

# The Masonic Enlightenment



John Theophilus Desaguliers  
Desaguliers and the Birth of Modern Freemasonry  
by Dr. David Harrison

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London in the early eighteenth century was laced with a network of social and political clubs and societies meeting at coffee houses, chop houses, and taverns under the shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral. This was an exciting period, and these spaces hummed with discussions of the political philosophy of Locke, potential money making projects, and the experimental natural philosophy of Newton. These establishments provided, in effect, a kind of free club where gentlemen and not so refined men could find like-minded company, read the latest pamphlets, conduct business affairs, and aspire to some serious networking. The most important and fashionable of the societies which met in these establishments was Freemasonry. Its reorganization in 1717 and subsequent modernization created a larger national matrix of patronization under the new Grand Lodge. Politics, despite the law of neutrality within a lodge, still became an issue for Freemasons during this time. More obviously, the centralized control of Freemasonry as a secret society became vitally important during this sensitive political period.

## The Search for Lost Knowledge and the Revision of Ritual

By giving Freemasonry an organized context centered in London, lodges throughout the country could be brought into line. This focus was underlined in 1723 when the new Constitutions of Freemasons was published to standardize the rules and regulations of the modernized society. This was seen as the culmination of a rejuvenation of the Craft, and was brought to fruition by the vigor of the Reverend Dr. James Anderson and the Reverend Dr. Jean Theophilus Desaguliers, two Protestant ministers who were staunch Whig supporters. However, Freemasonry was still undergoing a transitional phase, and by 1738 the Constitutions needed to be updated as the Craft developed. A Grand Lodge meeting finally approved this new edition with the addition of a new regulation<sup>1</sup> and met at the infamous Devil Tavern in January 1738. Here both Anderson and Desaguliers carefully directed the proceedings and successfully introduced the new procedures.<sup>2</sup> The regulation change indicated that Freemasonry was still in flux, even at this late stage, and hints at the deeper changes which had taken place in the ritual.

The 1723 edition of the Constitutions had also stated that the charges were "for the use of the Lodges in London", but it is apparent that Desaguliers had Masonic interests further a field. He had attended the Lodge of Edinburgh in St. Mary's Chapel while visiting Scotland in 1721, and a few years later in 1723, a copy of Anderson's Constitutions was presented to the Lodge of Dunblane. By 1725, lodges in Chester, Bath, Bristol, Norwich, Chichester, Reading, Gosport, Warwick, and Carmarthen had all come under the sway of the new "Premier" Grand Lodge. By 1735, the new Grand Lodge published its List of Regular Lodges which counted 134 lodges in all, including lodges as far away as India, Boston, and a number of lodges in France.<sup>3</sup> Visits to Grand Lodge meetings from other provinces also became a regular occurrence such as in 1733 when the Provincial Grand Master from South Wales visited a Grand Lodge gathering at the Devil Tavern in London. It is clear that the Grand Lodge quickly spread its influence with the changes in the ritual simultaneously being absorbed.

These ritual changes date to the early 1720's and occur after Desaguliers visited the Lodge of Edinburgh that met at St. Mary's Chapel. It has been discussed by many Masonic historians, including Gould and Waite, that elements of what was to become the third degree ritual were designed during this period, the implication being that the changes were influenced from what Desaguliers had witnessed in the lodge in Scotland.<sup>4</sup> He had certainly taken an active part in what was termed "the Admission and Passing of various honourable persons" during his visit, and the Lodge of Edinburgh was the most organized in Scotland, its minute books dating back to 1599. Though this reference may only reflect the terms casually used for "entered apprentice" and "fellow craft", it is not improbable that the ritual was conducted differently to the English ritual using different symbolism.<sup>5</sup>

With the destruction of Masonic documents at this time it certainly seems that the "Premier/Modern" Grand Lodge had purposely re-written Masonic history. Indeed,

the new Constitutions in 1723 confirmed that centralised control was being asserted. Paradoxically, despite this destruction of Masonic documents, Desaguliers is mentioned in many Masonic histories as actually having collected ancient Masonic documents. These documents appear to have been various versions of the Old Charges, which were adapted by Anderson and Desaguliers for the new Constitutions in 1723.<sup>6</sup> An example of this happened the previous year when Desaguliers had been presented with a collection of "curious Writings" during a visit to Christopher Wren's old lodge.<sup>7</sup>

At a Grand Lodge meeting on the 29th of September, 1721, Anderson was ordered to digest all the copies of the old "Gothic Constitutions" and write a new Book of Constitutions. In the following meeting held on the 27th of December, the Grand Master, the Duke of Montagu, a staunch Whig, appointed fourteen "learned Brothers" to examine Anderson's draft manuscript of the new Constitutions and to make alterations where necessary. During this same meeting it is stated that there were lectures given by some old Masons. What the content of these lectures were is not recorded, but the creative atmosphere surrounding the writing of the new Constitutions had certainly influenced an educational and historical review of Freemasonry. The next meeting on the 25th of March witnessed the fourteen Brethren reporting on their examination of Anderson's draft "manuscript", and after making some amendments, they had approved the "History, Charges, Regulations, and the Master's Song" of the new Constitutions, which was then ordered to be printed.<sup>8</sup>

Anderson, who was chaplain to the pro-Hanoverian Earl of Buchan, actually published a work in 1732 that, similar to the Constitutions, celebrated the Hanoverian dynasty entitled *Royal Genealogies*. The pro-Hanoverian stance presented in Anderson's Constitutions became entwined with the history of Freemasonry, and the 1738 edition was actually dedicated to Frederick, Prince of Wales. In the same edition, the very paragraph describing the decision to form the new Grand Lodge in 1717 began with a mention of "King George I entering London most magnificently on September 20, 1714".<sup>9</sup> George I is also celebrated in the original 1723 edition as personally sending an envoy to take part in the procession and ceremony to lay the foot stone of the rebuilt St. Martin's in the Fields in 1721 with a number of Freemasons.<sup>10</sup> The pro-Hanoverian stance continued throughout later editions, with the 1769 edition for example detailing the death of George I, and thenceforth celebrating George II.<sup>11</sup> Desaguliers has been credited with the "preparation" of the general regulations for the Constitutions,<sup>12</sup> and he certainly contributed to the first edition in 1723, having penned the dedication at the front of the work.

Anderson was a minister of the Scots Church at Swallow Street, St. James', Westminster and had previously published a number of long-winded Sermons. One such Sermon, entitled *No King-Killers*, published in London in 1715, described how Jerusalem had been a "Rebellious City" with the rebels "hindering the rebuilding of the city and temple of Jerusalem...troubling them in building" which not only directly referred to the re-building of Solomon's Temple, but at the time of

publication, also hinted at parallels with the political situation in London and the Jacobite reaction to the coronation of George I.<sup>13</sup> Both Anderson and Desaguliers were ministers who had an in-depth knowledge of the Old-Testament, and this would have certainly assisted them in the re-writing of the Masonic ritual.

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Similarities between Anderson's Constitutions and John Dee's Mathematicall Preface for his Euclide printed in 1570 have also been noted by historian Peter French, in which Dee refers to 'a great Number of Artes, from our two Mathematicall fountaines (arithmetic and geometry) into the fieldes of Nature'.<sup>1</sup> The Constitutions used comparable wording to Dee's Mathematicall Preface of Euclide, referring to architecture as 'the Science and the Art'. Anderson also discussed the 'seven liberal Arts and Sciences', two of which were arithmetic and geometry. These were popular themes for early natural philosophers and important features in the quest for hidden knowledge, with Dee's translation of Euclide being among the many works that would have been part of his lost library that so captivated the early Freemason Elias Ashmole.<sup>2</sup> Along with various 'Ancient Charges', Dee's Euclide, which was an extremely popular English translation, was a resource for the 'history' of Freemasonry by Anderson. The mathematical theme of Euclid filtered into Dee's magical interests, enabling him to gain a greater understanding of the mysteries of the universe. As with the revisions on the charges in the Constitutions, Desaguliers and Anderson set about to revise the ritual, and like Dee's magical rituals, the use of mathematics, geometry, necromancy, and magical symbols, all played an important part in a theatrical search for lost ancient knowledge.

What the ritual was like before the formation of the 'Premier/Modern' Grand Lodge is difficult to ascertain, as there are no written details, presumably as they were all destroyed. According to Waite, the three degrees were still in the making as late as 1723, with the resurrection theme of the third degree yet to be invented.<sup>3</sup> The 1723 edition of the Constitutions refers, rather confusingly, to Apprentices only being 'admitted Masters and Fellow Craft'. Gould suggested that this mention of 'Masters and Fellow Craft' was the second and final 'degree', taking place after the initial first 'Apprentice' degree.<sup>4</sup> Robert Plot writing in his Natural History of Staffordshire used similar terminology when describing Freemasonry, mentioning the 'Masters and Fellows of this right Worshipfull craft'.<sup>5</sup> These two initial degrees were thus made into three by Desaguliers, using the same material, but with the added 'extra' of the Hiram Abbif legend with its theme of resurrection and necromancy. As previously discussed, no recorded evidence exists of the early Masonic operative trade guilds performing a secret ritual with elements of the 'Modern' third degree. There are, however, apprentice documents and variations of the Old Charges which clearly point to the 'Entered Apprentice' and 'Fellow Craft' degrees within Freemasonry.

The actual origins of the Masonic ritual are completely shrouded in mystery, and it has even been claimed that before 1717, there was actually only one degree.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever its original form, the early ritual seems to have included the Apprentice and Fellow Craft content that followed the traditional practices of operative Masonry. The 1723 edition constantly refers to the 'Fellow Craft' as the senior phase of Craft Masonry at this time, such as in Regulation IV when it states that 'No Brother can be a Warden until he has pass'd the part of Fellow Craft', and again when stating that a Mason cannot be a Grand Master 'unless he has been a Fellow Craft before his Election'.<sup>7</sup> This phraseology within the 1723 edition continues when it states in Regulation XIII that 'Another Brother (who must be a Fellow Craft) should be appointed to look after the Door of the Grand Lodge'.<sup>8</sup> This demonstrates that the emphasis of the 'Fellow Craft' during this time was the final part or 'degree'.<sup>9</sup> This older progression is also reflected in the minutes of the Lodge of Edinburgh, where for example, George Drummond was 'admitted and received entered apprentice and fellow craft on the 28th of August, 1721.' Earlier minutes of this lodge also provide evidence of this original system, when, for example, on the 12th of December, 1633, a certain Johne Cunninghame was made 'fellow of craft' after serving his years of apprenticeship. In the case of Drummond, a non-operative member, he was made an 'Apprentice' and 'Fellow Craft' in one meeting, similar to Elias Ashmole's initiation in Warrington in 1646, which perhaps gives rise to interpretation that there was but one degree or ceremony for the two parts of 'Apprentice' and 'Fellow Craft'.

Another example of the change in wording in the new edition can be seen when Regulation XIII of the 1723 edition of the Constitutions states: 'The Treasurer and Secretary shall have each a Clerk, who must be a Brother and Fellow-Craft'.<sup>10</sup> In the 1738 edition, the phraseology was altered perfectly in the Regulation to accommodate the new third degree, and now stated that 'The Treasurer and Secretary may have each a Clerk or Assistant, who must be a Brother and a Master-Mason.' The changes in the regulation are evident again when the new 1738 edition stated that 'Another Brother and Master-Mason should be appointed the Tyler, to look after the Door'.<sup>11</sup> This regulation is in sharp contrast to the 1723 edition, the corrected 1738 edition firmly stating that a 'Master Mason' is now higher than the 'Fellow Craft' in rank. This change of wording from 'Fellow Craft' to 'Master Mason' as the final phase in Craft Masonry indicates that the ritual was changed during the time in between the first two editions of 1723 and 1738, with the third degree in 'Modern' speculative Freemasonry being firmly established.

Desaguliers, according to Waite, was credited as being the one who grafted speculative Masonry upon the old operative masonry.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Desaguliers, with the assistance of Anderson, re-constructed the ritual with dramatic and theatrical flair. Waite also quotes a letter printed in an obscure 'exposé' entitled the Grand Mystery of the Freemasons Discover'd, published in October 1724, which refers to 'two unhappy busy persons who were Masons (who) obtruded their idle notions of Adam and Solomon and Hiram', Waite suggesting that the 'busy persons' in question were none other than Desaguliers and Anderson, and that their 'idle notions' were their re-construction of the Masonic ritual.<sup>13</sup>

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In the 1738 edition of the Constitutions, the original Regulation XIII was altered to state that 'Apprentices must be admitted Fellow Crafts and Masters' which suggests that the three degrees had definitely been formulated by then.<sup>1</sup> The alteration of the original Regulations certainly presents the progression of Craft Freemasonry in a much clearer and precise fashion than in the original 1723 edition and suggests that at the time the first edition was published, the ritual was still in transition. The three degrees of the ritual had been mentioned by Prichard's anatomy of the Craft in 1730, *Masonry Dissected*, so the official regulation had to be altered and stated in a clearer form. The concern of the 'Premier/Modern' Grand Lodge was revealed at the front of the new 1738 edition:

And where'as some have written and printed Books and Pamphlets relating to the fraternity without leave of the Grand Lodge; some of which have been condem'd as pyritical and stupid by the Grand Lodge in Ample form on 24th February 1735 when the brethren were warned not to use them nor encourage them to be sold.' <sup>2</sup>

It was during this same meeting on the 24th of February 1735 that the plans for the new edition were put into place, when the Brethren 'spent some thoughts upon some Alterations and Additions that might be made to the (Constitutions)'. The Brethren of Grand Lodge seemed to have been rather concerned about an exposé called the *Free Masons Vade Mecum*, which was described as a 'silly thing, done without Leave', though Prichard's exposé may have also been amongst the 'Books and Pamphlets' regarded as 'pyritical' during this time.<sup>3</sup> The changes in the ritual and the creation of the third degree led the 'Premier/Modern' Grand Lodge to publish a new edition of the Constitutions, altering the regulations with carefully re-worded phraseology.

Despite the fact that pure and ancient Freemasonry consisted of 'entered apprentice' and 'Fellow Craft', the term 'Master Mason' had been in use before the development of a third degree by the new 'Premier/Modern' Grand Lodge. David Stevenson in his *Origins of Freemasonry* claims that within Scottish lodges the term 'Fellow Craft' was blurred with that of 'Master', both terms being synonymous. By the late seventeenth century however, Stevenson puts forward that the first evidence of the separation of 'Fellow Craft' and 'Master' into two separate grades appears. The Lodge of Edinburgh had traditionally been run by the 'Fellow Craft/Masters', but a power dispute between the actual working Journeyman 'Fellow Craft/Master' Masons and the organizing incorporation 'Fellow Craft/Masters', led many of the former to form the Lodge of Journeymen Masons in 1687. This secession, though seen as a step in the separation of 'Fellow Craft' and 'Master Mason', does not reflect any ritual developments, but the minutes of the Lodge of Edinburgh never reflect any ritual content anyway. As Stevenson points out, the incorporation masters, in the wake of a power struggle, may have developed new symbolism and secret signs to distinguish themselves from the journeyman 'Fellow Craft' Masons. Perhaps it could have been a ceremonial aspect of this new 'Master Masons' grade that Desaguliers witnessed on his 'pilgrimage' to the Lodge of Edinburgh in 1721.<sup>4</sup>

In Thomas Martin's Narrative of the True Masons Word and Signs, dated to 1659, Martin describes the 'Gripe' for both a 'Fellow Craft' and a 'Master', indicating that separate secret signs were used to distinguish both 'offices.' This suggests that a separation of 'Fellow Craft' and 'Master' had taken place before the dispute in the Lodge of Edinburgh. The 'Gripe' of a 'Fellow Craft' is described as 'grasping their right hand in each other thrusting their thumb nail close upon the third joint of each other's first finger', whereas the 'Gripe' of a 'Master' is described as 'grasping their right hand in each other, placing their fore finger's nails hard upon the carpus or end of others wrists, and their thumb nails thrust hardly directly between the 2nd joint of the thumb and the third joint of the first finger'.<sup>5</sup> These two well established secret signs indicate two separate grades by the 1650's. The Kilwinning Manuscript, a version of the Old Charges dated to the same period, indicates that 'mason's should work for their masters honestly, choosing the wisest mason working on a building to be their master of works....', suggesting that the differences between 'Fellow Craft' and 'Master' was the traditional operative worker and manager role.<sup>6</sup>



This photograph was taken at St. Kentigern's churchyard at Stobo in Scotland, a village which, according to legend, is also the resting place for Merlin. The skull and crossbones symbol was commonly used by Freemason's on their gravestones throughout Scotland during this period. Photograph by Marie Shaw from The Genesis of Freemasonry by David Harrison.

Thomas Martin's Narrative describes a further hint of the relationship of 'Master' and 'Fellow Craft', when in one of the Mason's worthy oaths, it indicates 'that no Master or Fellow take an Apprentice, to be allow'd his Apprentice but for 7 years....' again blurring the operative role of 'Master' and 'Fellow Craft', suggesting that both 'grades' have an element of power.<sup>7</sup> In later editions of the Constitutions it was clearly stated that 'In antient times no brother, however skilled in the craft, was called a master-mason until he had been elected into the chair of a lodge'.<sup>8</sup> This details the fact that the third degree of 'Master Mason' was part of the new Grand Lodge structure, and beforehand there was only 'Apprentice' and 'Fellow Craft', the title of 'Master Mason' only being gained when a 'Fellow Craft' was in the 'chair' of

the lodge, again hinting that a 'Master Mason' had more of a managerial status with the title given to those who presided over the lodge.

For the Speculative Masons who penetrated the operative lodges, the term 'Master' was adopted for the experienced brethren who were in charge of the lodge, hence in 1717, when the 'Premier/Modern' Grand Lodge first came together in London to choose the first Grand Master, it was 'the oldest Master Mason' described as 'being the Master of a Lodge' who proposed the list of candidates and invested the new Grand Master.<sup>9</sup> The term or grade of 'Master' seems to have been used in Speculative Masonry in the same way as in operative masonry, as a 'promotional' office, chosen by the 'Fellow Crafts' to be in charge of their lodge. The ritualistic or ceremonial content surrounding the grade is a mystery though the development of the third degree by Desaguliers in the 1720's was influenced by various sources.

The resurrection and necromancy themes displayed in the third degree act as the culmination of the dramatic ritual and certainly produced a profound finale to the educational journey of the new Freemason. In essence, the Hiram story which is revealed in the ritual, is a traditional tragedy, though deeper mysterious themes are embedded within the three degrees. The re-birth or 'raising' of the 'Master Mason' from a grave which features the skull and crossbones set within an atmospheric, candle-lit lodge room suggests images of alchemy, magic, necromancy, and immortality and seems to be contradictory to the philosophical outlook of Desaguliers. But when reminded that Newton was an alchemist obsessed with Solomon's Temple and its purported divine measurements, one can identify with Desaguliers, as a disciple of Newton, that he could adopt such imagery and symbolism as the basis for a third degree.

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This was an age still haunted by the Civil War, plague, and the upheaval of the Glorious Revolution (1688-89), thus unravelling God's code within the measurements of Solomon's Temple was a means by Newton to interpret Biblical prophecy itself in an uncertain time. After thoroughly researching ancient Biblical texts on the temple, Newton determined the measurement of the sacred cubit to be between  $25\frac{1}{5}$  and  $26\frac{1}{4}$  Roman inches, enabling him to unlock the mathematical secret of God and the Universe. These ideas are extremely close to the modern Masonic ritual, which takes place in a constructed Lodge that represents Solomon's Temple and culminates in a 'resurrection', the theatrical display of astronomy and mathematics entwining with magical imagery, and the search for lost ancient knowledge. Newton's mathematical interpretation of the New Jerusalem echoes similarities to the 'resurrection' of London which was being re-built during Newton's early career, at the heart of which a new temple was constructed by Sir Christopher Wren.<sup>1</sup> Wren himself had also researched Solomon's Temple, and like Newton, had drawn up a plan of what he thought was the correct measurements. Wren later became celebrated by James Anderson as an early Grand Master of Freemasons.



As suggested by Gould and Waite, Desaguliers may have witnessed elements of a different ritual in Scotland, perhaps even a version of the 'raising' ceremony that would become the third degree. The search for the elusive 'Mason Word', references of which are featured in early Scottish Masonic lore, symbolized the quest for lost ancient knowledge. The attempt to raise Hiram using the five points of fellowship thus represented the ultimate duty of loyalty and fellowship, with Hiram, even in death, refusing to give up the secret.<sup>2</sup> Certainly Richard Carlile, writing over a century later, comments on evidence of older and more mysterious Masonic practices in Scotland as suggested on tombstones in Holyrood Chapel in Edinburgh.<sup>3</sup> Supposed incidents of necromancy existed such as the aforementioned 'raising' in Walton-le-Dale involving John Dee's accomplice Edward Kelly. In addition, necromantic evocations also existed such as the seventeenth century manuscript taken from an original attributed to Roger Bacon, which supplies enigmatic evidence of a necromantic ritual.<sup>4</sup> This transcription instructs the necromancer and his assistant to 'repair to the churchyard or tomb where the deceased was buried' and 'the grave to be opened', the imagery invoked being similar to the third degree Masonic ritual. After this had been done, the magician was instructed to 'describe a circle' and to 'turn himself to all the four winds', reminding one immediately of the setting out of a lodge, which, like the circle drawn by the magician, was drawn by chalk with a layout of north, west, east and south.<sup>5</sup>

Other similarities with the third degree ceremony can be observed, such as when the magician had to 'touch the dead body three times' and commanded the dead body to arise. The head of the body lies towards the east, and the Pentacle of Solomon is used to protect the magician during the ritual.<sup>6</sup> Roger Bacon was a thirteenth century Franciscan Monk who embraced hidden learning, and had been linked, amongst other things, to necromancy. This aspect of Bacon's work clearly informed John Dee, which in turn informed other seventeenth century 'dabblers' in necromancy such as John Whalley. Necromantic rituals to raise the dead such as this had the ultimate aim to extract hidden knowledge from the dead individual, and although symbolic in nature, the third degree Masonic ritual held strikingly similar ceremonial elements.



This photograph was taken at St. Kentigern's churchyard at Stobo in Scotland, a village which, according to legend, is also the resting place for Merlin. The skull and crossbones symbol was commonly used by Freemason's on their gravestones throughout Scotland during this period. Photograph by Marie Shaw from *The Genesis of Freemasonry* by David Harrison

The Noah story of the raising and the attempt to obtain secret knowledge from him, as recorded in the Graham MS, dated to 1726, is in essence very similar to the third degree and appeared in the period when changes were made to the ritual. An adaptation of this necromancy story, reset amidst the building of Solomon's Temple, would have certainly appealed to Desaguliers, perhaps reminding him of Newton's research into Biblical prophecy and the Temple. There are poetical elements to the ritual which have certain rhythmical features and occurrences of alliteration and assonance. These poetical elements made the ritual easier to remember when it had to be recited orally from memory, and, importantly, made the ritual extremely effective when heard within a lodge. When reminded that Desaguliers wrote his poem *The Newtonian System of the World: The Best Model of Government* during the period when the ritual was developed, parallels can be made between the poetical elements of the ritual. The poem, which resounded Masonic themes, put forward the 'System of the Universe' as taught by Pythagoras and praised Newton's 'Caelestial Science', celebrating the 'unalter'd Laws' of the 'Almighty Architect.'<sup>7</sup> The title of Desaguliers' poem is similar to Cudworth's *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, a work which had captured the theme of the Cambridge Platonists and attempted to explain the spirit of the mind. One of the leading

Cambridge Platonists, Henry More, had informed Newton in his studies of Solomon's Temple. It was also during this time that both Desaguliers and Anderson were active in a mysterious society called 'Solomon's Temple', which met in Hemmings Row, with Desaguliers appointed Master of the society in 1725.

Desaguliers also uses similar terminology to parts of the ritual in his Dissertation Concerning the Figure of the Earth written in 1724. In the work, Desaguliers discusses the dimensions of the Earth based on Newtonian principles, deliberating the 'proper method for drawing (the) Meridian', stating that with 'observations of the rising and setting sun' and with 'many other observations of the Telescope and good Pendulum Clocks-all compar'd together for the true setting of the direct way of this famous Meridian, leave no doubt it is as perfect as the Nature of the thing is capable of.' 8 The second degree ritual reveals similar Newtonian language:

Q. When was you made a Mason?

A. When the Sun was at its meridian.

Q. In this country, Freemason's Lodges are usually held in the evening how do you account for this, which at first appears a paradox?

A. The Sun being a fixed body, the earth constantly revolving round it on its own axis, it necessarily follows, that the Sun is always at its meridian; and Freemasonry being universally spread over its surface, it follows, as a second consequence, that the Sun is always at its meridian with respect to Freemasonry. 9

Desaguliers goes on to discuss how the meridian can assist in creating more accurate maps, describing what is very similar to the 'network', which is placed over a globe in the lodge, creating a symbol of Freemasonry being universal over the Earth.

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Masonic historians Knoop and Jones also agree that the three ceremonies were created during the early era of the 'Premier/Modern' Grand Lodge; their content taken from the original first two degrees of 'Apprentice' and 'Fellow Craft' and from the necromancy story. They discuss the possibility that the tale of necromancy changed from the character of Noah to Hiram to accommodate a more obvious Masonic Biblical presentation linked to the construction of Solomon's Temple which became part of the Masonic ritual by 1730.<sup>1</sup> New research into the development of the third degree necromancy legend by Masonic historian Neville Cryer also links the association of the Noah story directly with the Hiram story with a deep traditional association between the operative Masons and Carpenters.<sup>2</sup> Noah was celebrated as the builder of the ark in the guild mystery plays in Chester and York and had been discussed by Wren in Parantalia, the ark being seen by Wren as a building commanded by God in a similar way that Solomon's Temple was designed by God. In the 1738 edition of the Constitutions, Anderson curiously mentions that 'Noachidae was the first name of the Masons, according to some old tradition,' Noachidae meaning 'sons of Noah.'<sup>3</sup> It would have been easy to replace Noah with Hiram within a legend which uses necromancy to acquire lost

knowledge, Desaguliers recognising the themes embedded within the subject matter of the original story. The three degrees thus displayed a theatrical lecture featuring elements of the old and new science, the themes of necromancy, astronomy, ancient architecture, and mathematics appealing directly to natural philosophers and theologians alike.

The new ritual, including the additional third degree, was quickly adopted by lodges in other areas in Britain. The rebel 'Antients' Grand Lodge featured all three degrees as part of their Masonic ritual, and later, even members of the York Grand Lodge adopted the trigradal system. The re-writing of Masonic history and further regulation changes in the 1738 edition of the Constitutions also hints at the way Freemasonry was still undergoing a transition. Anderson emphasised the new aristocratic patronage that the Grand Lodge had acquired, composing a list of Grand Masters beginning with the Duke of Montagu in 1721, leaving out the troublesome Duke of Wharton and Anthony Sayer, and placing Desaguliers, the lowest in social rank, last on the list.<sup>4</sup>

The 'history' of Masonry was developed in the new edition, detailing the building of Solomon's Temple and the building of St. Paul's, presenting Wren as an early Grand Master. This again suggests that the official legend of Freemasonry was still undergoing a transition, the 'history' being adapted to reflect a connection to operative Masons. The relationship with Wren seems to go further with the new edition, Anderson's 'history' of Masonry reflecting Wren's discussion of ancient architecture in *Parentalia*, both displaying a theme of the influence of ancient architecture on the modern.<sup>5</sup>

#### Desaguliers, Patronage, and the Networking Nexus of Freemasonry

Desaguliers was not only the most prominent exponent of Newtonian natural philosophy, but he was a leading figure in both Freemasonry and the Royal Society. He became Grand Master in 1719, and his new vision of Freemasonry sent shock waves through the British Masonic establishment. As a close follower of Newton, he was instrumental in propagating an approach to the study of nature that has subsequently become known as Newtonian experimental natural philosophy. Indeed, Desaguliers seemed to lead the way for other prominent Newtonian natural philosophers to become involved in the new Grand Lodge. Mathematician and astronomer Martin Folkes was a prominent Freemason who became President of the Royal Society, and like his fellow Freemason, Brook Taylor, promoted Newton's experimental natural philosophy.

Folkes, like Desaguliers, was rigorously involved in the Grand Lodge, serving as Deputy Grand Master, a trend followed by other Fellows of the Royal Society during this period such as, for example, Martin Clare, William Graeme, and Edward Hody. Attracted by the Masonic creed, many Fellows of the Royal Society joined the Craft's lodges. The theme of education also appealed to Newtonians like Martin Clare who founded the Soho Academy and acted as Deputy Grand Master on several occasions. Clare, Hody, and Graeme were members of the London based

Old Kings Arms Lodge which held numerous lectures during this period ranging from natural philosophy to architecture. One such lecture, presented in 1734 by a Brother Adams, was assisted by the use of a microscope where the works of Palladio were presented to the lodge by the architect Isaac Ware.<sup>7</sup>

These lectures which took place within the Old Kings Arms Lodge seemed to have been intricately entwined with the lodge meeting itself and reflect other scientific lectures which took place in other lodges outside London during the later eighteenth century such as in the Lodge of Lights in Warrington which held lectures on Newtonian gravitational astronomy.<sup>8</sup> Another example is the Berkeley based Royal Lodge of Faith and Friendship which held a Science Select Lodge organised by the Natural Philosopher Edward Jenner where lodge members had to produce a paper on a specific scientific subject.<sup>9</sup> Parallels between Martin Clare and his Soho Academy can be seen with the Lodge of Lights which had a number of members involved in the Warrington Dissenting Academy, founded in 1757. One of the founders of the lodge, Benjamin Yoxall, a local schoolmaster, was also a founder of the Warrington Circulating Library along with the Reverend John Seddon of the local Unitarian chapel who was the leading founder of the Academy. Two teachers from the Academy, Jacob Bright and John Reinhold Forster, were also prominent members of the Lodge of Lights.<sup>10</sup>

Forster eventually left the Academy to join Captain Cook as a botanist on his second voyage.<sup>11</sup> Another teacher at the Academy who was a Freemason was the French Revolutionary Jean Paul Marat.<sup>12</sup>

Many other Fellows of the Royal Society also contributed to the new Grand Lodge such as Richard Rawlinson, who served as a Grand Steward in 1735 and was renowned for his collection of ancient Masonic documents. James Hamilton, Lord Paisley, who became Grand Master in 1725, had been a Fellow of the Royal Society since 1715. He is an example of an aristocratic Freemason who was not only a leading figure within the Grand Lodge but one who also actively studied Newtonian experimental natural philosophy. The social nexus created by Freemasonry and especially the new Grand Lodge would have been extremely important for a social climber like Desaguliers. The networking opportunities helped to provide him with well connected contacts from the Royal Society and the aristocracy, developing his reputation and his career.

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Desaguliers worked hard to become one of the leading exponents of Newtonian experimental natural philosophy, mixing with extremely influential Freemasons who were linked to the Hanoverian Court and the Whig government. His origins were humble when placed next to the aristocrats he was later associated with. Desaguliers, born in 1683, was a Huguenot refugee, his father being a Protestant Minister, and was forced to flee France when Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685. The family arrived in England in 1687, with the young Jean Theophilus being smuggled out of France in a linen basket. This early experience

of having to escape the tyranny of an absolute Catholic monarch and the loss of religious freedom explains why he supported the Hanoverian Protestant Monarchy with such vigour and probably suggests why he was attracted to Freemasonry. The society would have offered Desaguliers aspects of social networking unavailable elsewhere, and he would have recognised the ethos of education and religious tolerance within the fabric of Freemasonry.

Despite being the leading figure in changing Freemasonry, very little documentary evidence remains of Desaguliers' research, thinking, and negotiation over the actual changes made to the ritual. There is also no reference of his actual initiation into Freemasonry, though Margaret C. Jacob suggests it could have been in 1713 when he moved into the area where his lodge met at the Rummer and Grapes Tavern, Channel Row, in Westminster. This lodge, one of the four original lodges which created the 'Premier' Grand Lodge in 1717, was later to become the elite Horn Tavern Lodge. There can be no question that Desaguliers was at such a groundbreaking meeting as the formation of the 'Premier' Grand Lodge at the Goose and Gridiron Alehouse. He was certainly mentioned later in a list of Masons as being present by Laurence Dermott in *Ahiman Rezon*.<sup>1</sup> Only two years later, he was to serve as Grand Master, gaining full control of the new Grand Lodge. His career blossomed during this time, Desaguliers becoming a fellow of the Royal Society in 1714, and in 1716, he became chaplain to the future Duke of Chandos, an extremely influential figure also linked to Freemasonry. Chandos would become instrumental in supporting Desaguliers' experimental ideas and drew upon his knowledge to aid his various commercial projects.<sup>2</sup>

After attending Oxford, he quickly penetrated Newton's circle, and by 1714, Desaguliers was a regular at the meetings of the Royal Society, confidently conducting experiments based on Newtonian natural philosophy. It was during this time that Desaguliers became extremely close to Newton himself, who became Godfather to one of his children. Nor was the relationship linear; in his early years at the Royal Society some of Desaguliers' own experiments informed upon some of Newton's ideas such as the transmission of heat through a vacuum. He became Curator of the Royal Society, and during the twenty years following Desaguliers' appointment, twelve 'Premier/Modern' Grand Masters were also Fellows of the Royal Society, continuing the link between the two societies that began with Ashmole and Moray.

Desaguliers had taken holy orders in the Church of England and, for him, Newtonian experimental natural philosophy was another way of understanding the work of God. This is best exemplified perhaps in his development of the planetarium, which mirrors the astronomy themes within Freemasonry and Newton's laws of motion. At the dawn of Hanoverian England, he relished in the networking supplied by Freemasonry, weaving an intricate web of aristocratic contacts such as the Duke of Chandos, who shared with Desaguliers a vision of a new world of opportunities created by the new science.<sup>3</sup>



A photograph of the grave of John Parry dating to 1776, from Llanferres Churchyard in North Wales, next door to the ancient 'Druid Inn'. The grave reveals the skull and crossbones which is associated with Freemasonry. Photograph by Marie Shaw from *The Genesis of Freemasonry* by David Harrison.

Chandos often wrote to Desaguliers concerning various new machines and inventions, frequently seeking advice, such as an enquiry regarding a model of a fire engine discussed in a letter dated 11th of February, 1724, and a strange sphere of glass which Desaguliers was requested to examine on behalf of Chandos in a letter dated 10th of August, 1725. On another occasion, Chandos instructed Desaguliers to enquire after the making of a 'Telloscopic' and some 'globes' in a letter dated 11th of March, 1732, Chandos showing signs of irritation at not receiving his inventions on time. The correspondence reveals that Chandos seemed to tap into the knowledge of Desaguliers at every opportunity, including an enquiry into 'a new sort of Plaister encountered at Paris'.<sup>4</sup> A new improved plaster, considering Chandos' huge investments in property, would obviously have been of great utility.

In a letter dated 25th of August, 1732, Chandos sought the advice of Desaguliers on what was effectively a modern variation of alchemy, Chandos writing of "a very odd relation of the performance of (Baron Silburghe)." He went on to describe how Silburghe had "found out a secret of fixing quicksilver, and my Lord Delaware brought over a piece of that which was so fixt, which upon the test appeard to be real & pure Silver, as much in weight as the Quicksilver amounted to that was put

into the Crucible." Driven by the potential profits to be made from such a scheme, Chandos instructed Desaguliers to find out about the mysterious Baron Silburghe, either to get him "to tell the secret, or admit a partner into the participation of it." In a world where wealth was measured by bullion, Chandos was anxious to discover more. Further advice was sought on the matter in an array of correspondence in July, 1734, when he enquired if Desaguliers knew where to find an account of "the Spaniards operating their gold & silver from the ore." This letter was followed by another enquiry into the heating of Quicksilver in 'a round ball made of some ashes'.

Desaguliers and Chandos were engrossed by this research, Desaguliers sending his patron an "acct of the Spaniards working the gold mines in Chile." Chandos in turn, was amazed at how they could "wash with any success their ore, after Mercury is put to it, with so strong a stream of water as you represent, for the particles of gold are so very small and light & hardly visible to the Eye." Chandos was doubtful to the effectiveness of the Spanish method, stating that "such a force of water would wash them out of the Vessell before the Mercury could have time to attract them." Desaguliers answered Chandos' questions on the power of quicksilver by enquiring into "the management of mettals," recommending the advice of a certain Dr. Barker, who had "not only great knowledge in this particular, but all other parts of learning." 6 The "old science" of alchemy had always represented the search for lost ancient knowledge, but for Chandos, this modern version of alchemy represented the search for pure financial gain.

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James Brydges was created the Duke of Chandos in 1720, and despite having earlier close links with Tories such as Bolingbroke, he became a Hanoverian supporter, and was crucial to the career of Desaguliers. His Masonic connections are rather obscure, though his networking amongst the clubs and coffee houses of London had brought him into contact with many Freemasons, such as Desaguliers, Alexander Pope, and Brook Taylor. There is a mention of an early lodge in 1723 being located at Edgeworth near London, which the Masonic historians Knoop and Jones give a plausible interpretation of Edgeware being the location of Chandos' estate Cannons.<sup>1</sup> It was under the patronage of the Duke of Marlborough that Chandos prospered. Having gained the position of paymaster of the Queens forces in 1705, Chandos profited £600,000 by the time he resigned in 1713, a huge sum by contemporary standards. Chandos continued to establish himself, acquiring Cannons, which he remodelled, the Hall being mentioned in the Constitutions alongside Walpole's Houghton Hall and Burlington's Chiswick Villa as displaying the "Masonic Art." Certainly his elegant marble tomb at St. Lawrence's Church located near to his estate, designed by none other than Wren's carver at St. Paul's Grinling Gibbons, is extremely suggestive of Masonic symbolism in the two prominent pillars that dominate it. Chandos certainly founded a Masonic dynasty. His son, Henry Brydges, who as Marquis of Carnarvan and member of the Bed Chamber to Frederick Prince of Wales, became Grand Master of the 'Premier' Grand Lodge in 1738, and his grandson, James Brydges, who became the third Duke of Chandos, followed suit, serving as Grand Master from 1754-6.

Henry Brydges succeeded as the 2nd Duke of Chandos after his father's death in 1744 and is perhaps more famous for purchasing his second wife while staying at an inn during a journey to London. His long and active Masonic career witnessed further transitions within the Grand Lodge. When his son, James Brydges, who was to become the 3rd Duke of Chandos, became Grand Master in 1754, Henry was present at his proposal. Henry continued to be active in the "Modern" Grand Lodge, and even as late as 1765, he took the chair in a Grand Lodge ceremony to propose the Grand Master.<sup>2</sup> James Brydges began his administration by ordering yet another new edition of the Book of Constitutions. It was during his period as Grand Master that the extent of the "Antients" influence began to become apparent. A hard line was taken on any rebels within the society, such as the fourteen brethren from a lodge held at the Marlborough Head in Pelham Street, Spitalfields, who were expelled for illegally assembling as independent Masons, their lodge being erased from the list. Brydges also issued the largest number of provincial deputation's thus far, including that for the County Palatine of Chester.<sup>3</sup> This was another move that

was clearly an attempt to gain greater localised control in the face of growing competition from the "Antients."

Despite being chaplain to the Duke of Chandos, Desaguliers was also chaplain to Frederick, the Prince of Wales, who he initiated into Freemasonry in an "occasional" lodge at Kew in 1737. Six years earlier, he had also initiated Francois, Duc de Lorraine, the representative of the Emperor of Austria Charles VI, and the future husband of the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria. The ceremony had taken place in another "occasional" lodge, which had met at Robert Walpole's country estate, Houghton Hall.<sup>4</sup>

Desaguliers was active within Freemasonry almost until the end of his life, serving as Deputy Grand Master on several occasions and recommending the foundation of a Standing Committee for the Masonic Charity in 1730. However because of his high profile within the Grand Lodge he was regularly open to criticism. Desaguliers reputedly appears in a number of engravings by Hogarth, who served as a Grand Steward in 1735. The Sleeping Congregation depicts Desaguliers as the preacher, hinting perhaps at how Hogarth felt about Desaguliers' oratory ability, and in the Gormogon engraving, Desaguliers is cast as the old woman on the donkey.<sup>5</sup>

His neglect of his duties as chaplain to Chandos led to the breakdown of their relationship<sup>6</sup> and, despite his powerful contacts, Desaguliers died in somewhat reduced circumstances in 1744, bitter at the way natural philosophy had been abused by projectors.<sup>7</sup> He last attended the Grand Lodge in 1741 and there is no other mention of him within the minutes. His final years were aggravated by bouts of gout, and in a letter to fellow Freemason and Fellow of Royal Society Martin Folkes in December 1743 he complains of the loss of the use of his right hand.<sup>8</sup> There is no mention of his death in Grand Lodge minutes and no evidence of a Masonic funeral. His son Thomas followed in his father's footsteps as a natural philosopher and as an officer in the Royal Artillery, where he experimented with rockets and developed a new method of firing small shot from mortars. Thomas, like his father, was also a Freemason<sup>9</sup> and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in recognition of his research.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout his life, Desaguliers was a firm defender of the Hanoverian succession and was attracted to aristocratic society where he found patronage and support for his ideas. He worked within Freemasonry and the Royal Society to strengthen the political agenda of the Whig oligarchy, promoting both Newtonian experimental philosophy and the Hanoverian Royal House. His long and active career had witnessed social climbing on a grand scale, taking a Huguenot refugee smuggled out of France in a linen basket to the dizzy heights of political power. Crucial to this trajectory was the social nexus of Freemasonry that he so energetically cultivated and, which in turn, provided him with prominent contacts. Indeed, the insecurities that Desaguliers had experienced in his early life could be sharply contrasted with the security experienced within Freemasonry, a society of secrets that reflected his interests in networking and natural philosophy, a society which he helped to shape.

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## End Notes

1 Knoop and Jones, Short History of Freemasonry to 1730, 85

2 Anderson, Constitutions, 1769, 234-310

3 Ibid., 270-310

4 Ibid., 222, also see Jacob, The Radical Enlightenment, 111. Jacob discusses the meeting at Houghton Hall and puts forward that Walpole was a Freemason.

5 J. H. Tatsch, 'William Hogarth: A Brief Sketch of His Life and Masonic Works', The Builder Magazine, Vol. IX, No. 3, (1923), p.4. Also see [accessed July 17 2007]

6 Chandos Letters to Desaguliers, 11th of March, 1732/3, ST57, Vol. 41, p.185; 20th of March, 1732//3, ST57, Vol. 41, p.203; 9th of February, 1736/7, ST57, Vol. 48, p.196; 20th of March, 1738/9, ST57, Vol. 51, p.131; 22nd of March, 1738/9, ST57, Vol. 51, p.137; 14th of June, 1739, ST57, Vol. 54, p.19; 25th of October, 1740, ST57, Vol. 54, p.19, in which Chandos is continually complaining to Desaguliers concerning his neglected duties at Whitchurch. Transcribed by Andrew Pink, University of London: UCL/Goldsmiths.

7 Stewart, Rise of Public Science, 380-381


8 Letter from Desaguliers to Martin Ffolkes, 13th of December, 1743, Royal Society Library, MS250, FO.4.25

9 Anderson, Constitutions, 1738, 229

10 H. M. Stephens and J. Spain, 'Desaguliers, Thomas, (1721-1780)', DNB, 2004

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