in his possession since 1795 but that he had communicated their terms, at a date unspecified, to de Grasse-Tilly. Moreover, when the Grand Constitutions were first published in 1834, through the permission and assistance of that person, de Grasse-Tilly had ceased for over ten years to be a power in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, his extra Supreme Council for the French West Indies had been absorbed within the Supreme Council for France, clearly permissible under the Grand Constitutions, and his other extra Supreme Council for the British West Indies had been extinct for some fifteen years. Bearing all these points in mind, let us see what led up to the publication of the Grand Constitutions in 1834.

The story starts in 1832 at New York, where the Anti-Masonic Movement, which had swept the United States of America since 1826, was beginning to die down. In 1832, possibly because he anticipated little opposition from the Supreme Council at Charleston and its Daughter Supreme Council set up at New York in 1813, both of which had hardly recovered from the effects of the Anti-Masonic Movement, there appeared at New York a mulatto of San Dominican origin who rejoiced in the name of Marie Antoine Nicolas Alexandre Robert de Jachin de Ste Rose de Roume de St Laurent, Marquis de Ste Rose, Comte de St Laurent, a former Captain of a ship and Commander of a flotilla of the Mexican Navy. He claimed to be Sovereign Grand Commander of a Supreme Council, then and still unknown, which had the equally impressive title of “the Supreme Council for New Spain ¹ and Mexico, Terra Firma, ² Southern America from the one sea to the other, ³ the Canary Islands, &c. &c.”. His object was to find a seat in New York for his homeless and hitherto unknown Supreme Council. This he hoped to effect by amalgamation with a Rite of Perfection body in New York which was in the process of putting itself on a par with the Supreme Councils of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of 33 Degrees by treating its 25th and last Degree of the Rite of Perfection (Prince of the

Royal Secret) as the equivalent of the 32nd Degree under the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite and by claiming to have a Committee of Management, called a Supreme Council, but actually an elective body supplied by its Degree of Prince of the Royal Secret. The advantages on both sides were obvious. St Laurent's Supreme Council, which had probably existed previously only on paper, got a base at New York.

On the other side, St Laurent offered this Rite of Perfection body the only known copy of the Grand Constitutions of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, and it is a fact that this Rite of Perfection body, which had previously denied any validity to any private Constitutions in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, suddenly changed its tune in 1832 when it became the custodian of the only alleged copy of the Grand Constitutions. On that basis the amalgamation was concluded in 1832, the united bodies assuming the title of "the United Supreme Council for the Western Hemisphere". Later in 1832 St Laurent repaired to Paris, where in 1834 a treaty of Alliance was concluded between the Supreme Councils for France, Brazil, Belgium and the United Supreme Council for the Western Hemisphere. During its conclusion St Laurent wrote to the Supreme Council of Belgium in June 1834 as follows, ⁴ the English translation being the present author's: "You will find at the end of the treaty now ratified by the Ill. and P. Bro. Duc de Choiseuil, Grand Commander of the Council of France, and by that Council itself, a translation made from the original Latin of the genuine Grand Constitutions of 1786. This original, signed in his own hand by the Ill. Bro. de Wowelner ⁵ certifying it Copy Conform from the Minute, ⁶ (and) since signed by the Ill. Bro. de Galvez, ⁷ former Viceroy of Mexico and by other Ill. Grand Commanders who have had it and jealously guarded its deposit, was in my hands since 1795 in my capacity of G. C ⁸ of the S. C. of New Spain, &c. I communicated it to the Prince Cambaçères, ⁹ to Bros. de Lacépède, ¹⁰ de Grasse (Tilly), ¹¹ &c., &c., but I was never agreeable to copies being made of it. I have deposited it ¹² in the archives of the United S. C. of the Western Hemisphere as stipulated by the treaty of 1832, ¹³ and of it ¹⁴ I had the honour of sending you a facsimile to Brussels in 1833. It is from the copy of this precious document, officially inserted in my Golden Book ¹³ that

the convention ¹⁵ has had printed the translation which you will receive with the treaty ¹⁶ you have just signed.”

Now, even if the facts stated in this letter are accepted as substantially true, it will be observed:

1. That what was deposited by St Laurent at New York in 1832 was no more than an alleged copy of a principal document which no one has ever seen.
2. That except for the members of the United Supreme Council for the Western Hemisphere (who, if they had any doubts, had strong reasons against expressing them concerning this document, which was their palladium amongst other Supreme Councils), no “outsider” ever saw even the alleged copy deposited at New York or had any opportunity to examine the signatures on it because (a) St Laurent himself said in his letter that he had never allowed any copies to be made from it, and (b) the archives of the United Supreme Council of the Western Hemisphere were all destroyed in 1845 by a fire which suspiciously occurred a few months before that Supreme Council became extinct under attacks from the other Supreme Councils in the United States, and which prevented any of its records falling into the hands of the latter.
3. That though the Convention at Paris, which carried through there the treaty of Alliance in 1834 and first published the terms of the Grand Constitutions of 1786, saw nothing but the alleged true copy in the Golden Book of St Laurent, it certified its translation appended to the treaty of Alliance of 1834 as having been made from the alleged original copy deposited at New York.

In other respects also St Laurent’s letter arouses suspicion. In it he stated that whereas the alleged original copy deposited at New York had been in his own hands since 1795 as Grand Commander of the Supreme Council for New Spain and Mexico, it had previously been in the hands of the Count de Galvez and others who had been Commanders of this Supreme Council before himself. Now the Count de Galvez died either in 1786 or in 1794. If he died in 1786, how was there time between Frederick’s death in August 1786 (after which, according to the Grand Constitutions, it was possible only to set up Supreme Councils) for him

to write to Wöllner in Germany for a copy of the Grand Constitutions, to get it in Mexico, to set up there a Supreme Council for New Spain and Mexico, &c., and to sign as its Commander the copy he had received, even if he had not died until the very last day of 1786? Alternatively, if the Count de Galvez did not die until 1794, how between his death in that year and the copy of the Grand Constitutions passing into the hands of St Laurent in 1795 could there have been, as St Laurent stated in his letter, other intermediate Commanders of his Supreme Council who had custody of and signed the copy? Apart from these, there is no record of the Count de Galvez ever having been a Mason, and as Viceroy of His Most Catholic Majesty of Spain in the Spanish Colony of Mexico, where the auto-da-fé continued as late as 1815, it is extremely improbable that he ever was a Mason. Again, there was no call anywhere in the Western Hemisphere for any extension of the Rite of Perfection into the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of 33 Degrees until the longer Rites began to reach the Western Hemisphere in 1790, with a year or two more for their effects to be felt by the Rite of Perfection. In other words, 1795 is about the earliest date in which there was any possibility of any Supreme Council for New Spain and Mexico, &c., and that, be it noted, was the year in which St Laurent said in his letter that he became its Commander.

Would it not be more probable to assume that in 1795, having invented or got hold of an alleged copy of the Grand Constitutions, St Laurent himself began to form on paper a Supreme Council for New Spain and Mexico, &c., just as de Grasse-Tilly in 1796 first began to form, also on paper, his first Supreme Council for the French West Indies?

Consider next the alleged signatures on the Grand Constitutions:

D'Esterno. Biographer and personal associate of Frederick as French Ambassador at Berlin in 1786 but, as a Mason having any interest in the Rite of Perfection or any other Ecossais Rite, completely unknown.

Johann Augustus von Starck (1741-1818). A Cleric of considerable attainment in Oriental languages. In Masonry a leader of the Templar Rite of the Strict Observance and a subsequent development of it. On his own statement in 1787 he had nothing to do with Masonry after 1777 (meaning, presumably, that he then ceased to take any active part in Masonry, because he continued his Masonic

publications up to 1786). Surely, if he had taken any share in the devising of a new Rite such as the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in 1786, he would not have forgotten this in the next year when he wrote denying any active part in Masonry after 1777. And why should a Templar Mason ever take a hand in troubles affecting Ecossais Rites to which he did not belong?

H. Willelm. This alleged signatory is uncertain, though possibly intended for Prince Heinrich Wilhelm (*d.* 1802), the younger brother of Frederick initiated by the latter personally into Craft Masonry on 20th June 1740; but, so far as is known, without any connection with Ecossais Masonry.

Johann Christopher Wöllner (1732-1800). Canon of the Lutheran Church and a Prussian Minister of State. In Masonry his original predilection was for the Templar Rite of the Strict Observance and in 1775 he was appointed, in connection with that Rite, its Ecossais Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Three Globes at Berlin. Regardless of the fact he held that appointment, by 1782 he had already induced his patron Prince Frederick Augustus of Brunswick to join him in the New Gold Rosicrucians, an alchemical and mystical Order, and the two thereafter devoted themselves to this Order.

Certainly, if one wanted well-known names connected with Germany in 1786 and knew little or nothing about their Masonic connections, it is an imposing list; but with such knowledge one has the right to enquire concerning each in connection with the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, “*Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?*”

Lastly, Frederick. Physically, Frederick could have signed the Grand Constitutions on 1st May 1786; but why should he have done so? At that particular time he knew his long, fatal and painful illness was nearing its end, and his mind was engrossed with such precautions as were possible to prevent the break-up of Prussia on his death. Is it likely at such a time he would have bothered to devise a new Rite giving such prominence in it to the Rite of Perfection? As a young man he had been initiated into Craft Masonry in 1738, but after 1744 he ceased to take any active part in it, though he allowed his name to be used subsequently as Patron or Protector of Masonry in Prussia. He never joined any “High Degree”, and the Rite of Perfection never entered Prussia. It is true that in several

of its Degrees, which had either a Prussian traditional history or which had a Crusader theme, he was acknowledged in the Rite as their Patron; but his patronage of them was accorded to him in France,¹⁷ in some of these cases because he was King of Prussia when the Degree first emerged, and, in the rest, because of his great name as a military commander. Would it not have been natural for Frederick's favourite nephew, who was trained by him, who succeeded him, and who was, unlike Frederick, personally interested in and connected with "High Degrees", to have introduced the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite into Prussia, if his Uncle had devised it? He did not even join it, nor did his Uncle's alleged Rite even enter Germany until nearly two hundred years after Frederick's death. Search has been made at Berlin for the principal of the Grand Constitutions or for any mention of the Meeting of the Supreme Council of the 33rd Degree held there on 1st May 1786, when, according to the Grand Constitutions, Frederick himself was present, and the result is—nothing.

Provided the Grand Constitutions of 1786 with their Secret Institutes are recognised to be, as they are, the Grand Constitutions of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, acknowledged as such by the Supreme Councils of the Rite over the world, each may think what seems likely to him concerning the accuracy of their alleged date and genesis. Of strict evidence there is none—nor is it possible to see how there ever could be any in absence of anything in the way of an original of the purported Secret Institutes and Grand Constitutions of 1786, on which the alleged signatures could be examined and checked. On the other hand, if there is no such original, it is abundantly clear that every scrap of circumstantial evidence which has come to light in a century of research points towards these two documents having been framed at some date after 1790 (and, therefore, after the death of Frederick) in the Western Hemisphere¹⁸ to meet conditions affecting the Rite of Perfection there and only there. For such as may share these views with him, the present writer has indicated in the preceding pages what he believes to be a possible starting-point for a hitherto untried line of research to trace the originator of these documents in the Western Hemisphere.

It is that in 1795 at San Domingo St Laurent either devised them for himself or then got into his possession the only copy of them devised by someone else at present unknown, and that he communicated them to de Grasse-Tilly about the time he fled from San Domingo as a refugee to Charleston.

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- 1 Then roughly comprising the present States of Washington, Montana, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.
 - 2 The northern coastline of the continent of South America.
 - 3 The southern belt of the continent of North America consisting of the Spanish Colonies of Florida and West Florida, purchased by the U.S.A. from Spain in 1819. As regards “the one sea to the other”, Florida is washed on the East by the Atlantic Ocean, and West Florida, adjoining it, extended to the mouth of the Mississippi River in the Gulf of Mexico.
 - 4 The letter is reproduced to face p. 80 in F. Clement’s *Contribution à l’Étude des Hauts Grades*, &c., &c. (Pub. Brussels, September 1937).
 - 5 The German Mason Wöllner (see p. 54).
 - 6 Of the alleged Supreme Council Meeting held at Berlin on 1st May 1786.
 - 7 Bernardo de Galvez, born 1746 or 1756, died 1786 or 1794. Became Viceroy of Mexico 1781. Attacked Canada and turned the British out of Pensacola, Florida, when they were engaged with the French and Americans at Yorktown 1782. In 1782, had the French Admiral de Grasse been successful at the Battle of the Saints, was ready with a force of 20,000 to invade the British West Indies. Created Count and Lt.-Gen. for his services by the King of Spain. Gave his name to Galveston, Texas.
 - 8 Must have been between 1804, when Masonry again permitted in France, and 1814, when Cambaçères, who supported Napoleon, disappeared from French Masonry.
 - 9 Probably between 1815, when de Lacépède dominated French Masonry, and 1822, when he resigned from all but the S.C. for France.
 - 10 Note that he had retired from leadership of the A. and A. S. Rite in France in 1822.
 - 11 An alleged copy only.
 - 12 Between the S.C. for New Spain and Mexico, &c. &c. and the Rite of Perfection “S.C.” at New York.
 - 13 The alleged copy certified by Wöllner.
 - 14 An official records book kept by each member of the 33° in which he entered copies of all documents of importance affecting the Rite and copies of any Patents granted by him.
 - 15 Which at Paris concluded in 1834 the treaty of Alliance.
 - 16 The treaty referred to in the preceding note.
 - 17 And, let it be noted, at a time when the Rite of Perfection there required its members to be Christians and Roman Catholics, which makes it extremely unlikely, as some have suggested, that Frederick became patron of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite as a Protestant leader.
 - 18 There is no argument for a Prussian origin of the Secret Institutes and Grand Constitutions in the Eagle neck-jewels worn in the 30th-33rd Degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, because the latter have a double-headed eagle and the Prussian eagle is single-headed.