

The Hiramic Legend and the Creation of the Third Degree

‘If not the Revd Dr John Theophilus Desaguliers FRS,¹ then who?’

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IT IS NOW GENERALLY ACCEPTED THAT THE THIRD DEGREE OF CRAFT FREEMASONRY first appeared in London in the first half of the 1720s, in the early years of the Premier Grand Lodge, when a number of new developments occurred. These included regular lodge meetings being held on fixed days and at defined places, lectures being delivered as part of lodge work, regulations being devised and, most especially, the introduction of the new degree of Master Mason. (This should not be confused with the Master of the lodge who, until the third degree was established, was in Masonic rank a Fellow Craft.) This change is clarified in the two editions of Anderson’s *Constitutions*. In the first, dated 1723, it is stated that the Master of a lodge must be a Fellow Craft: ‘No Brother can be a Warden until he has pass’d the part of a Fellow-Craft; nor a Master until

¹ For a full account of Desaguliers’s life and work, see A. Carpenter, *John Theophilus Desaguliers: A Natural Philosopher, Engineer and Freemason in Newtonian England* (London: Continuum, 2011).

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he has acted as a *Warden*.² In the second edition, dated 1738, it is stated that the Master of a lodge must hold the rank of a Master Mason: ‘The Wardens are chosen from among the *Master-Masons*, and no Brother can be a *Master of a Lodge* till he has acted as *Warden* somewhere, except in extraordinary Cases.’³ Thus, between the first edition of Anderson’s *Constitutions* published in 1723 and the second edition published in 1738 the third degree – the degree of Master Mason – had not only been introduced into lodge work, but had become the norm at least in the cities of London and Westminster and in those lodges outside London warranted by the Grand Lodge.

The Grand Lodge of London and Westminster was formed in 1717 and the prime mover behind it was probably George Payne. He was Grand Master twice in 1718–19 and 1720–21 with his friend Dr Desaguliers occupying the post in between. The first Grand Master in 1717–18 was Anthony Sayer who was clearly elected as a compromise candidate: ‘having put into the Chair *the oldest* Master Mason (now the *Master of a Lodge*).’⁴ Of the four old lodges,⁵ which came together to form the Grand Lodge in 1717, by far the most important was Lodge IV.⁶ It was the newest of the founding lodges, having been created c. 1712–13, but it rapidly became by far the largest lodge and its members the most influential. Its meetings were originally held at the Rummer and Grapes Tavern, Channel Row, Westminster, which happened to be next to Dr Desaguliers’s house and around the corner from where George Payne lived in New Palace Yard. But as it attracted a larger and larger membership, sometime before 1723 it relocated to the Horn Tavern in New Palace Yard, Westminster which had a huge entertainment room on the first floor in which the lodge met on the third Friday of each month. It was the members of this lodge that took the lead in the affairs of the Grand Lodge for the next twenty-five years. George Payne was very probably one of the founders of Lodge IV and according to Anderson’s *Constitutions* served as its Master in 1722–23. He was also Deputy Master in 1725 whilst the 2nd Duke of Richmond was Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge. Dr Desaguliers may well have been one of the lodge’s first initiates.

George Payne was a civil servant by profession.⁷ He spent his whole career working at the Leather Office in St Martin’s Lane as a Secretary to the Tax Office which was housed there. By 1743 he had risen to be its Chief Secretary. As an administrator by profession,

² J. Anderson, *The Constitutions of the Freemasons* (London: Senex and Hooke, 1723), 52.

³ J. Anderson, *The New Book of Constitutions* (London: Ward and Chandler, 1738), 145.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁵ In reality there were certainly five and possibly six early lodges which formed the Grand Lodge.

⁶ Now known as the Royal Somerset House and Inverness Lodge No. 4.

⁷ Payne was born in Chester, an old centre of Freemasonry closely connected at that time with Ireland. He was the son of Samuel Payne and Frances Payne née Kendrick. The family were comfortably off. Indeed, for the whole of his life George Payne owned a small estate he inherited from his mother outside Chester, although he lived in London for nearly fifty years. Payne’s mother’s family home Duddon Hall (sometimes spelt Dutton Hall) in the Parish of Tarvin to the east of Chester was bought in 1932 by the Dewar family, who demolished it and rebuilt it stone by stone in East Grinstead, Sussex where it still stands.

he would have realized the necessity for having a solid bureaucratic structure that would support the development of the new-style Freemasonry. He was the author of the *General Regulations* which were approved by the Grand Lodge on 24 June 1721 and published in Anderson's *Constitutions* in March 1723. These rules included the requirement of lodges to keep records and accounts.

When John Theophilus Desaguliers returned to London from Oxford in the autumn of 1712 and advertised his first set of lectures at the beginning of January 1713, he stated that subscriptions could be obtained from George Payne at the Leather Office, St Martin's Lane.⁸ It is thus clear that these two early Grand Masters knew each other long before the founding of the Premier Grand Lodge in 1717 and as least as early as 1712. Desaguliers probably came to know the Payne family through George Payne's younger brother, Thomas. Although nearly seven years younger than John Theophilus Desaguliers, Thomas Payne (who was born on 23 December 1689 at Chester) was his contemporary at Christ Church, Oxford.⁹ Payne matriculated at the usual age of sixteen, but Desaguliers was twenty-two years old when he went up to Oxford. Desaguliers's late start was a result of his father's death in 1699 leaving no money for his sixteen-year-old son's university education. Instead, Desaguliers had to earn his own living. He moved to Sutton Coldfield and for the next six years was a pupil teacher at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School, under its headmaster William Sanders.

In spite of the setback to his education, Desaguliers eventually entered Oxford in 1705 at the age of twenty-two. Money was still short and so he became a 'servitor' at Christ Church – a student who undertook menial tasks in return for a free education. The course in those days lasted four years.¹⁰ Having graduated with their BA degrees in 1709, both John Desaguliers and Thomas Payne stayed on at Oxford: Desaguliers as a Lecturer in Experimental Philosophy at Hart Hall (now Hertford College) and Payne as a Chaplain at New College. Hence, although their BAs were both from Christ Church, Desaguliers's MA was from Hart Hall and Thomas Payne's from New College. In 1711 both Payne and Desaguliers were ordained Deacons in the Church of England: Payne by the Bishop of Oxford and Desaguliers by the Bishop of London. Thus John Desaguliers and Thomas Payne were at Oxford together for a period of well over six years. During that time it is highly likely Thomas Payne introduced John Theophilus Desaguliers to his family from Chester, including his older brother George. It is also quite possible Desaguliers may have visited George Payne in London if he occasionally returned from Oxford to see his mother in Islington.

⁸ *Post Boy*, 6–8 January 1713; *Daily Courant*, 7 January 1713.

⁹ Desaguliers matriculated on 28 October 1705 and Payne on 19 February 1706.

¹⁰ At the time that John Desaguliers and Thomas Payne were undergraduates at Christ Church, the average number of student admissions each year was 33.

Once Desaguliers had returned to London for good in the summer of 1712, it is also likely that it was George Payne who introduced him to Freemasonry and to the members of the newly-founded Lodge at the Rummer and Grapes Tavern in Westminster. George Payne was also, as was noted earlier, Grand Master twice, in 1718 and 1720, Junior Grand Warden in 1724–25, and Senior Grand Warden in 1735. Outside Freemasonry, in 1743 Payne was appointed manager of State Lotteries and promoted to the post of Chief Secretary to the Commissioners of Taxes. After Dr Desaguliers's death in 1744 and during the period of four years from 3 April 1747, when the Lodge at the Horn Tavern was erased from the registers of Grand Lodge for non-payment of dues, George Payne became a member of the Old King's Arms Lodge. He was admitted on 5 May, 1747 and served as its Master in 1749.¹¹ When the Horn Tavern Lodge was restored to its former rank and place in the list of lodges on 4 September 1751, it was largely due to the efforts of George Payne and the respect and esteem in which he was held.¹² Payne must have been delighted and relieved at the outcome. Nevertheless, he continued to visit the Old King's Arms Lodge. George Payne, like Desaguliers, was a devoted Freemason all his life, attending Grand Lodge meetings regularly until his death on 23 February 1757.

A sea change occurred in the nature of Freemasonry with the founding of the Premier Grand Lodge in 1717. Very few of the 'New Masons' or 'Gentleman Masons' as they were then called were working masons and sculptors. Indeed, only one of the early members of Lodge IV was an operative mason: the mason-sculptor William Woodman. The 'New Masons' were gentlemen from all walks of life. The lodges which they joined and whose numbers grew rapidly in the 1720s met on a regular basis, on a fixed day and time and at a fixed venue, usually a tavern, sometimes a coffee-house. In March 1723 the first engraved list of lodges was published so that these gentlemen Masons knew when lodges other than their own were holding a meeting.¹³ This shows that Masonic visiting was being encouraged. With all this increased activity the simple initiating and passing of Masons was not enough work to sustain their evenings, and so lectures began forming part of lodge work as well as the introduction of a new ceremony: the degree of Master Mason. In due course another new degree was created, the degree of Scots Master. This paper argues that all three developments were the work of Dr John Theophilus Desaguliers, the third Grand Master.

¹¹ A. F. Calvert, 'George Payne, Second Grand Master' *AQC* 30 (1917), 260.

¹² 'Bro[the]r Lediard informed the Brethren that the Right Worship[ful] Bro[the]r Payne L[ate] G[rand] M[aster] & several other Members of [the] Lodge lately held at the Horn Palace Yard Westm[inste]r had been very successful in their endeavours to revive the said Lodge & that they were ready to pay 2 G[uinea]s to the Use of the Grand Charity. And therefore Moved that out of respect to Bro[the]r Payne & several other L[ate] G[rand] M[asters] who were Members thereof the said Lodge might be restored & have its former Rank & place in the List of Lodges. Which was ordered accordingly.' *QCA* Vol. XII, 57.

¹³ See C. Powell, 'The Earliest Engraved List of Lodges' *AQC* 131 (2018), 355–58.

There is no doubt that Dr Desaguliers was a distinguished lecturer. He earned the bulk of his living for thirty years by giving around 160 courses of lectures on experimental philosophy to paying audiences: in total nearly 3,500 public lectures mainly in England and occasionally on the Continent of Europe.¹⁴ A good description of his lecturing style is given by Baron Jakob Friedrich von Bielfeld (1717–70) who attended his lectures. Bielfeld was Legal Secretary to the King of Prussia. He described Desaguliers's lectures in a letter from London dated 6 March 1741 to his friend M. Jordon in Berlin:

I withdraw myself twice in the week from my labours to attend the celebrated Dr Desaguliers, chaplain to H.R.H the prince of Wales, in a course of experimental philosophy; and I have engaged almost all the foreign ministers here to be of the party. The doctor's apartment has more the appearance of a hall of congress, than the auditory of a professor; and as we pay him generously, he in return spares for nothing to treat us handsomely, and to discover to us all the hidden springs of nature. Physics, properly so called, mechanics, hydraulics, hydrostatics, optics, astronomy, are all included in his course. You have, I believe, in your valuable library the doctor's treatise, which is called *A course of experimental philosophy, &c* printed at London in quarto. This work forms the basis of his lectures; but he makes all his demonstrations by the aid of an infinite quantity of machines. He seems to unfold all nature before our eyes and to follow her in all her operations. I confess to you that I find an inexpressible pleasure in attending this lectures and that I never leave them without the highest satisfaction.¹⁵

Ten years earlier in the autumn of 1731 Francis I, Duke of Lorraine, the future Emperor of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, who was visiting Holland on his way to London, visited The Hague to hear Desaguliers's lectures, since he was particularly interested in science. The *Amsterdamse Courant* of 4 October 1731 reported:

The Hague 2nd October.

The learned and renowned Dr Desaguliers is now presenting a complete course of lectures on Mechanical and Experimental Philosophy which has been attended not only by persons of the first rank, but which has also been honoured on several occasions by the presence of the Duke of Lorraine.¹⁶

This was Desaguliers's second visit to Holland. Ever the opportunist in the promotion of Freemasonry, Desaguliers formed an occasional lodge at the home of the English Ambassador, the 4th Earl of Chesterfield, and made Francis, Duke of Lorraine, a Mason. When he was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1745, Francis must have admired the

¹⁴ In the Preface to the first edition of his *Course of Experimental Philosophy*, which appeared in 1734, Desaguliers stated that he had given 121 courses of lectures since he began at Hart Hall, Oxford in 1710.

¹⁵ Mr Hooper (trans.) *Letters of Baron Bielfeld* (London: Robinson and Roberts, 1752) Volume IV, 82–3. Text modernized.

¹⁶ Translated from J. A. van Reijn, 'John Theophilus Desaguliers, 1683–1983', *Thoth*, 5 (1983), 194.

late tenth-century Imperial Crown which bore a pictorial representation of King Solomon upon it.

Baron Bielfeld's employer, Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, was himself made a Mason on 14 August 1738 at Brunswick, when he was Crown Prince. Dr Desaguliers was to have performed that ceremony too on behalf of the Premier Grand Lodge, but he was too ill with gout to travel and the ceremony was performed by the Provincial Grand Master of Hamburg instead:

A Letter has been received by the Duke of Richmond from the King of Prussia, signifying his Majesty's Desire of being admitted a Member of the ancient and honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons; for which Purpose the Grand Lodge fixed on the Reverend Dr Desaguliers formerly Grand Master, to go over and assist at the Ceremony; but the Doctor's Indisposition not permitting him, 'tis said the Provincial Grand Master of Hamburg is gone over to initiate His Prussian Majesty, and a certain Number of his Officers into that Society — Much more might be said, but consistent with the Rules of Masonry, it is good to know what NOT to say.¹⁷

The previous year Dr Desaguliers did, however, initiate and pass another royal Mason, Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales, on 5 November 1737 in an occasional lodge at Kew Palace. He was, at that time, one of the Prince's Chaplains.

On average, Desaguliers gave five courses of lectures each year for over thirty years. To give some idea of what was involved, in May 1713 Desaguliers's lecture course consisted of twenty-one lectures divided into mechanics, hydrostatics, pneumatics, and optics. The final lecture was a demonstration of Sir Isaac Newton's theory of light and colours. Each lecture was illustrated by a series of practical experiments.

From 1714 Desaguliers was Senior Curator at the Royal Society, which was another platform for him to display his talents for public speaking by demonstrating the experiments. He was also a close associate of Sir Isaac Newton, the President of the Royal Society, and the main promulgator of Newton's ideas. Newton was himself very interested in Solomon's Temple, in symbolism, and in biblical matters generally. He and Dr Desaguliers met frequently at Royal Society meetings and Sir Isaac was godfather to one of Desaguliers's children. Newton was not a Freemason, which is surprising since Desaguliers would certainly have tried to recruit him and his academic interests lay very close to those of many speculative Freemasons of the time, a great number of whom were Fellows of the Royal Society. The problem was probably Newton's dissenting theology and his anti-trinitarian faith. He was also by nature a very solitary man who spurned social contact and would thus have hated the lively fraternal intercourse of the Freemasons' lodges.

There was an element in some of Dr Desaguliers's lectures that might today be labelled as magic. Just as the magician apparently defies nature, so Dr Desaguliers entertained his

¹⁷ *The York Courant*, 18 December 1739.

auditors by also demonstrating what seemed to be impossible: ‘Brass made to look like Silver on the sudden’; ‘A heavy Body made to rise, and a lighter to descend’; ‘Cork made to descend in Water’; and ‘Oil made to descend in Water’ were all titles of his experiments.¹⁸ Rather than defying nature, Dr Desaguliers was, in fact, educating his listeners about the latest scientific discoveries, yet concealing his academic knowledge under the guise of entertainment. It was by no means all entertainment though. Many of his auditors were serious students of natural philosophy themselves and went on to teach Newtonian ideas. The cost of the whole course in 1713 was two guineas. Later on Dr Desaguliers added astronomy and other subjects to his lecture series, for which he designed his famous planetarium. By the 1730s his fee had increased to three guineas each for a minimum of twelve auditors. Dr Desaguliers was happy to lecture in English, French, or Latin, and on at least one occasion he gave the same lecture in all three languages on the same day.¹⁹ He also published translations of scientific texts from French and Latin and taught students. This is an advertisement for his services in 1728:

COURSES of EXPERIMENTAL PHILOSOPHY and COURSE of EXPERIMENTAL ASTRONOMY, *publick* or *private*, in *Latin*, *French*, or *English*, are perform'd at any time of the year, and likewise all Parts of *pure* and *mix'd* *Mathematicks* taught, by the *Author*, at his house in *Channel-Row*, *Westminster*, where Gentlemen who have a Mind to apply close to these Studies, may be boarded.²⁰

As Trevor Stewart demonstrated in his Prestonian Lecture in 2004, the lectures given in Masonic lodges in the 1720s and 30s were occasionally on Masonic themes but more often on scientific topics similar to those given by Dr Desaguliers in his public lectures. For example, those discussed at the Old King's Arms Lodge – the lodge George Payne joined after the Horn Tavern Lodge was erased in 1747 – included: ‘The Principles of Astronomy’; ‘Reflection and Refraction of Light’; ‘The Structure of the Eye’; ‘The Eye and Light’; and ‘The Properties of Colour’.²¹

Dr Desaguliers's friends, including his noble friends, viewed him with a mixture of admiration and amusement. Privately, they referred to him as ‘Dessy’ and were well aware of his tendency to be pompous and overbearing whilst they admired his energy, commitment and talent. He was certainly a very busy man and packed an enormous amount into his life. The 2nd Duke of Richmond, a good friend, referred to him as ‘the grand Beelzebub of Freemasonry’ in a letter dated 31 July, 1735 to President Montesquieu, although he probably meant to write ‘the grand Behemoth of Freemasonry’:

¹⁸ J. T. Desaguliers, *A Catalogue of the Experiments in Mr Desaguliers's Course* (London, 1713), 1.

¹⁹ In August 1731 at Rotterdam: 7.30 am in French, 10 am in English and 4 pm in Latin.

²⁰ J. T. Desaguliers, *The Newtonian System of the World, the Best Model of Government: an Allegorical Poem* (Westminster: J. Roberts, 1728), 47.

²¹ A. T. Stewart, *English Speculative Freemasonry: Some Possible Origins, Themes and Developments*, Prestonian Lecture 2004, 66–7.

*... sachez enfin que le grand Belzébuth de tous les maçons, qui est le docteur Désaguliers, est actuellement à Paris, et doit venir au premier jour à Aubigny pour y tenir la loge. Venez-y donc, mon cher frère, au plus tôt recevoir sa bénédiction.*²²

[... be aware finally that the grand Beelzebub of all Masons, who is Dr Desaguliers, is now in Paris, and is to come on the first day possible to Aubigny to hold the lodge. So come as quickly as possible, therefore, my dear brother, to receive his blessing.]

On 2 August, Montesquieu responded to the Duke:

*Soit le bien-arrivé le docteur Desaguliers, la première colonne de la maçonnerie. Je ne doute pas que sur cette nouvelle tout ce qui reste encore à recevoir en France de gens de mérite ne se fasse maçon.*²³

[I hope Dr Desaguliers, the first pillar of Masonry, arrives safely. I do not doubt that at this news, all the remaining meritorious people of France will want to be made Masons.]

Desaguliers's enthusiasm for the development and spread of Freemasonry was undimmed even by 1734, as a couple of letters from Thomas Hill²⁴ to the 2nd Duke of Richmond show:

London, Aug[us]t 23 1734
My Lord,

I have communicated to the once, if I am not mistaken, right worshipful, but I am pretty sure more than once worshipful Dr. J[ohn]. Theophilus Desaguliers²⁵, your Grace's commands relating to the brotherhood of Aubigny sur Nerre [*sic.*]²⁶. I need not tel[l] you how pleased he is with this further propagation of masonry.²⁷ I think I do not judge too severely if I say that of the Christian religion would not affect him

²² R. Pomeau, 'Montesquieu – Correspondance inédite', *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, mars/avril 1982, 217. As far as we know neither Montesquieu nor Desaguliers ever visited Aubigny.

²³ R. Shackleton 'Montesquieu's Correspondence – Additions and Corrections' *French Studies*, Vol. XII, Issue 4, October 1958, 328. Montesquieu's letter is wrongly dated 2 July but is clearly a reply to the Duke's letter of 31 July and must, therefore, have been written in early August.

²⁴ Thomas Hill was the 2nd Duke of Richmond's tutor and a frequent correspondent and close friend in later life. He too was a Freemason and, according to the 1725 lists (*QCA X*, 22), a member of the Lodge at the Green Lettice [*sic.*] in Brownlow Street.

²⁵ Desaguliers was indeed 'once . . . Right Worshipful' for he was Grand Master in 1719 and according to Hill, Master of at least two Lodges. He was certainly Master of Solomon's Temple, the French lodge, in London in 1725 (*QCA X*, 42) and it would be interesting to know of which other lodge. It is likely he was Master of Lodge IV at some point, but no records are extant.

²⁶ The Duke set up a lodge at his grandmother's Castle at Aubigny-sur-Nère (Cher) early in 1734. According to a sentence in a letter he wrote in French to President Montesquieu on 31 August 1735, it already had over twenty brothers by then: *Nous y avons plus de vingt frères*. Sadly, no records are extant concerning this lodge.

²⁷ Desaguliers himself was greatly involved in the propagation of speculative Freemasonry, both within England and Scotland as well as abroad to Holland and France, and through his former assistants to Madrid and Lisbon.

so much.²⁸ When I mentioned the diploma,²⁹ he immediatl[e]y asked me if I had not *Amadis de Gaula*³⁰ or some of the old Romances. I was something surprised at his question, and begun to think as the house was til'd,³¹ our brother had a mind to crack a joke. But it turned out quite otherwise. He only wanted to get a little of the vieux Gaulois,³² in order to give his style the greater air of antiquity and consequently make it more venerable to the new Lodge.³³ He went from me fully bent upon getting that or some other such book. What the production wil[l] be you may expect to see soon. Among other discourse we had, he asked me if I intended going over to Holland. I told him it was very probable I might if nothing fel[l] out to hinder me. Why sais³⁴ the D[octo]r. I don't care if I go too, and then when we return we shal[l] have brethren enou[gh] abo[a]rd to make a lodge. It wil[l] be very pretty to have one of his Majesty's yachts a lodge, and what if we print it in our next book³⁵ by the name of Noah's ark.³⁶ I approv'd much of the conceit and the Doctor went his way in a strong belief of my being as good a brother as ever put on an apron. As I am upon so agre[e]able a subject, I cannot quit it without taking notice of the late acquisition you have made as to the Society sur vos terres.³⁷ I would have given a good deal to have been present at the ceremony . . .³⁸

Ten days later Thomas Hill wrote again to the 2nd Duke of Richmond:

London Sept[embe]r 3, 1734
My Lord,

. . . At the same time this comes to your hand, you wil[l] have one of greater consequence from our brother sy devant grand maitre,³⁹ Desaguliers. He has drawn up the necessary diploma⁴⁰ in a style agreeable to the antiquity of the craft. It is sign'd by L[or]

²⁸ Hill is probably alluding to the fact that Desaguliers was always more of a scientist and a Freemason than he was ever a priest.

²⁹ warrant.

³⁰ *Amadis de Gaula* is a chivalric romance in four volumes, written at the beginning of the 14th century. It was popular in French translation amongst Huguenots in the 16th and 17th centuries – hence Desaguliers's knowledge of it. It is also possible Desaguliers saw Handel's opera based on the story *Amadigi di Gaula* at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, London in May 1715.

³¹ Clearly their meeting was in a lodge.

³² Old French.

³³ Freemasonry attracted some of its early members by its links with geometry, others by its alleged antiquity, and here Desaguliers is clearly helping to promote the latter.

³⁴ says.

³⁵ Presumably Pine's list of lodges.

³⁶ The early Freemasons were often called Noachites and the *Graham MS* of 1726 suggests a link between the third degree and a unique legend of the raising of Noah. A modern Masonic degree, Royal Ark Mariners, develops the story of Noah within a Masonic context but comes from the 19th century.

³⁷ 'On your estate' referring again to Aubigny-sur-Nère.

³⁸ West Sussex Record Office, Chichester, *Goodwood MS*. 103.

³⁹ *ci-devant grand maître* – former Grand Master.

⁴⁰ warrant.

d Crauford⁴¹ countersigned by Dessy,⁴² Payne,⁴³ and myself. What have I to do there you wil[l] say! That's no matter; but the jest is, that it is said to be seal'd with the great Seal of the Society, as wel[l] as with the grand Master's signet, but the devil a bit is there of anything but my Lord's arms to it. I made this objection to Dessy; 'tis true sais⁴⁴ he, but we were in hast[e], and the great Seal was not to be had; we must clap it upon a bit of paper, and send it over hereafter to our brethren of Aubigny to be pasted upon the diploma. What wil[l] become of us when things sacred are managed in so negligent a manner! For my part I am ashamed of it, and therefore shall say no more . . .'⁴⁵

Of particular significance as far as the history of Freemasonry is concerned was the creation in the 1720s of the third degree – the degree of Master Mason – and the associated degree of Scots Master which was worked in the 1730s. Until the third degree was widely established in the mid-1730s, the Masters of Masonic lodges were in Masonic rank Fellow Crafts, since this was the senior Masonic degree.⁴⁶ This two-tier structure still exists in the English professions which grant two degrees of which the higher is always denominated 'Fellow'. Fellows are also permitted to teach more junior brethren, just as in operative masonry a Fellow Craft was permitted to take Apprentices. Thus the Royal College of Surgeons has Members and Fellows (MRCS and FRCS), the latter being consultants who teach the more junior members. Other examples from the professions are organists (ARCO and FRCO) architects (ARIBA and FRIBA) accountants (ACA and FCA) and physicians (MRCP and FRCP).

Clearly, the creation of degrees beyond the Fellow Craft degree involved changes to that particular ritual. Until the development of the two new degrees in the 1720s and 30s, the raising on the Five Points of Fellowship and the giving of the Mason Word were part of the Fellow Craft degree. These had to be moved. Of the sixteen very different catechisms and exposures that pre-date Prichard's *Masonry Dissected* of 1730 from the *Edinburgh Register House Manuscript* of 1696 onwards, fourteen of them describe the 'Points of Fellowship'.⁴⁷ Nowadays, the raising on the Five Points of Fellowship (note 'of Fellowship' because of its former position in the Fellow Craft degree) occurs in the third degree, and the new Master Mason is given only substituted secrets. He has to wait until he is exalted in the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch until he receives 'the genuine secrets of a Master Mason', that is, the Mason Word. This also explains two current

⁴¹ Lord Crauford was Grand Master in 1735.

⁴² Desaguliers, Grand Master in 1719.

⁴³ George Payne, Grand Master: in 1718 and 1720.

⁴⁴ says.

⁴⁵ West Sussex Record Office, Chichester, *Goodwood MS.* 103.

⁴⁶ Some lodges, especially operative lodges in Scotland, refused to work the new third degree and continued with a two-degree structure until almost the end of the 18th century, although speculative lodges in Scotland adopted it rapidly as in England.

⁴⁷ H. Carr 'An Introduction to Prichard's *Masonry Dissected*' *AQC* 94 (1981), 118.

anomalies. First, the Fellow Craft degree is by far the shortest Masonic degree since nothing was added to replace the missing material once it had been moved to the two new degrees in the 1720s and 1730s. Secondly, much of the Master's installation ceremony takes place in the Fellow Craft degree since, until the changes, all Masters of lodges were in Masonic rank Fellow Crafts.

At the heart of the third degree lies the Hiramic legend: a story of the death of Hiram Abif and of his raising having being faithful unto death. It is an allegory of the verse from Revelation 2:10, 'Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.' From its contents it is possible to see the hand of Dr Desaguliers at work. As well as being a distinguished scientist and lecturer, Dr Desaguliers was an Anglican minister. It is not, therefore, surprising to see Christian elements from the New Testament appearing in the story including its development of the above quotation from Revelation into the short play that is enacted during the ceremony.

As Dr Desaguliers understood only too well from his lectures on science, it is not what the lecturer says that is memorable but what he shows. It is the experiment that creates the vivid and lasting impression. So too in the third degree it is the candidate playing the part of Hiram in the enactment of the story of his murder that is the memorable part of the ceremony and leaves a lasting impression.

It is interesting to note the increased importance of the two Saints John in eighteenth-century Freemasonry. The motto on the first seal of the Premier Grand Lodge was *Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος* [En arche en ho logos] ('In the beginning was the Word') the opening words of St John's Gospel in the original Greek. Installation meetings during the eighteenth century were held on the patronal festivals of the two saints, 24 June and 27 December, and they were referred to as 'the two great parallels' of Masonry. Surprisingly, neither appears in any of the Old Charges. Like so many things that are familiar in Freemasonry, it was probably an eighteenth-century development, possibly also originating with Dr Desaguliers and inspired by the Mason Word. Until then the patron saints of the Freemasons were the Four Crowned Martyrs after whom Quatuor Coronati Lodge is named. They are referred to in the oldest Masonic document, the *Regius Manuscript* of c.1390 in which the Craft is described as 'The Art of the Four Crowned ones', *Ars quatuor coronatorum*.⁴⁸ This was as true in seventeenth-century France as in England. For instance, there is a chapel in the Cathedral of *Sainte Réparate* in Nice, dating from the middle years of the seventeenth century, which was paid for by the Masons and is filled with images of the Four Crowned Martyrs: there is no sign or mention of the two Saints John.

Until the nineteenth century Masonic obligations were always taken on the Bible, open at the Gospel of St John.⁴⁹ It seems its opening words were seen by the early Masons

⁴⁸ The Regius Poem between lines 496 and 497.

⁴⁹ Evidence for this can be found in the pages of old Bibles that have been used in lodges since the 18th century,

as referring to the Mason Word and thus one of the important secrets of Freemasonry. Certainly the early focus was on St John the Apostle and not on St John the Baptist. The method of electing the Master of a lodge was defined in the Schaw Statutes of 1598, but no uniform date was specified for when the election was to be held. A supplementary enactment was issued by Schaw the following year on 27 November 1599, stating that all Wardens were to be chosen yearly on the feast of St John the Apostle, 27 December.⁵⁰ This shows that the connection between St John's Gospel and Freemasonry goes back at least to the sixteenth century and probably much further. It is generally thought that the inclusion of St John the Baptist was probably an eighteenth-century English addition related to the foundation of the Grand Lodge in 1717. The earliest known use of the phrase 'the Holy Lodge of St John' as a generic term for a Freemason's lodge comes in *The Whole Institution of Masonry* of 1724 and thus in the post-Desaguliers revisions period:

Q. What Lodge are you off [*sic*]
A. Holy St John.⁵¹

It is significant that this manuscript is included in the same document from Bristol as *A Dialogue between Simon and Philip*, discussed in detail below, which is closely related to the Desaguliers revisions of the early 1720s. Earlier catechisms from Scotland such as *The Edinburgh Register House MS* of 1696 and *The Kevan MS* of c.1720 give as the answer to a similar question: 'Kilwinning', a literal rather than a symbolic answer to the question.

The third degree and the Royal Arch are full of Christian, New Testament elements and references. There are quotations from the Gospel of St John, from the Revelation of St John the Divine and from the *Book of Common Prayer*. Dr Desaguliers was, of course, an Anglican minister, and would thus be more familiar with the New Testament than with the Old and especially well versed in the *Book of Common Prayer*. James Anderson, as a Scottish Presbyterian, would have been familiar with the Old and New Testaments and but not with the *Book of Common Prayer*.

c.1720 Dr Desaguliers located an interesting fourth-century Greek legend quoted in a copy he possessed of Samuel Lee's book *Orbis miraculum, or, The Temple of Solomon, portrayed by Scripture-light*, published in London in 1659.⁵² With such a title it is not surprising that a keen Freemason would acquire a copy. In it he discovered, near the end,

such as that of Royal Brunswick Lodge No. 296, Sheffield where the only pages in the Bible that have had to be fully restored from scraps were the last page of Luke and the first page of John, which had been worn out by generations of Masons' hands being placed upon them when taking their obligations.

⁵⁰ R. T. A. Lindsay, *A History of the Mason Lodge of Holyrood House (St. Luke's) No. 44* (Edinburgh: EUP, 1935) Vol.1, 18–19.

⁵¹ D. Knoop, G. P. Jones & D. Hamer, *The Early Masonic Catechisms* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2nd edn, ed by H. Carr for Quatuor Coronati Lodge, 1963), 81–2.

⁵² Page 370. Desaguliers's signed copy appeared for sale on ebay in February 2013 from a bookseller in South Carolina, USA.

a fascinating story of the discovery by workmen of a copy of St John's Gospel on a pillar in a cave underneath the ruins of Solomon's Temple. Dr Desaguliers clearly saw the possibility of that story forming the centrepiece of a new Masonic ceremony: the second of the two new ceremonies created in the 1720s and 1730s.

The legend of the discovery of the Word in the hidden vault that now forms the basis of the exaltation ceremony of the Royal Arch was, in the 1730s, the centrepiece of the degree of Scots Master. This is made clear in the evidence the accused Freemason John Coustos gave in 1743 to the Holy Inquisition in Spain. Coustos's inquisitors were fascinated by the importance of the Gospel of St John in eighteenth-century Freemasonry, and that Masonic obligations were taken on that book. They asked Coustos to explain further: 'Why on the Gospel of John?' they asked. Coustos's answer given on 26 March 1743 is interesting and important:

That the reason and foundation that the Masters of this Fraternity have for causing those who newly join to take the Oath upon the Bible, or Book of the Gospels, at the place of that of St. John, is the following:— that when the destruction of the famous Temple of Solomon took place there was found below the First Stone a tablet of bronze upon which was engraved the following word, JEHOVAH, which means GOD, giving thereby to understand that that fabric and Temple was instituted and erected in the name of the same God to whom it was dedicated that same Lord being the beginning and end of such a magnificent work; and as in the Gospel of St John there are found the same words and doctrine they, for this reason cause the Oath to be taken at that place, thus to show that the whole institution of this Fraternity is founded on the same doctrine which Solomon observed in his sumptuous work; and the reason he [Coustos] has for saying this is that he had heard it so declared by some of the French and English Masters, though he does not know from whence they obtained this doctrine for its propounding.⁵³

John Coustos, a diamond cutter by trade and, like Dr Desaguliers, the son of a Huguenot refugee, became a Freemason in London in 1730, but departed in 1735 for Paris. He stated quite clearly to his inquisitors that he had learnt all his Freemasonry whilst he was in London. It is a matter of record that the degree of Scots Master was established in London by then. (We also know that it was worked in Bristol and Bath later in that decade, doubtless under Dr Desaguliers's influence, since he visited Bath on several occasions and Bristol at least once.) Coustos states that he had heard this from some French and English Masters, though he does not know from whence they obtained this knowledge. Coustos was a Master Mason and the Master of at least two lodges – one in Paris

⁵³ S. Vatcher, 'John Coustos and the Portuguese Inquisition', *AQC* 81 (1968), 52. Coustos was the son of a Huguenot refugee and was a Freemason in London between 1730 and 1735. From London Coustos went to Paris and founded a lodge there, now known as the Coustos-Villeroy Lodge. From there he went to Portugal, where he founded a lodge for foreigners in Lisbon. It was here he was arrested, tried, and tortured by the Holy Inquisition following Clement XII's Papal Bull of 1738 condemning Freemasonry.

and one in Lisbon – but he is never recorded as being a Scots Master. Only Scots Masters knew the fourth-century legend of the discovery of a book of the Gospels in a hidden vault below King Solomon’s Temple, a story now associated with the Royal Arch. Prior to the overtly Christian elements being removed in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the words read out by the Sojourners from the scroll they discover in the hidden vault are the opening words of St John’s Gospel, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God,’ just as in the original story quoted in Samuel Lee’s book.⁵⁴

The legend now associated with the Royal Arch was conceived in the fourth century AD by a Greek writer called Philostorgius. It tells of the discovery of a cave under the Temple of Solomon, when labourers employed by the Roman Emperor Julian were preparing the ground to rebuild the famous temple for the fourth time. In the cave placed on top of a pillar they discover a copy of St John’s Gospel. This story was published in Latin and Greek throughout the Middle Ages and appeared twice in the seventeenth century: once in English in Samuel Lee’s book and once in French in Claude Fleury’s twenty-volume *Histoire Ecclésiastique* of 1791. This is the English translation in *Orbis Miraculum* of which Desaguliers had a copy, and the original version of the story now associated with the Royal Arch ceremony of Exaltation:

When the foundations [of the Temple at Jerusalem] were a laying, as I have said, there was a stone among the rest, to which the bottom of the foundation was fastened, that slipped from its place, and discovered the mouth of a cave which had been cut in the rock. Now when they could not see to the bottom by reason of its depth; the Overseers of the building being desirous to have a certain knowledge of the place, tied a long rope to one of the Labourers, and let him down: He being come to the bottom, found water in it, that took him up to the mid-ankles, and searching every part of that hollow place, he found it to be four square, as far as he could conjecture by feeling. Then returning toward the mouth of it, he hit upon a certain little pillar, not much higher than the water, and lighting with his hand upon it, found a book lying there wrapped up in a piece of thin and clean linen. Having taken it into his hands, he signified by the rope that they should draw him up. When he was pulled up, he shows the book, which struck them with admiration, especially seeming so fresh and untouched as it did, being found in so dark and obscure a hole. The Book being unfolded, did amaze not only the Jews, but the Grecians also, holding forth even at the beginning of it in great Letters (*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*) To speak plainly, that Scripture did manifestly contain the whole gospel, which the Divine tongue of the Virgin-Disciple had declared.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ These words were replaced in 1835 by the opening words of Genesis.

⁵⁵ Samuel Lee, *Orbis miraculum, or, The Temple of Solomon, portrayed by Scripture-light* (London: printed by John Streeter for Thomas Basset, 1659), 370.

If this story were to be used in a new Masonic ceremony, Dr Desaguliers needed an account of how the Mason Word was lost. This was probably his inspiration for the creation of the Hiram legend, which is a story that accounts for the loss of the Word. As was noted above, certain parts of the old Fellow Craft degree were moved into the two new degrees: the Five Points of Fellowship to the third degree and the original Mason Word to the Royal Arch as the genuine secret of a Master Mason (note 'of a Master Mason' not of a Royal Arch Mason).

To this day the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) correctly states that there are just three degrees in Freemasonry and not four, and that the Royal Arch is the completion of the third degree and not, as the Antients maintained, a fourth degree.⁵⁶ If one examines the matter closely, both historically and ritually the present Royal Arch ceremony is certainly part of the Master Mason degree. There are also many things within its ceremonies – including the three installation ceremonies – which explain matters in the three Craft degrees that precede the Supreme Order. There is and has always been an indissoluble link between the Craft and the Royal Arch.

The fundamental difference between the degree of Scots Master in the 1730s and the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch in the 1760s is that the Scots Masters' lodges had the usual lodge arrangement of a Master and two Wardens, whereas Royal Arch chapters had and still have three co-equal Masters or Principals. Whilst Scots Masters' lodges existed in the 1730s in London, Bath, and Bristol, the earliest known Royal Arch chapters in their present form date from the 1760s in London and York.

In addition to being a distinguished lecturer and scientist, Dr Desaguliers was an occasional poet and actor, and would thus have known what would work well when performed in a lodge and how to dramatize his story effectively. In 1731 he contributed the *Epilogue* to a play in which his sons, John and Thomas, acted at Vanburgh Castle. In another play performed in 1732 he is shown in a Hogarth painting of the occasion as the prompter at the side of the stage. He himself took part in a play performed at one of the houses of John, Duke of Montagu, on New Year's Day 1735.⁵⁷ Like all talented lecturers he knew how to entertain and keep the attention of an audience.

The contents of the Hiram legend are well known and do not need repeating here. It is, however, important to remind ourselves of the earliest version we have of the legend which was printed in Samuel Prichard's *Masonry Dissected* in 1730:

Q: Where are you going?

A: To the West.

Q: What are you going to do there?

⁵⁶ *Book of Constitutions*, 1.

⁵⁷ C. H. G. Lennox, *A Duke and his Friends: The Life and Letters of the 2nd Duke of Richmond*, edited by the Earl of March, 2 vols (London: Hutchinson, 1911), Vol. 1, 295–6.

A: To seek for that which was lost and is now found.

Q: What was that which was lost and is now found?

A: The Master-Mason's Word.

Q: How was it lost?

A: By Three Great Knocks, or the Death of our Master *Hiram*.

Q: How came he be his Death?

A: In the Building of *Solomon's* Temple he was Master-Mason, and at high 12 at Noon, when the Men was gone to refresh themselves, as was his usual Custom, he came to survey the Works, and when he was enter'd into the Temple, there were Three Ruffians, suppos'd to be Three Fellow-Crafts, planted themselves at the Three Entrances of the Temple, and when he came out, one demanded the Master's Word of him, and he reply'd he did not receive it in such a manner, but Time and a little Patience would bring him to it: He, not satisfied with that Answer, gave him a Blow, which made him reel; he went to the other Gate, where being accosted in the same manner, and making the same Reply, he received a greater Blow, and at the third his *Quietus*.

Q: What did the Ruffians kill him with?

A: A Setting Maul, Setting Tool and Setting Beadle.

Q: How did they dispose of him?

A: Carried him out at the West Door of the Temple, and hid him under some Rubbish till High 12 again.⁵⁸

I now list all the contemporary evidence that is known to me concerning the creation of the Hiramic legend and thus of the third degree. In my view it all points towards Dr Desaguliers being its creator.

The Post Boy 1723⁵⁹

Although the *Post Boy* sham exposure of 26–28 December 1723 is the work of someone who had only the vaguest idea of Freemasonry, the author nevertheless lists three degrees and three passwords even though each is incorrect.

Q. What is the Apprentice's Word?

A. Babel.

Q. What is the Fellow Crafts Word?

A. Jerusalem.

Q. What is the Master Word?

A. Hiram abif.

It is possible, as Bro. Brent Morris has argued, that the word 'Master' refers to the Master of the Lodge and not to the degree of Master Mason. However, it is certainly of note that the password given for the Master Mason is 'Hiram abif'. Perhaps this is just a coincidence. Clearly, the author knew something of Freemasonry but not the details.

⁵⁸ S. Prichard, *Masonry Dissected* (London, 1730), 9.

⁵⁹ S. B. Morris, 'The Post Boy Sham Exposure of 1723' *Heredom* Vol. 7 (1998), 9–38.

If nothing else, the *Post Boy* exposure is evidence that the third degree and the Hiram legend were known in 1723, well before the first recorded ceremony in 1725.

*The Briscoe Pamphlet, c.1723*⁶⁰

One of the most convincing contemporary documents that links the name of Dr Desaguliers to the Hiram legend, and thus to the third degree, is the *Briscoe Pamphlet* of c.1723. In it a serious Mason of the old school, having read the recently-published *Book of Constitutions*, takes Anderson and Desaguliers to task for making changes to what is stated in the Volume of Sacred Law. The first two degrees, those of Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft, are based wholly on the Bible, most especially the First Book of Kings and the Second Book of Chronicles. The new third degree of the Grand Lodge Masons is based on a made-up story involving biblical characters which we now call the Hiram legend. It is to this that the author of the *Briscoe Pamphlet* is objecting. One can easily see where he is coming from. The passage between the old operative masons and the new gentleman Masons was not always an easy one. The Provincial Grand Master of Cheshire, Colonel Francis Columbine, expressed this in a letter he wrote to the 2nd Duke of Richmond in 1725, giving his reason for forming a third lodge in Chester: ‘because several of our Bretheren [*sic*] who are poor Artificers, but very Old Masons, could not support the Expence [*sic*] of associating with the Gentlemen . . .’⁶¹

Under the heading ‘Observations and Critical Remarks on the New Constitutions of the Free-Masons’ the author of *The Briscoe Pamphlet* takes Anderson to task for mistakes in his interpretation, and reporting of material from the Old Testament. He then turns his attention to Dr Desaguliers and his development of the character of Hiram Abif:

But our learned Doctor of Laws, to shew his extraordinary reading, takes a great deal of Pains to prove that *Hiram*, the Founder in Brass, a *Tyrian*, was not *Hiram* King of *Tyre*; when as the sacred text is so expressly plain in these Words, and *King Solomon* sent and fetch’d *Hiram* out of *Tyre*. He was a *Widow’s Son of the Tribe of Naphtali*, and his Father was a *Man of Tyre*, a worker in Brass, and he was filled with *Wisdom*, and *understanding*, and *cunning to work all Works in Brass*. Thus far the holy Penman, but the most ingenious Doctor *Desaguliers*, to make this *Hiram*, who was a Founder, and Carver in Brass, a *Stone-Cutter*, or *Free-Mason*, as you may suppose, has found out the very Letter of Recommendation which King *Hiram* sent to *Solomon*, which runs thus, and now I have sent a *cunning Man*, endued with *understanding*, *skilful to work in Gold, Silver, Brass, Iron, Stone, Timber, Purple, Blue, fine Linnen and Crimson*, also to *Grave any manner of Graving*, and to *find out every Device which shall be put to him*:

⁶⁰ D. Knoop, G. P. Jones & D. Hamer, *Early Masonic Pamphlets* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1945, reprinted by Burgess & Son, Abingdon, for Quatuor Coronati Lodge, 1978), 111–130.

⁶¹ Letter dated 19 April 1725 from Francis Columbine, PGM in Chester, to a brother close to the 2nd Duke of Richmond, possibly William Cooper, George Payne or Tom Hill, whom he hoped to meet in London at the beginning of May. Goodwood Archive, West Sussex Record Office, Chichester.

Here you find our *Free-Mason* is a mere Jack of all Trades, a Goldsmith, Silversmith, Brazier, Ironmonger, Stone-cutter, Timber-Merchant, Sawyer, Carpenter, or Joyner, a Linnen-Draper, and fine Scarlet-dyer; when as in the said Book of Kings we read no more of him that that he was a Founder, or Caster of Brass, and other metals, and a fine Sculptor, Carver, and Engraver.

The author then goes on to mention the three Grand Masters as they are portrayed in the third degree:

Well, but saith the admired Author of the Constitutions, when the wise King *Solomon* was Grand Master of the *Lodge at Jerusalem*, and the learned King *Hiram* was Grand Master of the *Lodge at Tyre*, and the inspired *Hiram Abif* was Master of *Work* and *Masonry* . . .’

This, again, strongly suggests that Dr Desaguliers had already created the Hiramic legend by c.1723, even if the earliest recorded raising was on 1 February 1725.

*A Dialogue between Simon and Philip, c.1724*⁶²

Another important source from the same period is *A Dialogue between Simon and Philip*. This was published by Knoop, Jones & Hamer in *The Early Masonic Catechisms*. However, their book was rushed into print at the last minute and before the editors had a chance to study it properly. Consequently, they provided a more considered version of the *Dialogue* in a paper to *AQC* in 1944. Unfortunately, when Harry Carr edited a second edition of *EMC* for QC Lodge in 1963, he ignored the authors’ paper in *AQC* 57 (1944), which gives their more considered opinion and commentary on the document. Although dated 1944, this *AQC* volume was not published until 1946. Their 1944 paper includes many changes to their views expressed in *EMC* including its possible date, a more accurate text and a corrected illustration.

The *Dialogue* talks about the Hiramic legend and how it relates to the degree of Entered Apprentice:

How was you admitted a Mason? By Three knocks on the Door the last at a double distance of time from the former and much larger . . . N.B. The reason of those three Knocks is not known to Prentices but to the Master which is from Hiram the Grand Master in Solomon’s Temple. Being murdered by his three Prentices and was dispatched by the third Blow the last Prentice gave him and this because he would not discover the Secrets to them.

This important link between the first and third degrees was taken up in Samuel Prichard’s *Masonry Dissected* of 1730:

Q: What was that which was lost and is now found?

⁶² D. Knoop, G. P. Jones & D. Hamer, ‘A Dialogue between Simon and Philip’ *AQC* 57 (1944), 3–21.

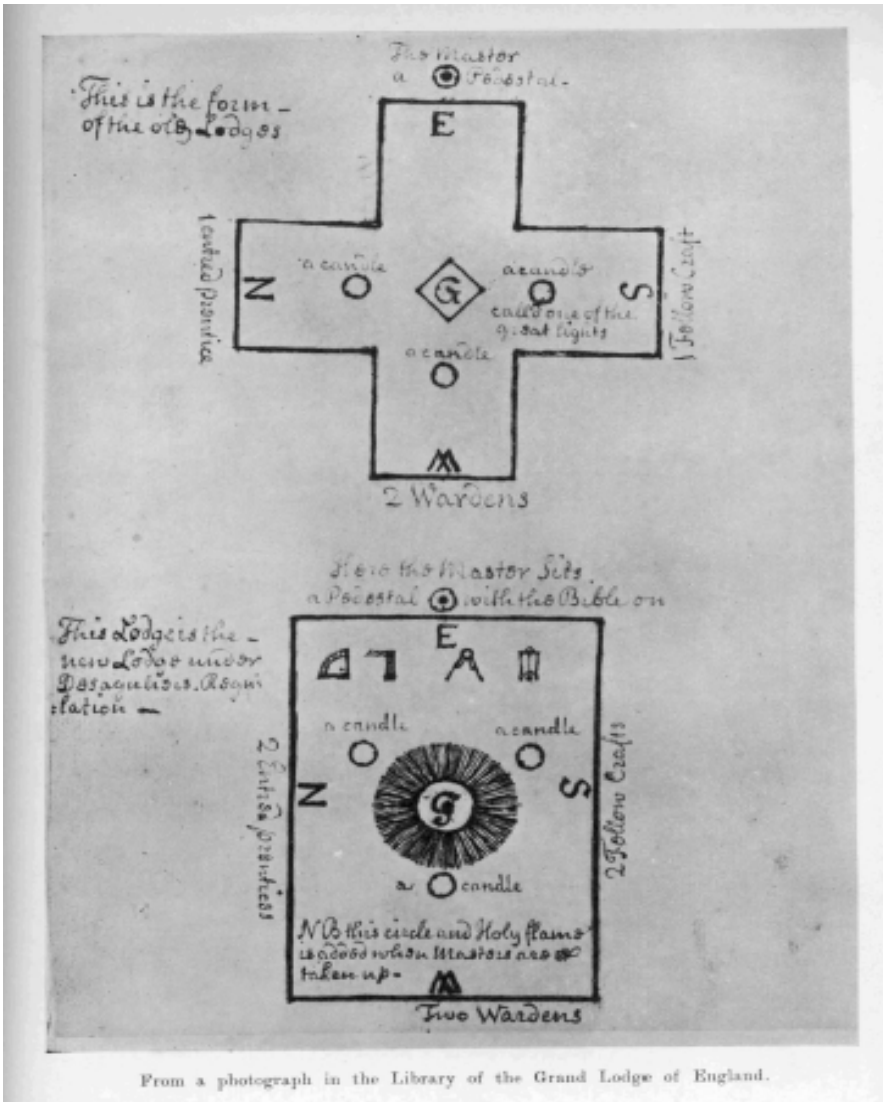
A: The Master-Mason's Word.

Q: How was it lost?

A: By Three Great Knocks, or the Death of our Master Hiram.

Sadly, this link between the first and third degrees by the manner in which the knocks of the first degree are given: 'the last at a double distance of time from the former and much larger' has now been lost in most lodges.

The diagram in the *Dialogue* of the new lodge under the Desaguliers's Regulation adds a note which does not occur in the form of the Old Lodges: 'N.B. this circle and Holy



From a photograph in the Library of the Grand Lodge of England.

flame is added when Masters are taken up.' Once again Dr Desaguliers's name is linked to the new degree of Master Mason in a document from c.1724.

*Les Quatre Fils Aymon*⁶³

Another strong argument which links Dr Desaguliers to the creation of the Hiramic legend is the influence upon it of a French medieval *Chanson de Geste*, entitled, *La Chanson de Renaud de Montauban* or *La Chanson des Quatre Fils Aymon*. According to this twelfth-century legend, Renaud de Montauban was one of four brothers who were the sons of Duke Aymon. After many adventures, including fighting in the crusades, Renaud returns home to find his wife has died. He sells everything and travels to Cologne where he works as a builder on the erection of a new church. Although not a trained mason, his work is far better than that of the professional builders, who in a fit of jealousy kill Renaud and throw his body into the Rhine. Instead of sinking the body is miraculously raised up and carried back to his brothers, who build a chapel as a shrine to his memory. The link to the Hiramic legend is, of course, the killing of a skilled mason by other masons who are jealous of his skills and of his lifeless body being raised up.

One has to ask: c.1720 who, apart from Dr Desaguliers among those closely involved in the Premier Grand Lodge, could possibly have known this twelfth-century French *Chanson*? Neither of Dr Desaguliers's parents spoke any language other than French, but they were educated people and would certainly have introduced their only child to the romance literature of their native country. However, even if Dr Desaguliers knew the story, one has to beg the question: what might have prompted him to think of it around 1720? As is well known, around 1720 Desaguliers's good friend and fellow Grand Master George Payne set about collecting old Masonic documents, especially copies of the Old Charges, on which to base the *General Regulations* he was drafting for the Premier Grand Lodge. It is certain he would have shown whatever he found to his close friend Dr Desaguliers. A number of these Old Charges include a reference to the so-called son of Hiram King of Tyre which they call Aynon or Aynone. The following example comes from *Grand Lodge MS No.1*, dated 1583:

And further more there was a kyng of another reigne that me[n] called Iram and he Loved well king Salomon and he gave him Tymber to his woork and had a soonne that height Aynone and he was a m[aste]r of geometrey And was cheife maist[e]r of all his Massons and was m[aste]r of all his graving & Carving and all other mann[e]r of massonrye that belongith to the Temple and this Is wytnessed in the Byble in the iiii booke of the Kyngs the iiird Chapter.⁶⁴

⁶³ R. de Montauban, *La chanson des Quatre fils Aymon, d'après le manuscrit La Vallière* (Montpellier: Coulet et Fils, 1909).

⁶⁴ *QCA* IV, v.

This Aynon was supposedly a son of Hiram and thus in Hebrew Hiram Abif – (Hiram [was] my father). He is so named in *2 Chronicles 2:13*:

I am sending you Hiram-Abi, a man of great skill, whose mother was from Dan and whose father was from Tyre. He is trained to work in gold and silver, bronze and iron, stone and wood, and with purple and blue and crimson yarn and fine linen. He is experienced in all kinds of engraving and can execute any design given to him. He will work with your skilled workers and with those of my lord, David your father.

It is more than possible that Dr Desaguliers's thoughts might have turned to the *Quatre Fils Aynon* story that had been told to him in his childhood, given the homophonous names Aynon and Aymon, and thus have borrowed elements of it for the Hiramic legend he was in the process of creating. Yet again one has to beg the question: who but Dr Desaguliers of those who were around at that time and mixing with the senior members of the Grand Lodge could have known this twelfth-century French *chanson de geste* and borrowed ideas from it?

The *Philo Musicae et Architecturae Societas Apollini*, 1725⁶⁵

The earliest recorded raising of a candidate to the degree of a Master Mason is included in the Minutes of the Masonic lodge for the lovers of music and architecture called the *Philo Musicae et Architecturae Societas Apollini*, which met between 1725 and 1727 at the Queen's Head in Fleet Street, London (later named the Apollo Tavern). The relevant Minute for 1 February 1725 states: 'Sometime before, the said Mr. William Gulston, Coort Knevit Esqr., Mr. William Jones, and Mr. Edmund Squire were Regularly pass'd Masters in the before mentioned Lodge [at the Queen's Head] of Hollis Street.' Although this is the first written record we have of a separate third degree, it is unlikely to have been the first ceremony ever performed. As the earlier quotations show it was certainly known in London by 1723.

Dumbarton Lodge Minutes of 1726⁶⁶

There is no doubt that the third degree was being worked in Scotland as early as 1725. The earliest Minutes of the Lodge of Dumbarton No. 18, dated 20 January 1726, reveal that those present included John Hamilton, Great Master, accompanied by seven Master Masons, six Fellow Crafts and three Entered Apprentices:

At the Lodge of Dunbritan the 20th January, 1726 – The which day being the first meeting of the Masons thereof after their Constitution, Convened John Campbell, James Brock, George McGie, James Nucoll, William Wallace, James McFarland, and Walter

⁶⁵ QCA IX.

⁶⁶ D. A. L. Wilson, *The History of Dumbarton Kilwinning Lodge No. 18* (Dumbarton: Dumbarton Kilwinning Lodge No. 18, 1998).

Williamson Masters, John McLauchlan, James Wallace, James Colquhoun, William Mitchell, Gabriell Porterfield, & Robert Fleming Fellows of Craft, James McArthur, John McNiell & George Ritchie entered apprentices. All by the advice and with Consent of John Hamilton the Great Master of the Lodge.⁶⁷

This shows that in January 1726 there were in the Lodge of Dumbarton eight Master Masons (one assumes the Master of the lodge was also a Master Mason) who must have been raised previously and in another Lodge. The following entry states:

Lodge of Dunbritan 25th March 1726 – . . . The said day Gabriell Porterfield By unanimous Consent of the Masters, was admitted and received a Master of the Fraternity who Renewed his oath and Gave in his entry money in the termes of the Institution All which ammount to The Sume of Nine pound Twelve Shilling Scots, Left in the Box.⁶⁸

This is the first record of a third degree ceremony in Scotland, although there must have been earlier raisings. Bro. Robert Cooper, who discusses this evidence in an *AQC* paper,⁶⁹ also argues that a brass square and compasses belonging to the same lodge and dated 1714 is evidence that the Master Mason degree was being worked at that date, but this is mere speculation and in my view highly unlikely.

Dr Desaguliers visited the Lodge of Edinburgh on 21 August 1721. It is certainly possible he had framed his ideas for the new third degree by that time and shared it with his Scottish Brethren. It is, perhaps, more likely that the third degree made its way to Scotland sometime between 1723 and 1725 when it had begun being worked in London. The Dumbarton Minutes show that the third degree must have been worked in Scotland as early as 1725, since there were eight Master Masons at the first meeting of the new Dumbarton Lodge No. 18 in January 1726. Since they were all local men, it is likely the lodge in which they were raised was in that area or, perhaps, they had travelled together to Glasgow or Edinburgh sometime in 1725 in order to be raised.

Drake's Speech, 1726⁷⁰

A speech given by Francis Drake on 27 December 1726 at York Grand Lodge refers to three degrees of Masonry, 'E-P F-C & M-M' in such a manner as to lead one to think that by this time the three degrees were fully established. This may well be the case since, as has just been noted, the third degree had certainly reached Scotland by 1725. It also suggests that, although the first recorded raising in London is dated 1 February 1725, there were probably ceremonies well before that year, possibly as early as 1723.

⁶⁷ Wilson, *The History of Dumbarton Kilwinning Lodge No. 18*, 6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁹ R. L. D. Cooper, 'The Earliest Speculative Working Tool', *AQC* 125 (2012), 61–84.

⁷⁰ Knoop, Jones & Hamer, *The Early Masonic Pamphlets*, 196–207.

Having quoted the contemporary evidence that points to Dr Desaguliers being the author of the Hiram legend and thus of the third degree, it is important to consider an early document that seems to argue against his authorship.

*Trinity College, Dublin, Manuscript*⁷¹

A false trail is the claim that the third degree was conferred in Dublin in 1711, years before its appearance in London. It is referred to in the *Trinity College, Dublin, Manuscript* transcribed in D. Knoop, G. P. Jones, and D. Hamer's *The Early Masonic Catechisms*. There is no doubt at all that the manuscript refers to a separate third degree being worked, since it refers to a perfect lodge containing 'three masters, 3 fellow craftsmen, & 3 enterprentices' and that 'The Masters sign is back bone, the word [is] matchpin.' The problem is the date.

A date on the reverse of the manuscript reads: 'Free Masonry Feb: 1711.' However, the contents of the manuscript suggest that it is of a later date, of around 1726, just after the founding of the Grand Lodge of Ireland. Only by looking at the original manuscript, the primary source itself, can one solve this apparent paradox. Upon close examination it turns out that the handwriting and ink of the endorsement are different from those of the manuscript itself, suggesting that the endorsement is not contemporary with the rest of the manuscript. This underlines the importance of examining original documents and of not relying on photocopies or scans.

Since the manuscript was found among the collected papers of Sir Thomas Molyneux (1661–1733), it has frequently been assumed it was written by him or by a close member of his family. This is not so. A comparison between the handwriting of the manuscript and the endorsement with known examples of Thomas Molyneux's handwriting and that of his close relatives shows there is no link. Molyneux was a Fellow of the Royal Society, as were many Freemasons in the eighteenth century, and the library of the Royal Society has since its foundation kept every letter sent to it by each of its Fellows. The letter books in the library of the Royal Society are a marvellous reference tool for anyone needing to identify the handwriting and signatures of former Fellows. It is thus clear from a close study of the manuscript itself that one cannot with confidence date it to 1711, and it was certainly not written by Sir Thomas Molyneux among whose papers it was found. It could well date from around 1726, as its contents suggest, and therefore does not provide evidence against Dr Desagulier's authorship of the third degree.

Conclusion

From the scraps of information contained in contemporary records, the name that recurs in association with the Hiram legend and the third degree is consistently that of Dr Desaguliers. He certainly had the ability to devise a new Masonic degree that would be

⁷¹ Knoop, Jones & Hamer, *The Early Masonic Catechisms*, 69–70.

popular and successful. His professional experience as perhaps the most distinguished lecturer in Europe at the time and his Masonic experience, where he was always invited to take the lodge chair even if other Grand Masters were present, are evidence enough of that. One of his most distinguished contemporaries, President Montesquieu, hailed him as 'the first pillar of Masonry.' It was Dr Desaguliers who initiated the first and second royal Freemasons, and would have initiated the third on behalf of the Grand Lodge had he not been too ill to travel.

There is no doubt that Desaguliers's influence on the developments of the Premier Grand Lodge in the 1720s and 1730s was without equal. Not only was he the third Grand Master, he was thrice Deputy Grand Master. Although his peers found his pomposity a little amusing, he was highly respected by his contemporaries. Only he would have had the presence and authority to put down the Duke of Wharton who tried to introduce Jacobite politics into a Grand Lodge Feast: 'And when the music began to play, *Let the King enjoy his own again*, they were immediately reprimanded by a person of great gravity and science.'⁷² When a Grand Master had a problem, as did the 2nd Duke of Richmond in 1725, he immediately referred it to Dr Desaguliers for his advice.⁷³

Dr Desaguliers dominated the Grand Lodge for the first twenty years of its existence. He was heavily involved in the creation and work of the Grand Charity including, in 1730, extending its charitable donations to the widows and orphans of Freemasons.⁷⁴ (This is perhaps another albeit tangential connection linking Desaguliers to the story of Hiram Abif, 'the widow's son'.) At the Quarterly Communication held on 26 November 1728 he proposed reviving the office of Stewards.⁷⁵ At the Communication held on 17 March 1731 he proposed regulations concerning Masonic regalia, in particular the aprons of Grand Officers being lined with blue silk, those of Grand Stewards with red silk, and those of the Masters and Wardens of Lodges with white silk.⁷⁶

A notice in the *Daily Post* on 20 June 1729 reported that Dr Desaguliers was responsible for the development of floor cloths, rather than drawing various symbols in chalk on the board floor of the lodge room. The earliest illustration of those floor cloths is in the well-known engraving of a procession in 1742 when they were carried as banners. The second degree cloth shows the working tools of both the first and second degrees, pointing to the frequent working of both degrees on the same evening by the speculative Freemasons at that time. The third degree cloth shows a coffin, a sprig of acacia, and the

⁷² *Ebrietatis Encomium* 1723 in Knoop, Jones, & Hamer, *Early Masonic Pamphlets*, 109.

⁷³ Letter dated 11 March 1725. *Goodwood MSS*, West Sussex Record Office, Chichester.

⁷⁴ *QCA X*, 134.

⁷⁵ 'And Dr. Desaguliers proposed (that in order to have the same conducted in the best manner) a certain Number of Stewards should be chosen, who should have the intire Care and Direction of the said Feast (together with the Grand Wardens) pursuant to the printed Regulations . . .' *Ibid.*, 91.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 146–7.

letters MB for the substitute secret.⁷⁷ The same notice in the *Daily Post* entitled *Antediluvian Masonry* provides a detailed description of the changes Dr Desaguliers brought about in Freemasonry in the 1720s:

There will be several Lectures on Ancient Masonry, particularly on the Signification of the Letter G. and how, and after what Manner the Antediluvian Masons form'd their Lodges, shewing what Innovations have lately been introduced by the Doctor and some other of the Moderns, with their Tape, Jacks, Moveable Letters, Blazing Stars, &c., to the great Indignity of the Mop and Pail.⁷⁸

Knoop, Jones, and Hamer suggested a date of 1726 for this advertisement, but they were mistaken. It was, in fact, first published in 1729. In 1986 Bro. Wallace McLeod published what he thought was a later version that he had found in the *Daily Post* for 20 June, 1729 but he had, in fact, discovered an earlier version than that published by Knoop, Jones, and Hamer.⁷⁹ Their version, the present writer has discovered, originated from the *Daily Post* of 23 June, 1730. The later version of *Antediluvian Masonry*, dated 23 June 1730, is different in various particulars from the 1729 version, including the addition of a final line that is clearly a joke at Dr Desaguliers's expense, since he was well-known for his grand orations on the Craft: 'The Eulogium on Masonry will not be differ'd on any account.'

The author of *Antediluvian Masonry* further discusses the second degree and then the third: '... with the whole History of the Widow's Son kill'd by the Blow of a Beetle, afterwards found 3 Foot East, 3 Foot West, and 3 Foot perpendicular; and the Necessity there is for a Master to well understand the Rule of Three'. Other third degree allusions occur in this Notice such as 'Cassia, Mossy Graves, &c.' and the author signs himself 'Lewis Giblin, M.B.N.' making it quite clear he is a Master Mason. It also shows that the third degree even in those early, pre-Prichard days concluded with 'substituted secrets' and not the traditional Mason Word which was revealed in the new degree of Scots Master, as the Coustos evidence referred to above makes clear. The two new degrees of the 1720s and 1730s were thus linked right from the start and, although the present Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch differs from the degree of Scots Master with its unique structure of having three co-equal Principals, the essential text as quoted above remains much as it was in the 1730s.

I should, perhaps, say a brief word about the so-called *Graham MS* and its unique description of the raising of Noah by his sons.⁸⁰ I believe the importance of this manuscript has been somewhat exaggerated. The story of the raising of Noah by his sons is unique in every sense which should raise our suspicions. The manuscript was written in

⁷⁷ *A Geometrical View of the Grand Procession of the Scald Miserable Masons, Designed as they were drawn up over against Somerset House in the Strand, on the 27th day of April, Anno 1742.* Engraving by Antoine Benoist (1721–1770).

⁷⁸ Taken from the earlier, 1729 version.

⁷⁹ Wallace McLeod, 'Antediluvian Masonry', *AQC* 99 (1986), 216–7.

⁸⁰ I say 'so-called' since I believe the author's name was Thomas Graham Chancing, not Thomas Graham.

York in 1726, and I believe it includes an attempt by an ambitious York Freemason to reproduce the Hiram legend, having heard vague details of it from London – or perhaps from Scotland since the *Dumfries No. 4 MS* was one of his sources – but without knowing any of the particulars. He thus mistakenly chose Noah rather than Hiram and invented a similar legend but using different biblical characters.

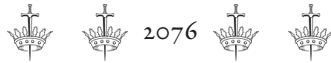
Who else apart from Dr Desaguliers of those who were around at the time in London had the ability, the seniority, and the background necessary to create the Hiram legend and the third degree? The aristocratic Grand Masters certainly did not. It was Dr Desaguliers alone among his contemporaries who possessed the talent, the flair, the charisma, the enthusiasm, the dramatic skills, and the knowledge. James Anderson, whose name may possibly be considered, is a non-starter. As a person he was a dour Scot, as a writer turgid, and as a preacher he was a bore. His chapel eventually failed completely and there is no evidence of him ever taking the chair of a lodge. His contributions to Freemasonry were his two *Books of Constitutions* of 1723 and 1738 which he edited and for which he provided the legendary history. There is no way he could have produced the third degree. George Payne, another important figure in the early history of the Premier Grand Lodge, was a keen Freemason, an experienced Grand Master, and sometime Master of its most famous lodge. He also collected Masonic manuscripts in order to learn about its history. But he was essentially an administrator, ideally suited to creating the structure of the Premier Grand Lodge and drafting its *General Regulations*. He was not a creative writer, still less a biblical scholar steeped in French medieval literature. William Cowper, the first Secretary of the Grand Lodge, possessed poetic skills but not, as far as we know, any dramatic ones.

I hope, having gathered together in one place all the fragments of contemporary primary source material known to me that are pertinent to the creation of the Hiram legend and the third degree, it will inspire others to look for more. It is a hundred and thirty-five years since a distinguished early brother of this lodge, Bro. Thomas Whythead, asked his brethren through the pages of *The Freemason*: ‘to probe every imaginable crevice whence we may extract some ray of light to illumine the present clouded condition of the sources of our ancient history.’⁸¹ There must surely be more concerning the early history of the third degree than I have quoted above hidden in contemporary letters, diaries, and books of lodge Minutes. At least if anyone comes across something they think is new, they can refer to this paper and know immediately if what they have found is already known about or not. If it is new then it will certainly be an important and exciting find, since at the moment we know so little. Nevertheless, given what we know at the present time, I end my paper to you today by repeating my initial question concerning the creation of the Hiram legend and the third degree: ‘If not the Revd Dr John Theophilus Desaguliers, FRS, then who?’

⁸¹ The Freemason 27th February, 1886, 134.



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