

# Joseph Cerneau vs. Emanuel De La Motta:

## *Understanding the Founding of the Scottish Rite's Northern Masonic Jurisdiction in 1813 through the Lens of Religious Intolerance*

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*... the French Systems were believed to have a tendency to looseness & irreverence as it regarded the Christian Religion. This opinion was much strengthened by many, on account of the famous document [i.e. Circular Throughout the Two Hemispheres] issued by a body at Charleston So. Ca. calling itself nearly by the same name, & which was composed mainly of Jews – Mr. Cerneau assured me that such was not the case with the system which he intended to introduce here. It was an entirely different system, regarding with the highest reverence every truth of the Revealed Religion of the Scriptures was known as the ‘Old Scottish Rite of Heredom’ & was altogether free from anything which would cause the slightest feeling of disrespect, or come into collision with any Religion based upon the Word of God.’*

— John W. Mulligan, recalling Joseph Cerneau's establishment of the high degrees in New York, as told to Robert B. Folger in 1851, from a manuscript history of the Scottish Rite by Folger

**I**N MAY 1813, EMANUEL DE LA MOTTA, TREASURER GENERAL OF THE WORLD'S first Supreme Council, located in Charleston, South Carolina, arrived in New York City. In a book published the following year, De La Motta recounted the purpose of his trip and what he encountered shortly after arriving:

In the early part of May, 5813 [i.e., 1813], I arrived here, not on any *speculative, office-hunting or masonic errand*, but in quest of health. Some time in July, a certain pamphlet or tableau, signed, sealed and stamped, was placed in my hands, entitled – ‘*List of the Grand Officers, Members, Honorary Members, &c. of the Supreme Council of Grand Inspectors General of the 33d degree, regularly established according to the ancient constitutional Scottish Rite of Heredon, for the United States of America, their territories and dependencies, held in the city of New-York. Also the Grand Consistory of Supreme Chiefs of Exalted Masonry, and the Constituted Bodies of its jurisdiction. Anno Lucis, 5813*’ ... On the very front of which I perceived the name of *Mr. Joseph Cerneau*, in the glaring character of ‘*Most Potent Sovereign Grand Commander*.’ Convinced that he must either have been egregiously imposed upon, or, that he was imposing on some respectable characters in the community, from a number of names which I understood to be very *respectable* in the city, *many* of them dignified with titles which that degree does not recognize, I was led to make some inquiry respecting this *Mr. Joseph Cerneau*, and his pretensions to certain titles.<sup>1</sup>

De La Motta was a member of the world's only Supreme Council at the time that he was given a tableau on which Cerneau was listed with the same title – Sovereign Grand Commander – as the chief officer of a Supreme Council. De La Motta concluded that either Cerneau had been duped by another Mason into having been invested with Masonic powers that did not exist, or that he himself was passing himself off to such ‘respectable characters in the community’ as DeWitt Clinton, John W. Mulligan, and Cadwallader D. Colden, who were listed as officers in Cerneau's Supreme Council (see Table 1). De La Motta suspected that Cerneau's Supreme Council appeared to be based on no legitimate Masonic authority. De La Motta attempted to investigate Cerneau's Masonic bona fides, but Cerneau refused to recognize De La Motta's authority to do so. Shortly thereafter, De La Motta's Supreme Council issued a circular, declaring Cerneau ‘an Impostor of the first magnitude’ and expelling him ‘from every Masonic Asylum within our Jurisdiction.’ In the same circular, the Charleston Supreme Council declared that the Consistory, estab-

<sup>1</sup> *Universi Terrarum Orbis Architectionis per Gloriam Ingentis: Deus Meumque Jus. Ordo Ab Chao: In the Name of the Grand and Supreme Council of the Most Puissant Sovereigns, Grand Inspectors General of the 33d Degree ...* ([New York]: n.p., 1814), 3–4. Italics in original for all quotations from this source throughout this essay. This pamphlet is referred to as De La Motta's Response in the notes that follow. Arturo de Hoyos has suggested that because Abraham Jacobs (b. 1757), who had founded a Lodge of Perfection and Council, Princes of Jerusalem in New York City in 1808, had already been in touch with De La Motta's Supreme Council in Charleston, South Carolina that De La Motta was on a ‘covert errand.’ See Art de Hoyos, ‘The Union of 1867,’ *Heredom* 4 (1995), 17.

lished in 1806 by John Gabriel Tardy, Jean-Baptiste Desdoity, Moses Levy Maduro Peixotto, and John James Joseph Gourgas, was the 'only lawful body in New-York, which can exist for the Northern District of the United States.'<sup>2</sup> Cerneau issued a rejoinder, mocking the Supreme Council's authority.<sup>3</sup> A Masonic political battle ensued.

Historians have addressed the conflict between Joseph Cerneau (1765–1848), a Roman Catholic born in France, and Emanuel De La Motta (1760–1821), born on the island of Saint Croix and a member of Charleston's Jewish community, from various angles. Official histories of both the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction and the Southern Jurisdiction highlight the civil and Masonic political rivalries, while also making the case that Cerneau lacked the proper Masonic authority to his titles and degrees.<sup>4</sup> In the twenty-first century Masonic historian Alain Bernheim has perhaps written more about Joseph Cerneau than anyone else. Bernheim has attempted to look at the extant records related to Cerneau's activity in an effort to reinterpret what he sees as biased institutional histories propagated by the two Supreme Councils.<sup>5</sup> The Supreme Councils for both the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction (NMJ) and Southern Jurisdiction (SJ) in the United States were locked in a decades-long Masonic political fight against Cerneau's organization and groups that later laid claim to being its descendant.

Some of Bernheim's conclusions do not always hold up to close scrutiny. However, his ability to shine a light on details and discrepancies in previous narratives regarding the Southern and Northern Masonic Jurisdiction's attacks on Cerneau is a welcome balance to those trying to sort out what, in fact, happened in New York City in 1813 regarding Cerneau and De La Motta. Many of those writing from the perspectives of the Southern Jurisdiction and Northern Masonic Jurisdiction have assumed that Cerneau was working the same degree system as the Charleston Supreme Council. Bernheim rightly echoes Robert B. Folger (1803–1892), a nineteenth century historian of the Cerneau Rite, who proposed that part of the misunderstanding between Cerneau and De La Motta may

<sup>2</sup> *Universi Terrarum Orbis Architectionis per Gloriam Ingentis. Deus Meumque Jus* (New York, NY: n.p., 1814). Hereafter referred to as Manifesto issued by Emanuel De La Motta, 1814.

<sup>3</sup> *To the Glory of the Supreme Architect of the Universe: Ordo ab Chao. At the Orient of the Most Powerful Sovereign Grand Consistory of Grand Inspectors General of the 33d degree, and Princes of the Royal Secret, Supreme Chiefs of Exalted Masonry of the Ancient Scottish Rite of Heredom, for the United States of America ...* ([New York: n.p., 1814]).

<sup>4</sup> S. H. Baynard, *History of the Supreme Council, 33°, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the United States of America, and its Antecedents* (Boston, MA: Supreme Council, 33°, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, 1938), vol. 1, 181–3. W. L. Fox, *Lodge of the Double-Headed Eagle: Two Centuries of Scottish Rite Freemasonry in America's Southern Jurisdiction* (University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 32–3.

<sup>5</sup> Referring to historians writing about the founding of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, Bernheim has written, '...responsibility is shared with my fellow historians who did not read, did not want to understand what they read, or were told to do so.' A. Bernheim, 'Emanuel De La Motta in New York, 1813–1815: A Retrograde Chess Problem,' *Heredom* 21 (2013), 72.

have hinged on the fact that De La Motta thought that Cerneau was propagating the same Rite as his own Supreme Council. In fact, he was not.<sup>6</sup>

In all of the previous investigations into the 1813 conflict between De La Motta and Cerneau the subject of religion has largely been left out. Is it possible that this battle over who controlled the high degrees in the Northeast of the United States might be better understood by looking at it, in part, as a case of religious intolerance? A substantial amount of evidence suggests that Cerneau's group viewed their Masonic Rite as strictly for Christians only. Primary sources also suggest that Cerneau's objection to both the Southern Jurisdiction's and Northern Masonic Jurisdiction's Supreme Councils was largely based on Cerneau's belief that the Jewish members of both Councils claimed to hold Masonic degrees that Cerneau believed to be for Christian initiates only.

As mentioned above, it appears that the animosity between De La Motta and Cerneau arose in large part from the fact that they were participating in similar, but different Rites. Cerneau's Masonic Rite, the 'Ancient Constitutional Scottish Rite of Heredom,' was probably restricted to Christians. De La Motta's 'Ancient and Accepted Rite' was open to non-Christians from its beginning in 1801. Many groups in the mid-to-late nineteenth century claimed to descend from Joseph Cerneau's Sovereign Grand Consistory, and Supreme Council. This paper will primarily focus on the period from 1807 until 1827, from the founding of Cerneau's Sovereign Grand Consistory, until Cerneau's return to France and the end of his association with the Consistory.

### Brief Background of Events

Jewish men were part of the world of eighteenth-century Freemasonry in North America and the West Indies. Stephen Morin's Rite of Perfection (sometimes referred to as the Order of the Royal Secret), from which the Scottish Rite emerged, included a number of Deputy Inspectors General who were Jewish. These include Moses Michael Hays, Joseph M. Myers, Isaac Da Costa, Moses Cohen, Abraham Forst, Barend M. Spitzer, Hyman Isaac Long, Solomon Bush, and others.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, extant rituals make it clear that Jews were welcome and initiated up to that rite's twenty-fifth and final degree. We know this in part because the 1783 *Francken Manuscript*, containing the complete text of that rite's degrees, includes a cover obligation for Jewish candidates for all of the degrees above the Lodge of Perfection – from the fifteenth to the twenty-fifth, inclusive of the Rose Croix degrees.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> R. B. Folger, *The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in Thirty-Three Degrees* (New York: Published by the Author, 1881), 186–193.

<sup>7</sup> For an excellent overview of early Jewish participants in Freemasonry in the United States, including the Deputy Inspectors General, see S. Oppenheim, *The Jews and Masonry in the United States Before 1810*, Reprint from *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* No. 19. 1910 (New York: Samuel Oppenheim, 1910).

<sup>8</sup> 'Form of the obligation taken by Israelites in all the Degrees from the 15th or Knights of the East,' in *The 1783*

In 1802 a group of Masons in Charleston, South Carolina issued their *Circular Throughout the Two Hemispheres*, declaring the formation of a Supreme Council of the 33rd degree the previous year. In 1813, De La Motta, the Charleston Supreme Council's Treasurer General, was in New York City for an extended period of time, ostensibly because of health reasons. While there, De La Motta became aware of five different Masonic organizations, four of which were conferring so-called 'high degrees.' None of the groups were subordinate to the Charleston Supreme Council, the entity which claimed the entirety of the United States as its jurisdiction.

The four groups were:

- Antoine Bideaud's Sublime Grand Consistory, established in 1806;
- Joseph Cerneau's Sovereign Grand Consistory, founded in 1807;
- Abraham Jacobs' Concordia Crescimus, a Council of Princes of Jerusalem, and his Aurora Grata Lodge of Perfection, both established in 1808.

A fifth group, Joseph Cerneau's Supreme Council, was established in 1813, and was subordinate to his Sovereign Grand Consistory.<sup>9</sup>

Upon discovering these competing and, to him, possibly illegitimate Masonic bodies, De La Motta wrote to his Supreme Council to inform them of the circumstances and to seek guidance. John Mitchell and Frederick Dalcho, the Charleston Supreme Council's Sovereign Grand Commander and Lieutenant Grand Commander respectively, sent De La Motta a certificate stating that De La Motta had the authority, as stated in the patent issued to him as a Sovereign Grand Inspector General, to 'establish, congregate, superintend & inspect all Lodges, Chapters, Councils, Colleges & Consistories of the Royal & Military Order of Ancient & Modern Free-Masonry, over the surface of the Two Hemispheres, agreeable to the Grand Constitutions.'<sup>10</sup>

With his credentials in hand, De La Motta, set out to interview and investigate the Bideaud-Jacobs bodies as well as the Cerneau organizations, in an attempt to learn from whom they believed they had received their authority. As Samuel H. Baynard pointed out in his history of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction's Supreme Council, the four principal officers of these groups were mostly comprised of Masons who held offices in the Grand Lodge of New York and who were prominent politicians and government officials.<sup>11</sup>

*Francken Manuscript* (Lexington, MA: Supreme Council, 33°, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, 2017), fol. 274, reproduced on pages 616–17.

<sup>9</sup> de Hoyos, 'Union of 1867,' 16–17.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in R. B. Harris, *History of the Supreme Council, 33° (Mother Council of the World) Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A. 1801–1861* (Washington DC: The Supreme Council, 33°, 1964), 119.

<sup>11</sup> Baynard, *History of the Supreme Council*, vol. 1, 181–183.

The Jacobs-Bideaud officers included John James Joseph Gourgas, Sampson Simson, Daniel D. Tompkins, and Richard Riker. The principal Cerneau officers were Joseph Cerneau, John W. Mulligan, DeWitt Clinton, and Cadwallader D. Colden. As Baynard notes, with the exception of Gourgas and Cerneau, all six men were lawyers and prominent figures (see Table 1).

Name	Masonic Group Affiliation	Occupation or Political Office, 1813	Office in Grand Lodge of New York, 1813
John James Joseph Gourgas	Jacobs-Bideaud	Merchant	None
Sampson Simson	Jacobs-Bideaud	Attorney	Grand Treasurer
Daniel D. Tompkins	Jacobs-Bideaud	Governor of the State of New York	Former Grand Secretary
Richard Riker	Jacobs-Bideaud	District Attorney, 1st District, NY	No office, but served on various committees
Joseph Cerneau	Cerneau	Jeweller	None
John W. Mulligan	Cerneau	Attorney	No office, but served on various committees
DeWitt Clinton	Cerneau	Lieutenant Governor of the State of New York	Grand Master
Cadwallader D. Colden	Cerneau	Attorney	Senior Grand Warden

Table 1. Principal officers in groups investigated by Emanuel De La Motta in 1813

### De La Motta Expels Cerneau from Freemasonry

De La Motta and his Supreme Council issued a circular, containing De La Motta's letter expelling Cerneau, dated 21 September 1813, which was printed alongside an approbation signed by the Council's two chief officers, John Mitchell and Frederick Dalcho, dated 31 January 1814.<sup>12</sup> In the circular De La Motta declares Cerneau 'an Impostor of the first magnitude' and expelling him 'from every Masonic Asylum within our Jurisdiction.' He then states the reasons why the Charleston Supreme Council was publicly expelling Cerneau from Freemasonry. De La Motta wrote, in part, that Cerneau's transgression was that he 'stiles himself as "Most Potent, Sovereign Grand Commander of the thirty-third Degree for the United States of America, their Territories and Dependencies,"' and that while De La Motta,

having previously taken such measures as were expedient in all such cases; *having also ascertained that he is not of, nor knows any thing at all about the thirty-third Degree;* and that having received no satisfaction whatsoever from the said *Joseph Cerneau*, for his assuming a Degree, Title and Powers to which he has not the smallest claim or

<sup>12</sup> Manifesto issued by Emanuel De La Motta, 1814.

right whatever; In consequence thereof, and being in duty bound to stop, crush and publish all such characters, so as to prevent their doing further mischief, and continue to delude and impose upon otherwise worthy Brethren unacquainted with the Superior Degrees of Free Masonry. . .

I do hereby publish and declare to the whole world, as well in my own name, as in that, and at the special request of my Supreme Council, in Charleston, South-Carolina, the aforesaid *Joseph Cerneau*, a Frenchman by birth, and a jeweller by trade, &c. &c. &c. *as an Impostor of the first magnitude, and whom we have expelled from every Masonic Asylum within our Jurisdiction*; and further, that whatever Masonic works or proceedings he may have performed, or put his hands to, ever since his arrival in this country from the West-Indies, are also, hereby declared as unlawful, void, and *totally viciated* [sic] *by his last barefaced imposture, and highly anti-masonic conduct.*<sup>13</sup>

The approbation by Mitchell and Dalcho, dated January 31, 1814, reads, in part,

In the *name* and in *behalf* of the Supreme Grand Council, of Sovereign Grand inspectors General of the 33d Degree, holding its sittings in Charleston, South-Carolina; We do hereby approve of, and confirm, *all* and *every* of the foregoing declaration and proceedings of our Illustrious Brother, E. D. La Motta, the Illustrious Treasurer General of the H.E. against a certain *Joseph Cerneau* . . .<sup>14</sup>

Cerneau responded to De La Motta's publication by issuing one of his own – a report written by a committee comprised of the officers of his Sovereign Grand Consistory, dated 28 February 1814.<sup>15</sup> The committee's response takes issue with many aspects of De La Motta's circular, including questioning whether the Charleston Supreme Council even existed.

Cerneau's committee also makes two references to religion, one explicit and one implicit. First, the Cerneau Consistory refers to De La Motta's circular as a 'disgusting mass of absurdity and wickedness, which certainly discovers no characteristic of the Christian morality of our order.'<sup>16</sup> This portion is particularly important as it demonstrates that the Cerneau group clearly believes, and explicitly states, that their rite is based on a 'Christian morality.' Also in the Cerneau response is a section that can be read as an implicit denigration of Jewish members claiming to have certain high degrees. This will be discussed in further detail below.

<sup>13</sup> Manifesto issued by Emanuel De La Motta, [1]. Italics in original.

<sup>14</sup> Manifesto issued by Emanuel De La Motta, [2]. Italics in original.

<sup>15</sup> *To the Glory of the Supreme Architect of the Universe: Ordo ab Chao. At the Orient of the Most Powerful Sovereign Grand Consistory of Grand Inspectors General of the 33d degree, and Princes of the Royal Secret, Supreme Chiefs of Exalted Masonry of the Ancient Scottish Rite of Heredon, for the United States of America* . . . ([New York: n.p., 1814].

<sup>16</sup> *To the Glory of the Supreme Architect of the Universe*, 9.

## De La Motta Accuses Cerneau of Antisemitic Animosity

De La Motta himself was the first to question publicly whether Cerneau held prejudicial views of him because he was Jewish. In De La Motta's sixty-one page rejoinder to Cerneau's committee's report he quotes Cerneau's committee, who had written 'it is only necessary to remark, that those who have any knowledge of our degrees, of De La Motta, and of some of the persons he names, must allow that it is *utterly impossible* that they ought to be what they profess.'<sup>17</sup> De La Motta writes plainly that he believes that Cerneau is insinuating that his Jewish faith disallows him from certain degrees in Freemasonry. De La Motta responded forcefully, writing,

Does it not excite the indignation of every enlightened mason, on a cursory perusal of the above paragraph? Can *the gentlemen composing this committee of Mr. Cerneau's Association* mean to impeach my character, or that of the gentlemen alluded to? *They dare not*. Or is it in consequence of our being Israelites [i.e. Jews]? If so, it is another strong corroborative proof, not only of their total want of information of the Sublime Degrees, but in fact of the *whole system* of masonry. What are the first principles requisite to qualify a candidate for admission in the first degree? Is it not a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being? Does not a Hebrew [i.e. Jew] manifest such faith? Is not any thing whatever relative to religion and politics, prohibited in our Lodges? Does it require more than that a man should possess that belief, and enjoy a good moral character, to entitle him to the benefit of masonry? Is there a path where the foot of civilized man has traversed, that masonic institutions are not established, and its benefits extended to all the believers in a Supreme Deity, without its being confined to any particular sect? Let us take a view of the three first degrees. Is it not evident to every Symbolic Mason, that there are no distinctions as to religious or political principles? It is as evident to the Royal Arch Mason that a Hebrew has the same privilege extended to him, as a companion of any other persuasion. If, then, the principles of Masonry are predicated upon such grounds, it is presumable that the more Sublime degrees could shut its doors against the admission of any person of morality, virtue and religion. Admitting *for a moment that Mr. Cerneau and his Society* should be in the possession of the High degrees, I call upon them to produce, if they can, one single instance in any one degree of masonry, which dis[en]franchises [*sic*] a Hebrew from enjoying every privilege granted to any other sect. Were I at liberty fully to explain myself [i.e., by discussing ritual], it being impossible to say into whose hands this may fall, I would lead them through each degree, *particularly the Rose Croix and the Royal Secret*, and point out whether a Hebrew is not as much entitled as a Christian Brother, or any other of whatever persuasion, to the Royal Arch, the Perfection, the Chief of the Tabernacle, the Prince of Mercy, the Knight of the Brazen Serpent, and *many more*, both under and above.<sup>18</sup>

Neither Cerneau nor members of his Grand Consistory responded in print to De La Motta's long rejoinder. We do not have their thoughts on whether they intended to imply

<sup>17</sup> De La Motta's Response, 36.

<sup>18</sup> De La Motta's Response, 38.

that it was Judaism that was at the heart of their complaint that ‘it is *utterly impossible* that they [i.e. De La Motta and unnamed others] ought to be what they profess.’<sup>19</sup> Three things are clear with regard to the question of religion in this story. Cerneau appears to have believed that only Christians could participate in his group. De La Motta believed that Cerneau’s view went against the very idea of universalism in Freemasonry. De La Motta also believed that part of Cerneau’s objection to De La Motta and some of his Masonic associates was the fact that they were Jewish.

### Religious Affiliations of the Key Players

Looking at the religious affiliations of the founding members of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction and the Southern Jurisdiction, one can see that both Christians and Jews were among the founders and chief officers (see Tables 2 and 3). In contrast, the members of Joseph Cerneau’s Sovereign Grand Consistory and Supreme Council were all Christian (see Table 4). Is this coincidental or not? More evidence suggests further interest in a more Christian form of Freemasonry on the part of Cerneau’s organization. In 1814 Cerneau’s Sovereign Grand Consistory established the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar and Appendant Orders for the State of New York, which declared itself as overseer of a number of ‘self-created [Knights Templar] bodies.’ The Grand Encampment’s top officers were drawn almost exclusively from the Sovereign Grand Consistory, with DeWitt Clinton being installed as Grand Master. In addition to Clinton, Martin Hoffmann, John W. Mulligan, James B. Durand, Anthony Rainetaux, Joseph Gouin, and Jonathan Schieffelin were all officers in both Cerneau’s Sovereign Grand Consistory and the Grand Encampment of New York at its founding in 1814.<sup>20</sup> Unlike many other Masonic bodies, the Knights Templar degree is explicitly Christian, and one might infer from the Sovereign Grand Consistory’s actions, their further interest in participating in and overseeing Masonic degrees that are strictly Christian.

<sup>19</sup> Writing years later and in defense of Cerneau, Robert F. Folger stated that Cerneau was referring to the fact that their taking of the degrees would have been Masonically ‘illegal and irregular.’ Folger addresses De La Motta’s accusation of antisemitism against Cerneau directly by writing, ‘The term Israelite, or Jew, is not even mentioned or hinted at, in the Reply, which is certainly a manly and honest report. But De La Motta knew his weakness, and made this ‘dodge’ of his own accord, in order to turn off the attention from the question at issue, and to excite the sympathy of the brethren in his behalf, by declaring that the Committee were influenced by a spirit of persecution toward him and his coadjutors, because they were Israelites or Jews.’ Folger, *The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite*, Supplement, 161.

<sup>20</sup> For a brief overview of the Sovereign Grand Consistory’s establishment of the New York Grand Encampment, see F. J. Scully, *History of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America* (Greenfield, IN: Wm. Mitchel Printing Co., 1952), 60–61. The two remaining officers in the Grand Encampment were Jacob Schieffelin and Elias Hicks who, while not officers in the Sovereign Grand Consistory, were nonetheless members. I would like to acknowledge S. Brent Morris for pointing out to me the shared leadership between the Sovereign Grand Consistory’s officers and those of New York’s Grand Encampment.

Name	Religious affiliation
John Mitchell (1741–1816)	Christian (unknown denomination)
Dr Frederick Dalcho (1770–1836)	Christian (Episcopalian)
Comte Alexandre François Auguste de Grasse-Tilly (1765–1845)	Christian (Catholic)
Jean Baptiste Marie Delahogue (1744–1822)	Christian (Catholic)
Major Thomas Bartholomew Bowen (1742–1805)	Christian (probably Presbyterian)
Abraham Alexander (1743–1816)	Jewish
Emanuel De La Motta (1760–1821)	Jewish
Dr Isaac Auld (1770–1826)	Christian (Presbyterian)
Israel de Lieben (1740–1807)	Jewish
Moses Clava Levy (1749–1839)	Jewish
Dr James Moultrie (1766–1836)	Christian (Episcopalian)

Table 2. Religious affiliations, founding members Charleston Supreme Council (Southern Jurisdiction)

Name	Religious affiliation
Daniel D. Tompkins (1774–1825)	Christian (Presbyterian)
Sampson Simson (1780–1857)	Jewish
John Gabriel Tardy (1761–1831)	Christian (Episcopalian?)
J. J. J. Gourgas (1777–1865)	Christian (Calvinist?)
Richard Riker (1773–1842)	Christian (unknown denomination)
Moses Levi Maduro Peixotto	Jewish

Table 3. Religious affiliations, founding members Supreme Council, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction

Name	Religious affiliation
Joseph Cerneau (1765–1848)	Christian (Catholic)
DeWitt Clinton (1769–1828)	Christian (Presbyterian)
John W. Mulligan (1774–1862)	Christian (Episcopalian)
Dr Charles Guerin	Christian (unknown denomination)
Cadwallader D. Colden (1769–1834)	Christian (Episcopalian)
John P. Schisano	Christian (unknown denomination)
Jonathan Schieffelin (1762–1837)	Christian (Episcopalian?)
J. P. Berard	Christian (unknown denomination)
Martin Hoffman (1763–1828)	Christian (Episcopalian)

Table 4. Religious affiliations, founding members Cerneau Supreme Council

## Ritual evidence

Rituals of the high degrees used by the groups associated with De La Motta and Cerneau at the time provide more clear evidence of their approaches to allowing non-Christian members or keeping them out.

### *1783 Francken Manuscript*

The Charleston Supreme Council's founding traces its roots back to Stephen Morin's Rite of Perfection. The Rite of Perfection was overseen by a number of Deputy Inspectors General, several of whom were Jewish. An examination of the Rite of Perfection's rituals, which were the basis for some of the Charleston Supreme Council's rituals, provides more evidence that the rite welcomed Jewish members. The *1783 Francken Manuscript*, containing the rituals of the Rite of Perfection, includes a cover obligation '... taken by Israelites in all the degrees from the 15th or knights of the East ...' The obligation allowed Jewish candidates to swear an oath in good faith.<sup>21</sup>

### *Frederick Dalcho's 1801 33rd Degree Ritual*

The earliest surviving rituals of today's Scottish Rite are a set of *cabiers*, some dated 1801 and others 1802, that are in the handwriting of Frederick Dalcho, a founding member of the Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction. Dalcho served as the Council's first Lieutenant Grand Commander and as its second Sovereign Grand Commander. Dalcho's *cabier* containing the 33rd degree is the earliest known version of the degree. It includes specific instructions for Jewish initiates taking their obligation, making it clear that their Supreme Council intended to have Jewish candidates for the rite's highest degree. The note regarding Jewish candidates includes two edits, making it clear that the process itself may have evolved. The note reads: 'N.B. ~~When~~ If a Jew takes this obligation, he is to must wear his Tephelin [i.e., tefillin or phylacteries] – & have the Hebrew Bible on his breast, with his arms crossed thereon.'<sup>22</sup>

### *Cerneau 1808 Rose Croix Degree Ritual*

In contrast to the two examples above an extant French-language ritual, dated 1808 and associated with the Cerneau Rite's Triple Amitié Chapter in New York City, makes it clear that they intended a much narrower set of candidates for their degrees. In a ritual *cabier* for *Grade Sublime du Souv. : P. : R. : +. : de H. : R. : D. : M. : de Kilwinning* [i.e. Sublime Degree of the Sovereign Prince Rose Croix of Heredom of Kilwinning], sample

<sup>21</sup> *The 1783 Francken Manuscript*, 616–17.

<sup>22</sup> Frederick Dalcho, transcriber, '33rd Sovereign Grand Inspector General or Supreme Council of the 33rd', 1801 or 1802, Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library, Van Gorden-Williams Library & Archives, Manuscript Masonic Rituals Collection, SC 155, R-511, [16].

text to be used for a certificate makes it clear that all candidates were to be Roman Catholic. This ritual includes example text of a certificate where the printed/written portion states ‘... age de \_\_\_\_, Natif de \_\_\_\_, de Religion Catholique et Romaine ancient,’<sup>23</sup> making it clear that while age and place of birth were to be filled in, a member’s religion could not be filled in. The language suggests that this degree was restricted to Catholics only.<sup>24</sup>

**Cerneau’s 1823 Broadside Against the Charleston Supreme Council**  
In 1823, a decade after his expulsion by De La Motta, Cerneau published an official communication in which he explicitly states that his rite is for Christians only. In a circular that Cerneau’s Grand Consistory published, in response to a small book published by Joseph M’Cosh, a member of the Charleston Supreme Council, the Grand Consistory cautions Cerneau’s subordinate bodies against ‘having connection or holding correspondence with any Councils or Chapters ... particularly with certain societies under the assumed title of K .: H .: whose members are unworthy of possessing the Subl .: Deg .: of Philosophic Masonry, which is founded on the christian [*sic*] religion, to which they are enemies in principles.’<sup>25</sup>

We can see from the Grand Consistory’s wording that it did not just view Jewish members as being ‘unworthy’ of possessing the Sublime Degrees of Philosophic Masonry (i.e., those above the 16th degree), which they claimed were ‘founded on the christian religion,’ but that such men were ‘enemies in principles’ to Christianity. It would appear from this declaration that Cerneau’s Grand Consistory held hostile views toward Jewish Masons.

### John W. Mulligan’s Narrative of the Early Days of Cerneau

Like the 1823 circular quoted above, the majority of primary documents that exist from Cerneau and his associates’ Masonic activities are formal documents – Minutes, circulars, etc.—and, with the exception of a few instances, do not reveal the intent of the group. One

<sup>23</sup> ‘Grade Sublime du Souv .: P .: R .: + .: de H .: R .: D .: M .: de Kilwining,’ *Bibliothèque du Grand Orient de France, Fonds AR rituels*, fol. 58. The colophon on fol. 65 of the manuscript indicates that it was copied by Jean-Baptiste Bacqué, an officer in the *Chapitre Triple Amitié*, Orient of New York, May 5, 1808. A list of officers on folio 64 shows that Bacqué held the second-highest office – Premier Grand Surveillant – just under Joseph Cerneau, who is listed as President of *Le Souverain Chapitre La Triple Amitié*. I am grateful to Arturo de Hoyos for bringing this manuscript to my attention, and to Pierre Mollier for providing me with more information about it.

<sup>24</sup> It is possible that this declaration of Catholicism may derive from the ritual’s potential roots in France. However, because of Cerneau’s own Catholicism and the statements made by John W. Mulligan in particular, which are discussed further in this essay, it would appear that this may be an intentional restriction imposed upon membership.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Most Potent Sov .: Grand Consistory of the Supreme Chiefs of Exalted Masonry of the Ancient Scottish Rite of Heredom, for the United States of America, Their Territories and Dependencies: *Extract from the Minutes of its Sessions of the 14th Day of the Ninth Month Anno Lucis 5823-Christian Era, 14 November 1823* ... [New York: 1823?]. The text of the Minutes extracted in the circular is also reprinted in A. Bernheim, ‘Joseph Cerneau, His Masonic Bodies, and His Grand Consistory’s Minute Book – Part 1,’ *Heredom* 18 (2010), 55–7.

later manuscript, however, stands out. In 1874 the Supreme Council, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, purchased an unpublished manuscript written by Robert B. Folger, a life-long Freemason who participated in many Cerneau-connected groups.<sup>26</sup>

In Folger's unpublished manuscript on the history of the Cerneau Rite, he begins by recounting meeting John W. Mulligan (1774–1862) in 1851 and conducting a series of interviews with him.<sup>27</sup> Mulligan served as one of Cerneau's chief officers from the beginning, including his role as Sovereign Grand Commander from 1821 to 1823. In the 1851 interviews Mulligan refers to himself as 'the earliest, & the warmest American friend of Mr. Cerneau,'<sup>28</sup> and furnishes us with a remarkably frank view of how Cerneau's closest associate viewed the events surrounding the conflict between De La Motta and Cerneau. Although told many years later, Mulligan's recollections, as reported by Folger, help give us a clearer understanding of the controversy between Joseph Cerneau and Emanuel De La Motta that defines the founding of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction.

Mulligan begins by recounting how he met Cerneau shortly after he had moved there in 1806. Mulligan notes that Cerneau

did not understand the English language, & found great difficulty in settling himself & family in the city. Being perfectly conversant in the French language, I was introduced to him by a friend (a Frenchman) who informed me that he [i.e., Cerneau] was a very high Mason, & worthy of my highest attention and consideration.

Mulligan also notes that Cerneau 'was a severe & rigid Roman Catholic, very conscientious, very sensitive.'<sup>29</sup>

Mulligan's unvarnished recollection of his involvement during the early days of Cerneau's Sovereign Grand Consistory provides us with first-hand evidence that Cerneau and his fellow Masons were not following the same Rite and that Mulligan, at least, cast the Cerneau opposition to the Charleston Supreme Council, by drawing attention to its Jewish members, at times in antisemitic language. Here is how Mulligan described the contrast between the two Rites:

<sup>26</sup> R. B. Folger, 'Narrative Explanatory of Events Connected with Sovereign Grand Consistory,' 1874. Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library, Van Gorden-Williams Library & Archives, SC 100. Enoch Terry Carson, who created a typewritten copy of the Folger manuscript in 1877, describes the purchase of the Folger manuscript in his preface. Enoch Terry Carson, transcriber; Robert B. Folger, 'A History of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite in the United States: More Especially as Connected with the Operation of the So-Called Cerneau Supreme Council from its Organization in 1807, to its Final Absorption into the Supreme Council of the Northern Jurisdiction of the U.S. in 1867,' 1877. Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library, Van Gorden-Williams Library & Archives, SC 087.

<sup>27</sup> Folger, 'Narrative,' 1–26. John W. Mulligan was the son of Hercules Mulligan (1740–1825), an Irish-American tailor and spy during the American Revolutionary War. After graduating from Columbia College in New York City in 1791, the younger Mulligan became Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben's secretary, serving in that capacity until Baron von Steuben's death in 1794. Mulligan and von Steuben were close; Mulligan inherited von Steuben's library of books and maps upon the Baron's death.

<sup>28</sup> Folger, 'Narrative,' 3.

<sup>29</sup> Folger, 'Narrative,' 1–2.

The reputation of these degrees [i.e. those that Cerneau brought with him from St. Domingo], in this country, at that time, was not good, inasmuch as the French Systems were believed to have a tendency to looseness & irreverence as it regarded the Christian Religion. This opinion was much strengthened by among many, on account of the famous document [i.e., *Circular Throughout the Two Hemispheres*] issued by a body at Charleston So. Ca. calling itself nearly by the same name, & which was composed mainly of Jews – Mr. Cerneau assured me that such was not the case with the system which he intended to introduce here. It was an entirely different system, regarding with the highest reverence every truth of the Revealed Religion of the Scriptures, was known as the ‘Old Scottish Rite of Heredom’ & was altogether free from anything which would cause the slightest feeling of disrespect, or come into collision with any Religion based upon the Word of God.<sup>30</sup>

Although Mulligan is not accurate about the religious composition of the Charleston Supreme Council (which, while including both Christian and Jewish Masons, was never ‘composed mainly of Jews’), he does make it clear, from this passage, that Cerneau’s Rite is not only different from that of the Charleston Supreme Council, but that religion is one thing that differentiates them.

In Mulligan’s narrative he calls frequent attention to Jewish Masons, whom he viewed as interlopers. For example, after explaining how the Cerneau organization was structured, including the functions of the Sovereign Grand Consistory and the Supreme Council, Mulligan recounts, ‘All was progressing well, when a new cause of trouble made its appearance, in the person of a Jew named Abram [i.e. Abraham] Jacobs, from whom, at first we had a great deal of annoyance.’<sup>31</sup> In discussing the arrival of De La Motta in New York City, Mulligan recalled that ‘Their body [i.e., Supreme Council at Charleston] numbered but very few, was very little known, & in order to accomplish the contemplated plan, they selected from their number, Emanuel Dela Motta, a Jew, to come on to New York & to put into effect such measures as would be most likely to answer the purpose.’<sup>32</sup>

Later in his narrative Mulligan more bluntly expresses how he perceived De La Motta and the Charleston Supreme Council. When contrasting Cerneau’s Consistory with the Charleston Supreme Council, Mulligan said to Folger, evoking an old antisemitic stereotype: ‘On the opposite side was Dela Motta, a Wandering Jew, a stranger, & totally unknown to any except his Jewish associates.’<sup>33</sup> In describing the founding of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction’s Supreme Council, Mulligan states that De La Motta ‘undertook to establish a Sup. Gr. Council here, with Daniel D. Tompkins as its Sov. Gr. Commander, but that body never had more than a nominal existence. Mr. Riker was ashamed of it –

<sup>30</sup> Folger, ‘Narrative,’ 2.

<sup>31</sup> Folger, ‘Narrative,’ 8.

<sup>32</sup> Folger, ‘Narrative,’ 17.

<sup>33</sup> Folger, ‘Narrative,’ 18.

retired – it was left in the hands of the Jews & Mr. Gourgas, who did what they could for a while to give it activity, but all in vain.<sup>34</sup> Again, the facts here are disputable, including the idea that the Supreme Council was ‘left in the hands of the Jews & Mr. Gourgas.’ Later Mulligan does not name De La Motta, but instead refers to him as a ‘Jew pedler,’ when talking about how ‘he undertook to traduce & vilify’ Joseph Cerneau, Mulligan, and the other officers in the Sovereign Grand Consistory.<sup>35</sup>

When discussing the Rose Croix chapters, Mulligan describes his perception of how Cerneau’s Rose Croix degrees grew out of a Roman Catholic tradition. Mulligan recounts that

The ceremonials & doctrines [i.e., of the Rose Croix Chapters] were very different from those of the present day [i.e., 1851]. The services were, in fact, French, & the degree strictly in accordance with the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, by which is meant the fundamental principles of the Christian Religion, as far as the absolute Divinity, Human birth, Life, Death, Burial, & Resurrection of the Redeemer is concerned. This formula was insisted upon with great pertinacity, & out of it grew in this country, the system of Templarism, as founded by the Sov. Gr. Consistory, Mr. Cerneau being its head.<sup>36</sup>

If Mulligan’s words are not evidence enough, Folger himself lays out a similarly stark contrast between Cerneau’s Christians-only rite (viewed positively by Folger) and the Southern and Northern Masonic Jurisdiction’s rite. Later in the manuscript, written in Folger’s voice, he states that

The one [i.e., Cerneau’s Rite] was strictly a Religious Order, strongly characterized by the peculiarities of the Roman Catholic system. It regarded with veneration all the leading doctrines of Christianity, as the Divinity of Christ, the Atonement for sin made by Him, the Crucifixion, Death, Burial, & Resurrection of His body, & made it obligatory upon all who were received as initiates, to be, at least, nominal believers in the same.

The other [i.e. De La Motta, etc.] was strictly Jewish, & ‘Rationalistic.’ The very first manifesto they issued after the founding of the Supreme Council in 1802, contained such a mass of falsehood, & was of such a blasphemous tendency, that it was rejected by the Grand Lodge of Scotland, as a paper full of dangerous doctrines . . . They denied the divinity of Christ, & likened him to a common thief. They ignored the whole system of Atonement, & in its place substituted Philosophy, Paganism, Old women’s fables, & a variety of things foreign to the basis of the degrees from which they undertook to teach.

In the days of the existance [*sic*] of the Sov. Gr. Consistory these matters were well known, but as changes have been constantly passing over the order, they have been entirely forgotten, & lost sight of, yet, even now, a comparison of the rituals worked by Joseph Cerneau, & those of Abram Jacobs, which were the product of the Jews of St.

<sup>34</sup> Folger, ‘Narrative,’ 18.

<sup>35</sup> Folger, ‘Narrative,’ 24.

<sup>36</sup> Folger, ‘Narrative,’ 11.

Domingo, & agree perfectly with the Ancient & Accepted Rite as administered, the characteristics are so bold & striking that one can hardly believe that such monstrosities should find a resting place with thoughtful men.<sup>37</sup>

Mulligan and Folger provide ample evidence that Cerneau and his rite's descendants viewed themselves as members in a group that was for Christians only and which, by definition, excluded Jewish Masons. Cerneau, Mulligan, and Folger all believed that this exclusion derived naturally from the degrees that their rite encompassed, which explicitly forbade members to initiate Jewish Masons.

### Later Histories that Emphasize and Exaggerate the Jewish Membership of the SJ and NMJ

While the primary focus of this essay has been on the period during which Joseph Cerneau was active in his organization in the United States, it is worth noting the persistence of the anti-Jewish attitude among those defending Joseph Cerneau in the decades that followed his return to France in 1827. This anti-Jewish attitude ranges from explicit anti-semitism to more implicit forms which exaggerate the role of Jewish Masons and frame their participation and influence in a pejorative manner.

In his 1843 book *Histoire Pittoresque de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, F. T. Bègue Clavel gives this account of the founding of the Scottish Rite in the United States:

the ancient and accepted Scottish rite does not go back beyond 1801; it was created in this year in Charleston by five Jews, named John Mitchell, Frederick Dalcho, Emmanuel de la Motta, Abraham Alexander, and Isaac Auld, who, in purely mercantile views, had assumed the functions of Grand Commander, Lieutenant Grand Commander, Treasurer, Secretary, etc., and thus held the entire administration in their hands ...<sup>38</sup>

This account is especially notable for how it focuses on the idea that the Supreme Council was established by 'five Jews.' While the five men named were some of the founders of the Charleston Supreme Council, only one of these five – De La Motta – was Jewish.

Another French writer, Jean-Marie Ragon, gives a similar history of the founding of the Charleston Supreme Council, which also falsely reports – presumably with antisemitic ill intent – that the founders were entirely Jewish. Ragon also gives his own version of

<sup>37</sup> Folger, 'Narrative,' 41–2.

<sup>38</sup> 'Ce qui paraît démontré aujourd'hui, c'est que le rite écossais ancien et accepté ne remonte pas au delà de 1801; qu'il fut créé en cette année à Charlestown par cinq juifs, appelés John Mitchell, Frederic Dalcho, Emmanuel de la Motta, Abraham Alexander, et Isaac Auld, lesquels, dan des vues purement mercantiles, s'étaient adjudgé les fonctions de grand-commandeur, de lieutenant grand-commandeur, de trésorier, de secrétaire, etc., et tenaient ainsi toute l'administration entre leurs mains ...' F-T. B. Clavel, *Histoire Pittoresque de la Franc-maçonnerie et des Sociétés Secrètes Anciennes et Modernes* (Paris: Pagnerre, Editeur, 1843), 207.

the 1813 founding of the Northern Jurisdiction's Supreme Council in New York that appears to be based almost entirely on his imagination and his animosity toward Jews. In his 1881 history of the Cerneau Rite, Robert B. Folger quotes an English translation of Ragon's account:

The Jews who had been initiated by De La Motta for the purpose of founding & establishing a new Sup. Council in New York City, were also traffickers in Masonry, more adroit & less selfish than Mr. Cerneau. Among them were some honorable & honest persons, not Jews, whose names served that body as a recommendation, & a cloak, & under the shelter of these names, they reserved for their own profit, all the receptions, diplomas, patents, & other monies received by that body, & the amount was by no means small . . . They also charged Cerneau with speculation, while in their own body they were pocketing the money as fast as it came in, & deceiving the honest & honorable members of their own body whom they were leading by the nose. The last manifesto which they published was in 1817, which led to a rupture in their own body, & the honest members kicked the Jews out. But the sequel shewed, that the Jews who were kicked out were the main spring & very support of the Council; that as long as they were in the body, members were made, & its existence was strengthened. The Jews made money by the operation, which alone was quite sufficient to inspire them with great zeal, & when they were kicked out, the Council died. That Supreme Council existed no more.<sup>39</sup>

Albert Gallatin Mackey, writing in 1874, in his encyclopedia entry on Stephen Morin commented on these writers, noting that 'Ragon, Thory, and Clavel say that [Stephen] Morin was a Jew; but as these writers have *judaized* all the founders of the Scottish Rite in America, we have no right to place any confidence in their statements.'<sup>40</sup> One can see, however, that these French writers did more than 'judaize' all of the early founders; they constructed an antisemitic narrative which pitted 'honest' members against Jewish members who are portrayed using familiar antisemitic tropes.

### Robert B. Folger's View

Robert B. Folger, a physician and Freemason, was perhaps the most public defender of Joseph Cerneau in the United States.<sup>41</sup> In 1826 Folger was irregularly initiated up to the 32nd degree by Abraham Jacobs. Folger's association with Cerneau began shortly after. Believing he had been legitimately initiated, Folger joined Lafayette Chapter of Rose

<sup>39</sup> Folger, *The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, in Thirty-Three Degrees*, 160–61.

<sup>40</sup> A. G. Mackey, *An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences* (Philadelphia, PA: Moss & Company, 1874), 509.

<sup>41</sup> The best contemporary biography of Folger is an essay entitled 'The Biography of a Remarkable Freemason,' in A. de Hoyos & S. B. Morris, *Committed to the Flames: The History and Rituals of a Secret Masonic Rite* (Hersham: Lewis Masonic, 2008), 75–93.

Croix, which was subordinate to Cerneau's Sovereign Grand Consistory.<sup>42</sup> In 1867 or 1868 Folger signed an oath of fealty with the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction's Supreme Council and became an Active Member.<sup>43</sup> In 1881 Folger and Hopkins Thompson, another Active Member of the Supreme Council, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, announced that they had formed a new Supreme Council, which traced its roots to Cerneau's original Supreme Council.<sup>44</sup> The following year both Thompson and Folger were expelled from the Supreme Council, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction.<sup>45</sup>

Folger's book, *The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite: A Full and Complete History*, first published in 1862, and published again under a slightly different title in 1881, is a history of Freemasonry told from the perspective of Masonic organizations leading back to Joseph Cerneau.<sup>46</sup> In defending Cerneau and his Masonic descendants, Folger also framed many of his arguments against the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction's founding in antisemitic language. In describing De La Motta, Folger writes

These remarks are perfectly characteristic of the man. He was a 'Jew' in every sense of the word. Commencing with the notable document, issued by the Sup. Council of Charleston in 1802, of which he was a member, & a signer, a document which would lead to the belief, that the divine man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, was a liar, & a thief; he would brand with 'shame & spitting' every member of the Rite who would countenance or encourage, a plainly marked Christian degree. This spirit was promoted & continued by the Jews of that body; it became more & more prominent, especially in the grade of K-H [i.e. Kadosh] so much so that it became a matter of public notoriety, & in Nov<sup>r</sup> 1823, drew from the Sov. Gr. Consistory, an edict, denouncing the Sup. Gr. Council of Charleston; cautioning all brethren, councils, chapters, or colleges, from holding any communication with them whatever, on account of infidel principles.<sup>47</sup>

Folger did not hide his antisemitism, not when writing about De La Motta, as seen above, nor when claiming that the rite founded by Cerneau was for Christians only. Folger wrote about the founding period of the Cerneau Rite, from 1807 until 1827, by underscoring its exclusion of Jewish Masons:

It is rather a matter of interest to the living members of the old order, to look back over the doings of the past. The Sov. Gr. Consistory had assumed the position, & claimed for itself to be, a close & strict adherent to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion. From the moment of its foundation – Oct. 1807 to the hour of its

<sup>42</sup> de Hoyos & Morris, *Committed*, 78.

<sup>43</sup> Baynard, *History of the Supreme Council*, vol. 1, 105.

<sup>44</sup> Baynard, *History of the Supreme Council*, vol. 1, 121–25.

<sup>45</sup> Baynard, *History of the Supreme Council*, vol. 1, 131–32.

<sup>46</sup> R. B. Folger, *The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite: A Full and Complete History* (New York: n.p., 1862). Folger's 1862 book was published as a second edition under a different title in 1881: R. B. Folger, *The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in Thirty-Three Degrees* (New York: Published by the Author, 1881).

<sup>47</sup> Carson & Folger, 'A History of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite in the United States,' 158.

dissolution – Nov. 1827, the body did not swerve from the stand which it had taken, & which the laws of the ‘Ancient Constitutional Scottish Rite of Heredom’ sternly insisted upon – viz; the Christian religion as its basis.

And that they were consistent in their actions cannot be denied, inasmuch as through the whole course of the administration of that Rite, no Jew was ever admitted as a partaker of its mysteries. There was no objection made to the Jews as men. They were quite highly esteemed as any other class could be, but the barrier in the way of their admission was simply, the denial of the truth of the doctrines which were the basis of the structure which the order had reared. Nor did they, on their part, complain, as the acknowledgement of such doctrines was fatal to the faith in which they prided themselves, & in which, from childhood, they had been educated.<sup>48</sup>

While in the passage about De La Motta Folger writes of Jewish Masons as holding ‘infidel principles,’ he then claims that ‘There was no objection made to the Jews as men,’ stating that they were only excluded because of ‘the denial of the truth of the doctrines which were the basis of the structure which the order had reared.’ Folger’s views were hardly uncommon at the time, but they were, as De La Motta and many others pointed out, hardly filled with fraternal sentiment.

### The NMJ’s Later Exclusion of Jewish Members

Between its founding in 1813 and the beginning of the anti-Masonic period in 1826 the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction’s Supreme Council included Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant members. The group’s second Sovereign Grand Commander – Sampson Simson – was Jewish. Despite this early practice of inclusivity, the NMJ did not continue to welcome Jewish Masons above the sixteenth degree. For nearly a century, from the 1840s until the 1940s, the NMJ’s strictly Christian Rose Croix Degree excluded non-Christians.

Because of the effects of the anti-Masonic movement in the United States, the NMJ’s Supreme Council was effectively dormant from 1827 until 1845. Gourgas and Yates kept the documents, rituals, and papers of the Supreme Council during these years. Starting in 1845, Gourgas began to reorganize the Supreme Council. The reorganized Supreme Council was composed of six officers, none of them Jewish.<sup>49</sup> Among its first acts was to issue a warrant to English Freemason Robert Crucefix, creating a Supreme Council for England and Wales. Gourgas enclosed a letter and other documents with the charter. In

<sup>48</sup> Carson & Folger, ‘A History of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite in the United States,’ 164.

<sup>49</sup> The two Jewish officers of the NMJ’s Supreme Council were no longer active by 1832. Moses Levi Maduro Peixotto died in 1828. Sampson Simson, who resigned as Sovereign Grand Commander in 1832, does not appear to have continued his association with the group after he stepped down. Jacob De La Motta, son of Emanuel De La Motta, became an Active Member in the NMJ’s Supreme Council in 1814, but moved south and switched his affiliation to the Southern Jurisdiction by 1823. The six officers in the reorganized Supreme Council in 1845 were J.J.J. Gourgas, Giles Fonda Yates, Edward Asa Raymond, Charles Whitlock Moore, Reuel Baker, and John Christie. Baynard, *History of the Supreme Council*, vol. 1, 281.

the letter, Gourgas mentions the Rose Croix degree and instructs Crucefix that, 'No Jew Brother is ever to be received in this degree under any circumstances, or pretext whatever. None but Christian Brothers can be initiated into it.'<sup>50</sup> This statement was remarkable in its blunt clarity and it would take nearly a century before the Supreme Council tackled this edict head on, although there were moments when it appeared that a more inclusive approach would be embraced.

In 1867, after decades of Masonic denunciations and expulsions against each other, the descendants of the Cerneau Supreme Council and the Gourgas Supreme Council called a truce and merged into a united Supreme Council. A few years later, in 1870, following the 'de-Christianization' of the Rose Croix degree by Albert Pike's Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction, the NMJ's Supreme Council put their own Rose Croix degree to a vote. The majority approved adopting new seventeenth and eighteenth degree rituals that were of an 'exclusive 'Christian' character.' The minority report, written by dissenting members of the Council, wrote that they

protest against the intolerant doctrine of inhibiting from the above-named degrees [i.e. seventeenth and eighteenth] all those who are not of the Christian faith, holding that all men believing in the one Great and ever living God, the immortality of the soul and the virtues inculcated thereby, are eligible to all degrees of the A.A.S. Rite.<sup>51</sup>

Further to this they went on to propose that the NMJ should adopt the degrees and rituals of the Supreme Council's Southern Jurisdiction for its own Rose Croix chapters. This proposal was voted down.

In 1938, under the leadership of Melvin Maynard Johnson, who was Sovereign Grand Commander from 1933–53, the Supreme Council finally addressed the issue of excluding non-Christian candidates within the NMJ. Johnson spearheaded the revision of the Rose Croix degrees that finally allowed Jewish brothers to take their oaths in good faith and with respect to their religion. Johnson laid out his arguments in a 1938 pamphlet, *Non-Christian Candidates in the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, where he emphasized the role that Jewish men played in the founding of the Scottish Rite, and also reminded his readers that the Rose Croix degree that the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction was currently using was not the same degree the founders had used. Johnson wrote,

<sup>50</sup> G. A. Newbury & L. L. Williams, *A History of the Supreme Council, 33° of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the United States of America* (Lexington, MA: Supreme Council, A.A.S.R., N.M.J., 1987), 176. Newbury and Williams note both that the underscoring is in the original and, with regard to why such an explicit restriction on Jewish members would have emanated from the Supreme Council, write 'the 1845 group which authorized the issuance of the English Charter were all Knights Templar, and this may explain their unusual act.'

<sup>51</sup> *Proceedings of the Supreme Council of Sovereign Grand Inspectors-General of the Thirty-Third and Last Degree, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the United States of America* (New York: Masonic Publishing Company, 1870), 92.

Be it remembered in this connection that the Christian doctrinal and dogmatic interpolations in our present Eighteenth Degree were inserted into our ritual partly in 1860, and the balance in 1870. *These were innovations in the body of our Rite ...* The innovations in the Gourgas-Yates recast of the Eighteenth Degree, supplemented by amendments of Carson, have given us today a ritual distinctively offensive to as earnest, honest, God-fearing men as any among our membership.<sup>52</sup>

Since the reforms put in place under Johnson, Jewish members have been able to participate in all of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction's degrees, with oaths and obligations that include language that non-Christians can state in good faith.

## Conclusion

Examining the surviving primary source material surrounding the conflict between Emanuel De La Motta and Joseph Cerneau does not allow us to conclude with certainty what motivated both sides. However, it appears that religion played a role. From 1801 until 1827 both the Southern Jurisdiction and the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction included Jewish Masons among their officers and membership. During this same period, it appears that the Cerneau group not only excluded Jews from membership in their rite, but that they did so purposefully and with a degree of animus.

Reading the extant primary sources, we can conclude that Joseph Cerneau and others involved with his rite, such as John W. Mulligan, believed and claimed that they were practicing a different rite from that of both the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction's and Southern Jurisdiction's Supreme Councils. Cerneau's Sovereign Grand Consistory and Supreme Council viewed their rite as one that restricted membership to Christian Masons only. The organization itself, through its 1823 circular, made a forceful statement of its views regarding Christianity and membership. Later historians of the Cerneau rite, including original officer John W. Mulligan and long-time apologist Robert B. Folger, used more explicit and sometimes antisemitic language when expressing their feelings about Jews and their belief that they should be excluded from membership from certain degrees.

Multiple factors are likely to have contributed to the long-standing animosity between the Rite of Joseph Cerneau and the Supreme Councils of the Southern Jurisdiction and Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. Not adequately addressed by researchers in the past, religion appears to have played a significant and contributing role in the long-standing schism between these groups.

<sup>52</sup> M. M. Johnson, *Non-Christian Candidates in the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry: With Some Discussion of the Eighteenth Degree* ([Boston]: Privately printed by the Supreme Council, 33°, A.A.S.R., N.M.J., 1938), 11.

