THE ANDERSON STORY

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Premier Grand Lodge of Freemasonry

In early 18th century, it was observed that the traditional profession and art of building construction was declining in almost all Western Europe. When it was entirely apt to take its place among the pages of history, it would from then on be referred to as Operative Freemasonry.

The descent of Operative Freemasonry was more apparent in England, in London in particular. This was due to somewhat differing economical and political structure in Britain with respect to the countries in the Continent.

Therefore, Speculative Freemasonry that will be replacing the operative was initially observed in England. Persons that created this change are said to be ones that were referred to as “accepted masons” in the 17th century and even beforehand. Admitting such persons that actually don’t practice the profession as members to lodges had started long before, in the mid 15th century.

In most masonic literature, it is stated that Speculative Freemasonry is an offshoot of the traditional profession of building construction and architecture referred today as “Operative Freemasonry”.
Furthermore, the previous is also referred to as “operative art” and the latter as “speculative science”.

However, findings of the near past in 20th Century don’t verify this occurrence of “continuity”. Despite no definite judgement on this matter has put forward yet by scholars, it is said that such a belief of the past may be erroneous.

Nowadays, it is asserted that Speculative Freemasonry has been produced all by itself following much different aims, some lodges in London were seized in order to accomplish this set-up within the structure of an association that already existed, then the antiquity of the operatives was regarded as being maintained in order to place the historical past of this new institution on a strong foundation.

If such a statement is correct, then it is more probable that these two deeds were performed simultaneously at that time rather than being in a sequence.

Four lodges in London (older city) and Westminster being a neighbouring town at that time, assembled in 1717 and assumed a common name as the Grand Lodge of London and Westminster. (However Westminster is usually not referred merely for the purpose of simplicity.)

In 1725, this institution of Modern Freemasonry changed its name to Grand Lodge of England.

The Grand Lodge of London has brought quite a different mode of organization into Freemasonry with respect to its traditional structure that persisted for centuries.
First of all, the autonomy of lodges was eliminated by creating a "central authority". Despite not being said so yet at that time, as regards the later terminology in Speculative Freemasonry, the concept of "obedience" has been imposed.

This operation was made without announcing a general communication in the country, and was put in effect by ignoring the opinion of other lodges.

On the other hand, this new body calling itself “grand lodge” was following certain different aims with respect to those of the actual profession. It was altering the principles by its own consent.

Lodges that were preserving pure operative status could neither understand nor approve such an alteration.

Thus, most lodges in other regions of England opposed such an organisation.

They asserted that this institution doesn’t fit at all to the ancient traditions of Freemasonry that were sustained for centuries. They even accused this establishment referring to itself as “Grand Lodge of London” and claiming to be a masonic society by corrupting the esteemed status of the profession and the art. Petitions were made first to persons close to King George I, then to Church of England in order to provide extermination of this society.

Can this be regarded as the first antimasonic movement in history?

If the objectives of accepted masons that established the Grand Lodge of London would be taken into account together with those that supported them in the backstage, we may justify the attitude of the lodges that were trying to provide survival of their traditional profession.

Some of those participated in the establishment of the Grand Lodge were not aware of the happening behind this action. However, it is of no doubt that many of them knew.

The arrow was out of the bow. From now on, regardless of whatever the incurring cost may be, this new masonic institution having a speculative character should ascertain development as superior to the operative lodges. For this reason, it was necessary to situate the Grand Lodge of London on a much stronger foundation.

For this purpose, George Payne as the second grand master of the Grand Lodge necessitated a "constitution" to be prepared. This new constitution should be replacing older ones that were mostly learned by listening those having the necessary experience.

Upon the instruction of the Grand Master in 1718, an attempt was made in the country to collect any available "ancient manuscripts" concerning Freemasonry.

As conceived from certain old manuscripts that were discovered at much later dates after those days and survived until the present, the said documents were covering the History of Freemasonry or the rules that masons and lodges were obliged to observe.

It couldn't be determined whether the real purpose in collecting these was to contribute to the new formation of Freemasonry by detaching it from the operative, or to verify that this newly founded institution actually bases on the principles of the ancient profession.

In fact, one of the well-known ancient customs of Operative Freemasonry maintained from time immemorial was to keep anything related to the profession as unwritten.

This was a mandatory precaution in order to protect the secrets of the profession. However, it is obvious that this was overruled in various places, primarily in England.

From early 15th century on, some persons narrated certain matters, the rules that freemasons are obliged to observe during their works in particular. The number of such manuscripts was indefinite. However, it was known that they exist, even to the extent of the place or the possessor in England.

If the conditions in those days are taken into account, obtaining this information within such a short period of time as one year is rather illogical. This denotes that a good investigation has been performed in advance at much earlier times.

As a matter of fact, it is also known that a preparation of about 15 years was made in acquiring the organisation of Speculative Freemasonry.

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Now, let's come to the vital point in this issue: After a few months, the manuscripts that could be collected got lost in a fire incident.

Some writers asserted that this fire was a special set-up in order to show an excuse to the destruction of those "old manuscripts". According to their claim, the glory of Speculative Freemasonry would be promoted by this means, and no longer would be depending on the rules of the operative era.

Despite could be no more than a rumour, this opinion may quite well be basing on truth. Because, after a couple of years elapsed, some other manuscripts that were not known previously as existing were discovered. They were burnt by being thrown into the fireplace. This latter event has been verified in masonic literature.

How much use has been obtained from the collected old manuscripts during the preparation of the new constitution of Freemasonry?

This is indistinct. The probable contents of these can only be guessed by analysing certain other old manuscripts that were discovered in much later dates. Accordingly, in contrary to what has been claimed, very few of the ancient customs of Operative Freemasonry were sustained in the new constitutions prepared by the Grand Lodge of London. These mostly consist of moral rules that are not related to organisation or administration.

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In the Grand Lodge of London, the officers of lodges and the grand officers were being elected annually.

Despite this was not written anywhere as a rule, it was tried to set down as a tradition.

As a matter of fact, both the first grand master Anthony Sayer in 1717, and George Payne who followed him stayed in this station for just one year only. In 1719, Jean Theophile Désaguliers was elected to this grand post.

During his time as Grand Master, Désaguliers devised a proposal regarding the constitution that his predecessor George Payne had anticipated.

In the following year, he handed this over to George Payne who once again was elected as the Grand Master. In the meantime the general assembly had discussed this project and rejected it by disapproving both the constituents and its reasoning.

On the other hand, the proposal that was rejected by the general assembly was lacking in various aspects with respect to the administration of the Grand Lodge. It was clear that obtaining the approval of the general assembly will not be so easy.

Whereas, the Grand Lodge was under improvement, and urgent solutions were needed to various administrative problems. For this need, George Payne prepared a set of "general regulations" to be put in force immediately, and shall be endorsed to the constitution that is expected to be approved on a later date.

In the next annual general assembly in 1721, John Duke of Montagu was elected as the Grand Master. In this meeting, the "general regulations" comprising the administrative rules of the Grand Lodge was approved and put in force.

Whereas, the proposal concerning the constitutions was once again rejected. Nobody was against a new constitution in principle, but both the appearance and the contents were being regarded as improper and insufficient.

Upon this situation, the Duke of Montagu assigned James Anderson to devise an influential preface to the constitutions as well as correcting some points by making use of his own information.

As regards the approach by Duke of Montagu, this constitution shouldn't be pertaining only to those involved in speculative labours, but should be appreciated by those maintaining their profession in the building construction sector as well.

When James Anderson completed his studies, the Grand Master constituted a committee of 14 persons, and asked them to examine Anderson's version of the proposal.

The committee didn't pay much attention to the historical part included in the proposal as devised by Anderson. As a matter of fact, sources of historical information at that time were quite limited.

Anderson asserted that he compiled most of the information in this part from the manuscripts that were lost in the fire incident, and the members of the committee had nothing more to say.

For this reason, errors in the historical accounts could not be avoided. In the section under the heading of "Approbation" in this book that follows the general regulations, it is mentioned that various historical errors were made in the past, nonetheless these were corrected in this book of constitutions.

However, leaving aside those unknown “corrections”, errors made in this book regarding historical facts are obvious. Such faults were disclosed at quite later dates, by researches and assessments made in 19th century when history started to lead itself towards being a branch in social sciences as well.

The proposal of the constitutions submitted to the general assembly once again was approved on 27 March in 1722 but it couldn’t be put in effect immediately.

At that time an important difficulty emerged in the Grand Lodge. Grand Master John Duke of Montagu was quite indisposed, and could not perform his duties.

Therefore, in the general assembly of 24 June 1722 it was decided to elect another grand master. Consequently, Philip Duke of Wharton was elected and installed to this office. However, many were raising an objection.

It was claimed that the rules were violated. This neither had anything to do with Duke of Wharton’s personal character, nor was it related whatsoever to his actual aim in getting admitted in Freemasonry.

As a matter of fact, we see that Duke of Wharton leads an antimasonic activity in later years due to disapproving the approach and performances of the Grand Lodge of London.

Shame on him but what could have been done?

Objections against the election of the Duke of Wharton as Grand Master was depending on the "general regulations" put in force in the time of George Payne.

The new grand master had to be nominated by the one on duty, and then he should have been installed into his office by observing a specific ritual devised for this purpose.

These were not performed.

Therefore, many were thinking that the Duke of Wharton cannot be regarded as grand master.

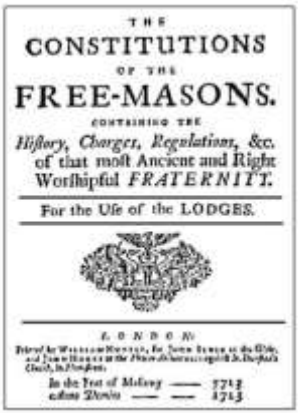
Avoiding this dilemma took some months. It was needed to wait for the Duke of Montagu to get better enough and be able to attend the general assembly.

In the meantime Duke of Wharton demanded some certain alterations in the constitutions. A few of his views were agreed. In the general assembly of 17 January 1723, he was nominated in accordance with the practice, and installed to his office as the Grand Master.

The constitutions having given the last form was approved once again and put into force.

Due to certain alterations made on these constitutions in later times, the date "1723" is pronounced whenever this original constitutions of Speculative Freemasonry is referred to.

Today, exactly 280 years elapsed after these constitutions were put in effect.


THE
CONSTITUTIONS
OF THE
FREE-MASONS.
CONTAINING THE
History, Charges, Regulations, &c.
of that most Ancient and Right
Worshipful *FRATERNITY.*
For the Use of the LODGES.
LONDON:
In the Year of Masonry ——— 5723
anno Domini ——— ——— 1723

In some masonic literature, this original constitutions is referred to as "Anderson's Constitutions".

The reason of such a referral has nothing to do with the labour carried out by James Anderson in the preparation of the constitutions.

The importance of his contribution cannot be denied. Furthermore, the "historical section" in this book was narrated entirely by him.

Nevertheless, his name can be observed in only one place in the book of 1723 where the names the masters and wardens of all lodges are listed.

It is observed that a phrase has been added here adjacent to his name as "the writer of this book".

In fact, he tried to emphasise in a number of places that he wrote this book all by himself.

In the stage of submitting the proposal of the constitutions to the general assembly of the Grand Lodge of London, Anderson undersigned this together with the members of the committee that worked on it. During this submission, he undertook the task of acting as the reporter and defended the proposal.

After being put in force, we observe that he considers possession on the constitutions by claiming that it is his own work. At that time, this was either not noticed or ignored by oversight.

It is quite probable that the attitude of Anderson in this respect may have emanated purely from a personal matter. In 1722 the Junior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of London didn't attend to his office at all. James Anderson constantly substituted him in the meetings.

However, nobody supported him in being directly elected to this post, nor did anybody nominate him to be a grand warden of the Grand Lodge.

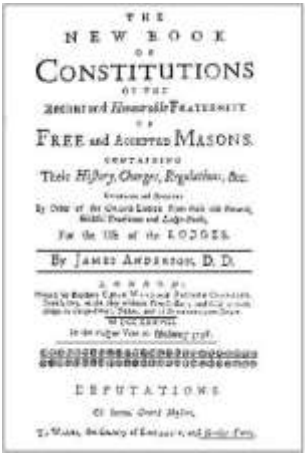
Not being able to attract the appreciation of the brethren constituting the general assembly, he provided a self-satisfaction by this manner. Whereas, we see at quite later times that Anderson's anxiety on those dates was in vain. Because, he acquired to be **"the person that had his name pronounced the most"** throughout the history of Freemasonry.

Another motive in referring to these rules as “Anderson’s Constitutions” is to highlight that they actually are invalid in general by proclaiming that they have been produced only by Anderson.

As soon as the constitutions were put in effect, religious institutions as well as the lodges that maintain being purely operative started to raise objections. Required defence against clergymen in particular was again a matter that had to be performed by Anderson being a priest in the past.

Anderson carried out this duty as best as he could, however, he believed that certain parts of the constitutions need to be modified anyhow. In this context, by a struggle that continued for many years, he finally succeeded in providing agreement on certain alterations.

When he was having the new book printed after the changes made in 1738, he had his name to be written clearly on the front cover as the “author”.


THE
NEW BOOK
OF
CONSTITUTIONS
OF THE
Most Ancient and Honourable FRATERNITY
OF
FREE and ACCEPTED MASONS.
CONTAINING
Their *History, Charges, Regulations, &c.*
By James Anderson, D. D.
DEPUTATIONS

Hence, referring to the new constitutions of 1738 as "Anderson's Constitutions" may not be so wrong.

However, according to their own approach, some masonic institutions preferred to include the constitutions of 1723 in this definition as well.

Therefore, it is necessary to give credit to those opinions asserting that making reference to the constitutions of 1723 as Anderson's Constitutions is incorrect.

In those opinions, it is stated that the real Constitutions of Anderson are those dated 1738, and the original of 1723 cannot be named as Anderson's Constitutions.

Those that support this thesis assert that the purpose behind referring to the original constitutions of 1723 as Anderson's Constitutions is a search by the United Grand Lodge of England that was constituted at a much later date in 1813, in influencing the liberal wing of Freemasonry that could not be taken under its own universal authority in Freemasonry.

This opinion is worth to consider. It is exposed to the evaluation of masonic researchers.

These make it apparent why James Anderson was that person having his name pronounced the most for so many years in Speculative Freemasonry

The Constitutions of 1738

When the Grand Lodge of England changed its name to the Grand Lodge of England in 1725, it was obvious that this activity was not confined to London. Both the solely operative lodges and the extreme conservatives that were protesting the movement only verbally until then, this time started a campaign of assault against Freemasonry.

These attacks could have been considered as unimportant, but they were provoking other antimasonic inclinations in England. The support given by the Church of England in particular was causing quite discomfort to the Grand Lodge of England.

The Church of England was not against Freemasonry being different in character. Nor was it interested in its institutional features. However it was not pleased with the contents of the constitutions at all, and was asserting that certain expressions in this text clearly contradict religious doctrine.

In addition to the above-mentioned charge of defence, it was again Anderson that was applied for a solution to this situation. He further was asked in 1735 to review the constitutions all over again.

This time, studies of Anderson took quite long. It may be thought that discussions were held on his preparations and could not be easily concluded, but this may not be more than an assumption.

On those days, minutes of meetings in the Grand Lodge of England were being kept regularly. In these minutes, nothing is mentioned concerning a proposal for the alteration of the constitutions or any discussions made in this respect. Hence, either Anderson was not able to work as rapidly as in the former days due to being indisposed, or he was coming across with serious criticisms and even oppositions upon explaining his views in meetings that didn't require any minutes.

We know that all proposals put forward by Anderson were not agreed, and certain alterations were made. We further know that the new constitutions were approved in a meeting of the general assembly in 1738.

Finally, Anderson provided printing of the "New Book of Constitutions" under his name as the author.

In appearance, contents of this book were not much different with respect to the original constitutions of 1723. The historical part was corrected at places but all errors couldn't be avoided. Descriptions concerning the meetings of the general assembly in the Grand Lodge of London that weren't previously recorded have been added.

In the meantime, Anderson was making complaints against the speculative freemasons in the Continent, and accusing them by ingratitude. Despite he didn't explain his reasoning, it was clear that he was remonstrating the freemasons in France who made attempts peculiar to themselves.

As a matter of fact, while persevering to agree only to the constitutions of 1723, the freemasons in the Continent have started to amend Speculative Freemasonry as fitting to them and were creating some higher degrees.

One of the consequences of such ventures, namely creation of the premier Scottish Rite by Andrew Michael Ramsay turned out to be banning of Freemasonry by the Roman Catholic Church.

Since the Grand Lodge of England was regarding itself as the "Leader of Freemasonry", it was deeming that elimination of all movements that were developing against Freemasonry should be performed by itself. For this purpose, necessary alterations should have been made on the constitutions.

Obviously, the most important part of the constitutions is that named as "The Charges of A Free-Mason".



(49)

THE

CHARGES

OF A

FREE-MASON,

EXTRACTED FROM

The ancient RECORDS of LODGES beyond Sea, and of those in *England*, *Scotland*, and *Ireland*, for the Use of the Lodges in LONDON:

TO BE READ

At the making of NEW BRETHREN, or when the *MASTER* shall order it.

The General Heads, viz.

I. God and Religion.
II. Of the Civil Magistrate supreme and subordinate.
III. Of Lodges.
IV. Of Masters, Wardens, Fellows, and Apprentices.
V. Of the Management of the Craft in working.
VI. Of Behaviour, viz.

1. In the Lodge while constituted.
2. After the Lodge is over and the Brethren not gone.
3. When Brethren meet without Strangers, but not in a Lodge.
4. In Presence of Strangers not Masons.
5. At Home, and in the Neighbourhood.
6. Towards a strange Brother.

C

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Approved by the Grand Lodge, and ordered to be printed in the last Revision of the Book of Constitutions on 25 March 1723.

We all know that there are 6 main items in this part referred to as obligations, and the first obligation was the most important among all.

Alterations that were thus made in this section of the constitutions were giving an impression as if constituting of minor details in appearance, but these actually were very important in sense.

The degree of "master mason" that was out of question in 1723 was added to the constitutions in this book, and other subsequent corrections were made as well.

On the other hand, in this book Anderson made a brief description concerning the conclusions of the general assembly meetings during 1717-1723 that didn't have any minutes.

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Then, arguments started on whether the original constitutions of 1723 or the new constitutions put in force in 1738 shall be valid in England.

It may be thought that such an argument should never be made, because the new one upon being approved by the general assembly substitutes the previous.

However, similar to oppositions against the constitutions of 1723, there were ones opposing to the alterations. Let's note in the meantime that the situation in the Continent was completely disregarded.

Hence, we have to know that these apply only to England. Lodges in the Continent were continuing to recognize the original constitutions of 1723.

As a matter of fact, towards the middle of 18th century, it was observed in England that the lodges started to make changes in practice at places. Of course the disagreement on the matter as which constitution is the one to be observed had an influence on this deviation, but this was not the only reason.

Each of many lodges was wishing to apply rules and schemes preferred by itself just by disregarding the existence of an obedience that it was connected to. Vastly deviating procedures were applied in constituting new lodges, initiation of candidates, conferring degrees, election of officers, and business in lodge meetings.

Lodges in a discord were regarding only those that are similar to them as being “regular”, and were accusing others as irregular bodies and simultaneously giving harm to Freemasonry.

The Grand Lodge of England was unable to put the lodges in due order, and was incapable in eliminating the contradictions in approach.

As a result, a separation occurred in Freemasonry in England. Then an era of devising constitutions that again were similar in appearance but in fact different from each other started.

In the second half of 18th century, separations in the Continent exhibited greater dimensions than in England.

Anderson could see none of these. His mission was over by the printing of the New Book of Constitutions in 1738.

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James Anderson passed away in 1739.

Persons attended his funeral could be counted by fingers of human hand.

Whatever he did during his life in Freemasonry, he was unable in attracting fraternal love.

However, his name has always been pronounced in this society all over the world; he was never forgotten, and was commemorated by respect.

Nevertheless, this fact doesn't avoid the error made in referring any constitution in Freemasonry, the premier constitutions of 1723 in particular that 280th anniversary is being celebrated this year, as "Anderson's Constitutions".

It should be recognized that constitutions aren't relevant to individuals at all, but to institutions, in spite of the fact that any one person may have higher contribution in its creation than any others.