



On June 9th 2018, in Montpellier, in association with the 30th degree Lodge of the Supreme Council *Chevalier de Ramsay* and the members of the Jurisdiction of the 12th sector, the Grand College of Scottish Rites - Grand Orient of France organised a symposium about Jean-Jacques-Régis Cambacérès who was Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Orient of France (1805-1814) and Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of the 33rd degree in France (1806-1814).

The symposium was highly successful in terms of numbers. More than 300 members of 10 different obediences attended. It was also successful in terms of quality as can be seen by reading the 10th instalment of the *Essais Écossais*.

Grand Commander Cambacérès, whom Napoléon Bonaparte called the “Regulator” because of his immense legal skills, was also second in rank in the state at the beginning of the Consulate as Second Consul, then as Prince Arch Chancellor of the Empire at the end of the first Empire. He fulfilled both his masonic and non-masonic duties with all the splendour which their symbolic representations required.

The main writer of the Civil Code, he was also the main drafter of the *Statutes of the Masonic Order in France* published in 1806. P.F Pinault called him the Senior Warden of Imperial Masonry, as he protected it as much as he kept watch over it. Indeed, I would call him the Junior Warden of Imperial Administration because he was at the origins of what would thereafter become the Institutes of Political Sciences (*Instituts d'Études Politiques*) and of the National Administration School (*ENA*). He had even foreseen the Diplomatic and Consular Institute, which only came into being in 2010. For an example, he founded the corps of Auditors at the Council of State (*Conseil d'État*) (1803). Let us observe that the auditor, “he who listens”, and who, among other things, was bound to remain silent could later become *maître des requêtes* then Counselor. Therefore, he experienced a true initiatory sequence of apprentice-fellowcraft-master which Cambacérès personally supervised.

At the end of the Empire, he was removed from all his public charges and he relinquished all of his masonic representations, quite numerous in both cases. In his funeral eulogy, Bro. Fauchet attested that later on “he took up simple customs and habits. He took the garb of a Methodist; he visited the temples with a regularity which was as conspicuous as the bizarre and childish ostentation which had made him stand out in the past”.

Since 1773, at the Grand Orient of France, all offices and functions are subject to election, followed by an installation during which elected Brethren take their obligations. It is only after that oath which “obliges” has been taken, that offices and functions can be exercised. In a great many Lodges, Officers address one another in a formal manner during ritual practice; otherwise a fraternal first name usage prevails. This shows that each elected officer must regard himself or be regarded as the temporary owner of the position he holds. In this way, none of us can pretend to own a masonic function after he has ceased to exercise it, under the pretext that he would be, in his eyes but in his eyes only the only one capable of exercising it.

Each of us is irreplaceable because he is unique, but each of us is perfectly replaceable because he is just a link in the chain. When the time comes to step down from an office, every consequence must be drawn. When he listens to the text of the oath taken by his successor, the officer who leaves the office assesses the magnitude of the obligations he had taken. This is where the symbolism of the pair formed by the Tyler and the Worshipful Master imposes itself upon every one of us, because the Tyler already exists in the W. Master that is being installed. One must be fully aware of the fact that the honour of being the W. Master is coupled with the happiness of being the Tyler, and vice-versa. Otherwise, there is no initiation.

Such evident truths, though often obscured, ought to be recalled and the particularly illuminating example set by Jean-Jacques-Régis Cambacérès could be evoked with some profit.

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33rd – Sovereign Grand Commander