

## **WHO WAS THE REVEREND DOCTOR JAMES ANDERSON?**

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My first Masonic reading, King Solomon's Temple in the Masonic Tradition, by Alex Home was my first introduction to Dr. Anderson. This created a great interest in him for me, as I found that just about every Masonic article I read, he was mentioned. When discussing Masonic History with my fellow Brothers, I was surprised to find that little is known about this most influential Mason of our Order. So Worshipful Master, I hope I can do justice to him with my presentation this evening.

We will find that Dr. Anderson is referred to by some writers as Anderson, Mr. Anderson and Dr. Anderson, as a matter of fact at first I came to the conclusion that there must have been two Andersons, one a Mister and one a Doctor. Later I discovered by further reading he was a Doctor of Divinity. Actually, little was known about him prior to 1717, He was a Presbyterian Minister and received his D.D. in 1731. So whether he became ordained after 1717 - thus the Mister. I could find no reference to it. His Masonic connections are also a mystery as there are no records of where or when he was Initiated, nor can it be asserted it took place at Aberdeen where his home was. The son of a prominent member of the Lodge of Aberdeen. Records show that he was a Master of a Lodge in 1723 a member of Lodge at the Horn in 1723 and Lodge at Solomon's Temple - Hemming Row in 1725 and installed Grand Warden in 1723. He attended Grand Lodge fourteen times between 1730 and 1736 but did not attend between 1723 and 1736. Remember, his Constitution was produced in 1723, again no reference to why he did not attend Grand Lodge.

Now this Mason who so little was known of before 1716 when it is thought he arrived in London, became the most influential Mason of all time. He produced the "First Ever" Constitution for the Grand Lodge of London in 1723, - which consisted of the History. Old Charges and Regulations of our Order, entitled The Constitution of the Free Masons, 1723", and up-dated it in 1738. He must have proved himself to someone for the Grand Master to order him to produce the Constitution. At that time the influx of Noble-men, Gentlemen of first rank and being inexperienced in Masonry, 'the appearance of someone seemingly who knew all, was the best for the job. Why do we find so much reference to him in Masonic articles'? It is said he had a flair for manipulating and putting together a product to suit the customer and to be an inventor of facts when he did not have them. He was the first Masonic Historian and on whose head poured much reproach. In his time, history was a mixture of folk memory, legend, established facts and recent events. Not as scientific research as in later years. His critics did not take this into consideration. He had few means of checking the reliability of his sources and saw nothing wrong in filling the missing areas.

Thus just about every Masonic writing quotes, analyses, criticizes and credits him for his profound influence on our Order. His Constitution is world known, his history is still referred to and his Old Charges still a part of the United Grand Lodge of England's Constitution. Two hundred and sixty-five years after he first produced them in 1723 and were adopted verbatim in 1738, 1756, 1767, 1784 and the last time before reunion of the Modems and Antients. Our own Grand Lodge Ancient Charges in our Forms and Ceremonies are taken from them. The Regulations were first produced by George Payne, Grand Master in 1718, then reproduced in a different form and expanded by Dr. Anderson. Though many of his regulations were ignored by Grand Lodge, they still remained part of the Constitutions.

In 1718, when Grand Lodge was one year old, the Grand Master George Payne, desired any Brother to bring to the Grand Lodge any old Records and Writings concerning Masons and Masonry in order to show the usages of the Antient Times. This year several old copies of the Gothic Constitutions were produced and collated, but even in those early days there were reticent Masons who did not choose to risk disclosure and many valuable manuscripts were burned.

In 1721 the Duke of Montague, the Grand Master, finding fault with all the copies of the Old Gothic Constitutions, ordered Bro. Dr. Anderson to digest the same in a new and better method. Thus in 1723 the "FIRST EVER" Book of Constitution was approved by Grand Lodge and the Grand Master, the Duke of Wharton. The 1723 edition was not published by Grand Lodge, but by the author - Dr. Anderson himself, which was acknowledged by Grand Lodge in 1735.

He did not only influence our Order with his Constitutions, but also was responsible with Rev. Dr. Desaguliers, Grand Master in 1719 and George Payne, Grand Master in 1718 and 1720 for our three degrees as we know them today. Mackey tells us that originally Operative Masonry was only one degree up to 1719. It is generally admitted by historians that the present system of three degrees was the work of Dr. Desaguliers assisted by Dr. Anderson and George Payne. In 1719 the Second Degree was modeled out of the First, and the Third Degree was invented or fabricated in late 1722 and worked in Lodges about 1723 - 25. They were friends and members of the same Lodge.

In conclusion Brethren, Dr. Anderson started his Second updated edition of the Constitution in 1735 completing it in 1738 and he died May 28th. 1739. Let me encourage you to read his Constitutions, we have them in a single volume in our Library. You will get more insight of his merits and shortcomings by reading the Foreword and the Introductions in the 1723 and the 1738 Editions.

References; Anderson's Constitutions, Mackey and Q.C. Vol 99

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