

**LIONEL VIBERT AND THE 1923 BICENTENARY FACSIMILE EDITION
OF ANDERSON'S CONSTITUTIONS OF 1723**

by
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Introduction

Anderson's *Constitutions* of 1723 is one of the earliest documents of English Freemasonry. It is a small quarto volume of just ninety-one pages, which includes:

- an allegorical Frontispiece;
- a Preface by Dr. John Theophilus Desaguliers;
- a forty-eight page 'History' of the Fraternity of Accepted Free MASONS;
- six 'CHARGES of a FREE-MASON extracted from the ancient Records of LODGES';
- thirty-nine 'General Regulations, compiled first by Mr. GEORGE PAYNE, *Anno* 1720, when he was Grand-Master';
- a two-page 'Approbation' from Grand Lodge; and
- four Songs.

The full title Anderson gave to his 'History' was 'History [...] of the Right Worshipful Fraternity of Accepted Free MASONS; and not infrequently it has been described as the first history of Freemasonry ever published. In spite of its title, however, Anderson's 'History' is not a history of organised Speculative Freemasonry at all; it is a history of architecture and the operative stonemason's craft. It has nothing to do with the symbolic teachings that might be drawn from contemplation of a stonemason's tools and materials. It deals only with the buildings that can be erected, using these tools and materials for their primary *operative* purpose.

It is, therefore, not entirely surprising that Anderson chose to begin his 'History' at the Creation of the World:

'ADAM, our first Parent, created after the Image of God, *the great Architect of the Universe*, must have had the Liberal Sciences, particularly *Geometry*, written on his Heart; for ever since the Fall, we find the Principles of it in the Hearts of his Offspring ...'¹

Because his 'History' is often identified as the first history of our Order, Anderson himself has been referred to as 'The Father of Masonic History'.² In 1885, R.F. Gould in his *History of Freemasonry* enclosed this title in inverted commas, indicating his disapproval of it; and went on to relate that Anderson's lamentable lack of accuracy: 'has become a *damnosa hæreditas*³ to later historians'.⁴

¹ *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons. Containing the History, Charges, Regulations &c. of that most Ancient and Right Worshipful Fraternity. For the use of Lodges* (London, 1723), p. 1.

² Gould's *History of Freemasonry* Vol. 2 (1885), p. 290.

³ A harmful or burdensome inheritance. In Roman law, an inheritance from a person who dies insolvent and whose debts the heir is bound to discharge.

⁴ Gould's *History of Freemasonry* Vol. 2 (1885), p. 294.

This misunderstanding of the nature of Anderson's 'History' has been maintained throughout the English-speaking Masonic world for more than a century. In 1929, in the U.S.A., Clegg wrote of the *1723 Constitutions*:

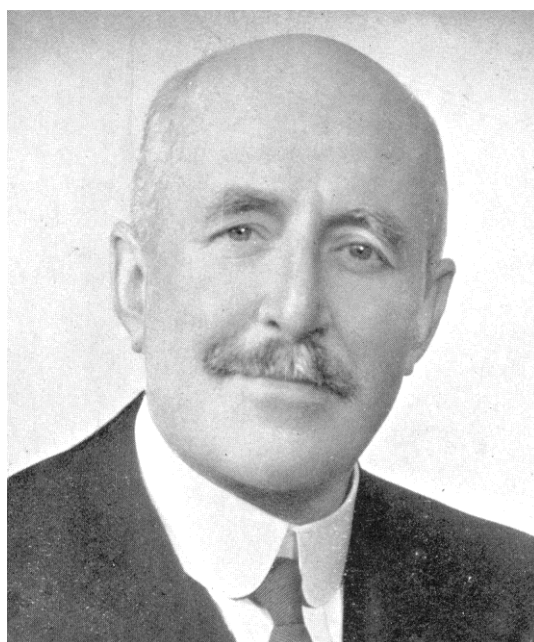
Its intrinsic value is derived only from the fact that it contains the first printed copy of the Old Charges and also the General Regulations. The history of Freemasonry which precedes these, and constitutes the body of the work, is fanciful, unreliable, and pretentious to a degree that often leads to absurdity.⁵

In 1998, Frederick Smyth described Anderson's history as 'quite unreliable':⁶

His statements, unless they are within his own Masonic experience or are fully corroborated, are nowadays usually disregarded, but it must be remembered that he saw himself not so much as an historian as a collator of the Old Charges.

This unfavourable view of the *Constitutions of 1723* (and 1738), and of Anderson himself, reached a peak in 1923 – the bicentenary of his *Book of Constitutions*. It was in this year that Lionel Vibert gave a paper to Quatuor Coronati Lodge (No. 2076) and the Lodge went on to publish a facsimile edition of the *1723 Constitutions*, for which Vibert also provided the Introduction.

Arthur Lionel Vibert, I.C.S., P.A.G.D.C.
(3 July 1872 – 7 December 1938)



**Photograph reproduced from the
*Transactions of the Somerset Masters' Lodge No, 3746 (1938), facing p. 518.***

⁵ R.I. Clegg, *Mackey's Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* (1929), p. 77.

⁶ Smyth, F., *Facts for Freemasons* (London, 1998) ISBN 0 90765541 6

Lionel Vibert was one of the most prominent Freemasons of his time. Until the recent Covid-19 pandemic, he was the only Prestonian Lecturer to have been appointed twice, since the revival of the Lectures in 1924. He gave two different Lectures in successive years, his titles being: 'The Development of the Trigradal System' in 1925, and 'The Evolution of the Second Degree' in 1926. He was editor of the highly acclaimed *Miscellanea Latomorum* between 1916 and 1938. Also, although it was not mentioned in any of his obituaries, the English Craft owes him a great debt of gratitude for leading the widely-felt objections when Grand Lodge banned the Extended Inner Working of the Craft Installation ceremony in September 1926. He was pivotal in the resistance to this very unpopular move, and instrumental in persuading Grand Lodge to reverse the enormous mistake it had made in deciding on the most difficult ritual problem it had faced since 1827.⁷

Arthur Lionel Vibert was born on 3rd July 1872, at St. Petersburg, the son of John Este Vibert, a professor of English at the University of St. Petersburg,⁸ and his wife Fanny, née Dix. In 1874, the family moved to Jersey, where his father became headmaster of St. Aubin's School, serving until his death in 1886.⁹ Lionel was educated at Victoria College, Jersey, where he won the Queen's History Prize and a Gold Medal for mathematics. In the Channel Islands Census, of 1881, he is recorded as living with his father, mother, one brother, five boarders and two servants at St. Aubin's School, High Street, St. Aubin.

He joined the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.) in 1891, and went up to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he was in residence from 1891 to 1893, after which he proceeded to India and served in the Presidency of Madras. He served for twenty-five years, as a tax collector and a judge, and also as political agent for Puddukottai State. In 1896 he received the special thanks of the Madras Government for the special services he had rendered during a sudden Moplah¹⁰ outburst.

He married Millicent Agnes, née Goddard, at St. Michael and All Angels' Church, Folkstone, Kent, on 9th December 1908 and the couple had one daughter.

Lionel Vibert retired from the I.C.S. in 1918, at the relatively early age of forty-six. At the Installation banquet of Quatuor Coronati Lodge in November 1921, Herbert Bradley as I.P.M., gave the toast to Vibert as the incoming Master and said:

He did not at all times see eye to eye with the Government, and this probably accounts for his early retirement. His chief fault in the eyes of his superiors was an excess of animal spirits, which occasionally offended the powers that were. He also possessed in full measure that very great asset which covers almost as many sins as the proverbial virtue,¹¹ a strong sense of humour.¹²

Bro. Vibert was initiated in the Royal Alfred Lodge (No. 877) in Jersey, on 9th August 1892, at the age of twenty. He said that he had obtained that privilege because the then Provincial Grand

⁷ See Baker, A.R., 'The Extended Craft Installation Ceremony: the 1926 Deputation to Grand Lodge', *AQC* 133 (2020) 308-312; and Baker, A.R., 'On the Craft Installation Ceremony in Bristol', *Corona Gladiorum* 17 (2019-2020) 193-205.

⁸ And tutor to the Bariatinsky Princes.

⁹ When Lionel was only fourteen.

¹⁰ The people of the Malabar Coast, constituting the state's largest Muslim community.

¹¹ Proverbs 10: 12: 'Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.'

¹² *AQC* 34 (1921) 218.

Master was his cousin. He was passed on 13th September that year, raised on 10th January 1893, but resigned in October that year before re-joining in 1901 and remaining a member until his death. He joined Lodge Perfect Unanimity (No. 150), Madras, on his arrival and revived Lodge Southern Cross (No. 2298) at Palamcottah in 1894, becoming its W.M. in 1896 and 1897. He was a member of several other Lodges in India, joining the local Lodge each time he was transferred to a new station.

On his return from India, he took up residence in Bath and, in 1919, joined Royal Cumberland Lodge (No. 41) of which he was W.M. in 1926. He was also a founder of St. Alphege Lodge (No. 4095) and became a member of the Somerset Masters' Lodge (No. 3746) in 1920, where he served as W.M. in 1930. He also joined the Lodge of Rectitude, No. 335, Corsham, Wiltshire in 1926. In 1904, he was appointed Pr.G.St.B. (Jersey); in 1911, District G.S.W. (Madras); and in 1934, Pr.G.S.W. (Somerset). In 1928, he was appointed as one of the Assistant Grand Directors of Ceremonies of the United Grand Lodge of England. He also had the honour of being appointed P.G.S.W. of the Grand Lodge of Iowa.

Vibert was President of the Bristol Masonic Society in 1927-1928, and was also a member of the Lodge of Research (No. 2429) Leicester, and the Manchester Association for Masonic Research. He joined the Quatuor Coronati Correspondence Circle in January 1895, and was elected a full member of the Lodge in January 1917. He acted as Local Secretary of Q.C.C.C. Ltd. for Southern India for many years and for the Province of Somerset between 1919 and 1928. Unusually for a non-Irish Mason, he was made an Honorary Associate Member of the Lodge of Research CC (I.C.) Dublin, in 1928.¹³ He was installed as Master of Quatuor Coronati Lodge (No. 2076) in November 1921 and served as Secretary of the Lodge from 1928 to 1938, resigning the office just a month or two before his death. His obituary in *The Masonic Record* stated that: 'The enquiring Brother has never been sent empty away from 27 Great Queen Street. Bro. Vibert's literary style was clear and incisive and his reviews were candid.'

In the Royal Arch, Lionel Vibert was exalted in Pitt Macdonald Chapter (No. 1198), Madras, on 18th October 1894. He became a Founder of Rock Chapter (No. 260) in 1907, where he served as First Principal in 1908. He became a joining member of Royal Cumberland Chapter (No. 41), Bath in 1920, where he served as First Principal in 1927 and Royal York Chapter of Perseverance (No. 7), London, where he served as Scribe E. He became Dist.G.J. of Madras, in 1911 and, in 1928, he received Grand rank as P.G.St.B.

In the Mark Degree, Bro. Vibert was advanced in Macdonald Ritchie Lodge in India in 1894. He was also Master of Hiram Lodge (No. 13) London, where he served as Worshipful Master in 1937, and was appointed G.J.D. in 1934. He was also a member of Knights Templar, becoming a joining member of Antiquity Preceptory, No. 1, Bath in 1920 and Studholme Preceptory, No. 140, London in 1932, where he served as Eminent Preceptor in 1937. He was a member of the Cryptic Degrees, and was serving as T.I.M. of Constantine Council (No. 2) at the time of his death. In the S.R.I.A. he joined the Robert Fludd College in Bath in 1919, and Metropolitan College in 1929; he became Celebrant of Metropolitan College in 1936, and D.G. of C. in 1932. He was also a member of the Red Cross of Constantine, the Royal Order of Scotland, the Order of Eri, and K.T.P.

¹³ C.W. Wallis-Newport, *Corona Gladiorum* 2 (2004-2005) 178.

Bro. Vibert's many achievements in Masonic literature are widely known and highly appreciated. As well as his many Masonic papers (See Appendices 1 and 2), several of which are of great value, he wrote three books:

Freemasonry before the Existence of Grand Lodges (1913)

The Story of the Craft (1921)

The Rare Books of Freemasonry (1927)

Bro. Vibert was well known as a speaker on Masonic subjects; and, during the last year of his life, he lectured to over thirty Lodges in London and the Provinces. When Frederick Levander died in 1916,¹⁴ Lionel Vibert acquired the rights to the Second Series of *Miscellanea Latomorum or Masonic Notes and Queries* and commenced republication in December 1919, only resigning his editorship in June 1938 on account of ill health.

He was a keen musician – in Mason a Lodge Organist – and when he settled in Bath, he became honorary treasurer of the Mid-Somerset Musical Competitions; a member of the English Folk Dance Society; and a member of the Literary Institute. He was also a member of the British Numismatic Society. He served as a committee member of the Municipal Library and Art Gallery, in Bath; on the town council as Chairman of the Blind Committee; and as a Guardian and Vice-Chairman of the Finance Committee. When he was appointed Secretary of Quatuor Coronati Lodge at the end of 1928, however, he left Bath to reside in London.

He died at his residence, 85 Ridgmount Gardens, London, on Wednesday 7th December 1938. His funeral service was held at St. James' Church, Piccadilly on Monday 12th December 1938 and was well attended by a large concourse of Brethren. The interment took place at Highgate Cemetery. His obituary in *The Transactions of the Somerset Masters' Lodge* recorded:

Bro. Lionel Vibert possessed a most genial and sympathetic disposition, and his sense of humour was very strongly developed. His great characteristic was his unfailing kindness and courtesy, and Masonic Students never sought his aid in vain. He truly possessed an encyclopaedic knowledge of Masonry ...¹⁵

In his critical appraisal of Anderson's *Constitutions*, he certainly did demonstrate a wide knowledge of Freemasonry. However, very little of his 'genial and sympathetic disposition' or 'his unfailing kindness and courtesy' are to be seen.

Vibert's Quatuor Coronati Paper on Anderson's *Constitutions of 1723*

Lionel Vibert delivered his paper, entitled 'Anderson's *Constitutions of 1723*',¹⁶ to Quatuor Coronati Lodge, as I.P.M., on Friday 2nd March 1923. By his own admission, it covered 'much of the same ground as' Dr. Wilhelm Begemann's chapter on the *Constitutions* in the second volume of his *History*.¹⁷ The Lodge had undertaken, in 1913, to publish an English edition of this *History*; and Vibert had offered to translate it and at the same time add additional information. However, Vibert never completed his translation and instead gave his paper to the Lodge,

¹⁴ F.W. Levander was W.M. of Quatuor Coronati Lodge (No. 2076) at the time.

¹⁵ *Transactions of the Somerset Masters' Lodge* No. 3746 (1938) 521.

¹⁶ *AQC* 36 (1923) 36-69. Discussion, 69-85.

¹⁷ Begemann, W., *Antecedents and Beginnings of English Freemasonry in England, Volume 2* (1910), pp. 154-248.

stating that the date of its delivery had only fallen in the Bicentennial year of the first publication of the *Constitutions*, by ‘a coincidence that was unpremeditated’.¹⁸

The paper painted a very unforgiving view of both Anderson and his *Constitutions*. In dealing with the ‘History’, Vibert quoted Anderson’s final paragraph *in toto* and commented:

In all this it will be observed there is not one definite statement of fact, or name or date, except in the last dozen words; and even there the grand master’s name is mis-spelt.¹⁹

Perhaps the most serious allegation Vibert levelled against Anderson as a man concerned alterations made to the Minutes of Grand Lodge. The Minute for June 1772 recorded that Hawkins was one of the Grand Wardens. Against the name of Hawkins, in Anderson’s own hand, the words ‘who demitted and then James Anderson A.M. was chosen in his place’ appear. In the Minutes for June 1773, there is an erasure which was difficult to see in the Book itself but was revealed by later photography of the page for the *Q.C. Antigrapha*.²⁰ The Minute had originally read: ‘Grand Wardens. Joshua Timson, the Revd. Mr. James Anderson, who officiated for Mr. William Hawkins.’ The last six words have been carefully erased – not just struck out, but scraped away with a knife. Although Vibert ‘most studiously refrained from saying that Anderson made the erasure’, and ‘nowhere used the word “dishonestly”’, the implication could hardly have been made more clearly. ‘... someone’, Vibert wrote, ‘has been at the pains to do his best to destroy the official record’²¹ – he did not need to *state* his conviction that Anderson was the culprit.

There was a long discussion of this paper in the Lodge, and in later correspondence. The paper occupied a little over thirty-two pages in *AQC* 36, and the discussion a further sixteen. Many voices were raised against Vibert’s views of both Anderson himself and his *1723 Constitutions*.

R.H. Baxter,²² in proposing the Vote of Thanks, began:

I cannot help regretting that our old friend, and my own fellow-countryman, the Rev. James Anderson, M.A. [*sic*], should have come out in such a poor light, [...] and [I] hope that his character may be re-established. It is hardly consistent with the nature of his sacred calling that a Presbyterian divine should be capable of direct mendacity.²³

W.B. Hextall,²⁴ seconded the Vote of Thanks saying:

¹⁸ *AQC* 36 (1923) 69.

¹⁹ *AQC* 36 (1923) 45.

²⁰ Volume X (1913), plates at pp. 196 and 48.

²¹ *AQC* 36 (1923) 40.

²² Roderick Hildegard Baxter (1871-1946) a Rochdale architect initiated in St. Martin’s Lodge (No. 2320) in Castleton, Lancs. in 1897, was a founder of the Manchester Association for Masonic Research in 1909, president in 1911, and editor of its *Transactions* between 1917 and 1926. He was W.M. of Quatuor Coronati Lodge (No. 2076) in 1922, and Prestonian Lecturer for 1929, the title of his Lecture being ‘The Antiquity of Our Masonic Legends.’

²³ *AQC* 36 (1923) 69.

²⁴ William Brown Hextall (1847-1923) a solicitor in Derby who was called to the Bar in 1884, joining the Midland Circuit. Initiated in Hartington Lodge (No. 1085) in 1873, he was elected to membership of Quatuor Cornati Lodge (No. 2076) in 1909 and served as W.M. in 1914-1915. He lectured many

I cannot, however, refrain from thinking he has borne somewhat severely upon Anderson, [...] who was certainly industrious, if not at all times remarkable for ingenuousness. [...] and though Anderson, as a man and a writer, is no doubt open to the imputation of self-seeking and inaccuracy, he and his work must be regarded as anything rather than negligible.²⁵

W.J. Songhurst²⁶ was supportive of Vibert, however:

My sympathy for Anderson was considerably lessened when I discovered that he had tampered with the Minute Books of Grand Lodge. [...] Anderson is altogether so unreliable that I consider we are justified in declining to accept any statement he makes unless independent evidence can be produced in his support.²⁷

And Sir Alfred Robbins,²⁸ the 'Prime Minister of English Freemasonry' wrote:

I am sure that everyone interested in the early history of English Organised Freemasonry will express very deep thanks to Bro. Vibert for the infinite pains he has taken in dealing with a very intricate subject.

J.E. Shum Tuckett²⁹ defended Anderson against Vibert's criticisms, taking them one by one. He expressed his disagreement with Vibert's approach to Anderson in the most eloquent and diplomatic terms:

Our thanks are most certainly due to Bro. Vibert for this admirable commentary on the 1723 Book of Constitutions. The time and patience required to bring such a task to so successful an ending might well have discouraged any but an enthusiast in the search for Truth such as we know our I.P.M. to be. [...] although his condemnation of Dr. Anderson's shortcomings is unqualified in its severity, ...³⁰

He went on:

times against the idea of moving towards uniformity in Masonic ritual, and in favour of the preservation of old workings which can claim to have 'antiquity's pride' on their side.

²⁵ *AQC* 36 (1923) 69-70.

²⁶ William John Songhurst, F.C.I.S. (1860-1939) was Secretary of Quatuor Coronati Lodge (No. 2076) between 1907 and 1929, and one of the editors of *AQC* from 1908 until 1936. He was W.M. of 2076 1934-1935. He had, in 1913, edited the early Minutes of Grand Lodge for Vol. X of *Quatuor Coronatorum Antigrapha* – the volume containing evidence of Anderson's alterations to those Minutes.

²⁷ *AQC* 36 (1923) 73.

²⁸ (1856-1931) a journalist and political biographer, who was London correspondent of the *Birmingham Daily Post* from 1888 and President of the Institute of Journalists in 1931. He was President of the Board of General Purposes from 1913 until his death, and W.M. of Quatuor Coronati Lodge (No. 2076) in 1923-4. He was the author of *Five Years of Tory Rule: a Lesson and a Warning (1879)*, *Practical Politics; or, the Liberalism of To-day* (1888), *The Early Public Life of William Ewart Gladstone: Four Times Prime Minister* (1894), and *English-speaking Freemasonry* (1930).

²⁹ Major James Edward Shum Tuckett, M.A., F.C.S., T.D. (1870-1934) a schoolmaster at Marlborough College. Initiated in the Hartington Lodge (No. 916), he became a joining member of the Robert Thorne Lodge (No. 3663) in 1915, W.M. of Quatuor Coronati Lodge (No. 2076) in 1919-20 and President of the Bristol Masonic Society in 1925. He was the author of *Notes on Freemasonry in the Town of Marlborough 1768-1834* (1910).

³⁰ *AQC* 36 (1923) 77.

Inability to agree with our Bro. Vibert in his estimate of Bro. James Anderson as a man in no way decreases my admiration of the scholarly and valuable paper he has been good enough to provide for our guidance and instruction. As regards the charges against Anderson's character I submit that the Doctor is entitled to a verdict of "not proven".³¹

Vibert, however, was unrepentant and undaunted; he responded with a vigorous rebuttal to all the criticisms of his Brethren:

I am sorry if my language appears harsh to Bro. Hextall, but one has only to compare the Regulations as they appear in 1727 and 1738 to see the frivolous way in which Anderson alters the text of what purports to be the Law of the Craft; and he is always doing this sort of thing. I do mean my remarks as a general criticism, and I am sorry, but I still think it is deserved.³²

In confirming his view of the alterations to the Grand Lodge Minutes, he emphasised:

The erasure is the work of some person who was concerned, not to correct the record, but to destroy evidence. The addition [...] is in Anderson's own hand. [...] That it was ever ordered, or sanctioned, by authority I do not believe.³³

However, he concluded, not unreasonably:

The fact is that the standards of 1723 or 1738 in such matters were not ours, and that no one at the time would have thought any the worse of him [*Anderson*] for his rearrangements of the evidence. But to-day we have to realise that Anderson is absolutely unreliable.³⁴

Vibert's Introduction to the *Facsimile Edition of the 1723 Constitutions*

The Lodge decided to publish a Facsimile Edition of the *1723 Constitutions* and Lionel Vibert recorded that in 'recasting the paper to serve as the Introduction to it, I was greatly helped by the additional information, and criticisms, that it [*his AQC paper*] had evoked.' As Shum Tuckett observed:

... to no other Brother could the task of writing the Introduction have been entrusted with greater fitness, or with a more sure expectation of complete success. And in fact Bro. Vibert's contribution has enormously increased the value of the original book which he judges with such ruthless precision.³⁵

His ruthless approach to the task was certainly maintained and, as Shum Tuckett pointed out in his review of the *Facsimile Volume for AQC*:

³¹ *AQC* 36 (1923) 81.

³² *AQC* 36 (1923) 83.

³³ *AQC* 36 (1923) 84.

³⁴ *AQC* 36 (1923) 85.

³⁵ Review of the *Facsimile Edition 1923*, *AQC* 36 (1923) 104-108, pp. 104-105.

The opinions which Bro. Vibert has formed concerning the man's [Anderson's] literary work, more particularly his Masonic literary work, and also concerning the man himself, are definite and distinctly unfavourable.³⁶

Vibert began his 46-page Introduction with a biographical sketch of Anderson and then dealt with each of the sections of the *Constitutions* in turn. In dealing with the 'History', he wrote: 'throughout he [Anderson] has made without any scruple such modifications and additions as seemed good to him'³⁷ and later on: 'This passage, for all its quotation marks, is a sheer invention of his own.'³⁸ In dealing with the Regulations for the Annual feast, he commented that these '... appear to represent Anderson's idea of what the law ought to be, rather than what in fact was observed.'³⁹ In dealing with the Songs, Vibert reported that Anderson: 'takes his usual liberties with the text' and pointed out that 'the claims thus made have been the source of an entire literature of their own.'⁴⁰ In reference to the addition of the 'Ladies Verse' to Matthew Birkhead's 'Enter'd 'Prentice Song', he said: 'Truly no man's text was safe in the Doctor's hands.'⁴¹

Vibert also made a few comments on the 1738 *Constitutions*, which indicate his opinion of Anderson as a man, including one on the Regulations: 'In 1738 Anderson reprinted them – but not verbatim, for he seems to have been constitutionally incapable of copying even his own text correctly'.⁴²

As he drew near to his conclusion, he wrote:

Anderson's work seems not to have been directly noticed at the time, either by way of praise or censure. [...] The work, in fact, might almost be said to have attracted no notice.

Yet it would be difficult to estimate its influence on the history of the Craft. [...] it took its place as the official manual, so that the fact that it was not official but essentially a private affair was entirely lost sight of. [...] To-day we value the Doctor's labours less highly, but the *Constitutions* of 1723 is nevertheless one of the most important records of the Craft.⁴³

It was Shum Tuckett who wrote the review of the *Facsimile Volume* for *AQC* and he devoted more than three, of his little-over-four, pages to a repost to Vibert. Shum Tuckett saw Anderson as his Masonic Brother, and was particularly keen to salvage his reputation and restore his character:

... there are some who will not so readily endorse the adverse verdict pronounced by Bro. Vibert concerning the man's character, as all must surely be willing to do while it is merely a question of the merit of the man's work. It is possible to be a desperately dull fellow, destitute of a sense of historical perspective, and unable to

³⁶ *AQC* 36 (1923) 105.

³⁷ p. xvii.

³⁸ p. xxvi.

³⁹ p. xxxix.

⁴⁰ p. xliv.

⁴¹ p. xlv.

⁴² pp. xl-xli.

⁴³ p. li.

realise the responsibilities of editorship, and yet to be an honest man incapable of deliberate fraud and conscious imposture.⁴⁴

However, Shum Tuckett concluded:

No student who reads Bro. Vibert's Introduction to the Bi-Centenary reprint with careful attention can fail to appreciate its great value even if here and there he finds himself at variance with the opinions it puts forward with such persuasive force. All will readily agree that it is a notable contribution to the study of what is probably the most important, but certainly the most obscure period in our Masonic history, the early years of the premier Grand Lodge.⁴⁵

The U.S.A. and the *Little Masonic Library*

In 1924, for the American Market, the Masonic Service Association reproduced a Facsimile copy of Anderson's *1723 Constitutions in Book 1* of the *Little Masonic Library*.⁴⁶ Vibert provided the Introduction for this too, but his contribution was now much shorter and better arranged – with nine section-headings. In the last section, headed 'Our Debt to Anderson', he dealt much more gently with his subject than he had done in either his *AQC* paper or the *Facsimile Edition*:

While as students we are bound to receive any statement that Anderson makes with the utmost caution unless it can be tested from other sources, we must not be too ready to abuse the worthy Doctor on that account. Our standards of historical and literary accuracy are higher than those of 1723, and his object was to glorify Montagu and the Craft and the new style of architecture introduced by Inigo Jones and others of his school; and this he did wholeheartedly, and if in the process he twisted a text or two or supplied suitable events to fill gaps in his narrative for which mere history as such had failed to record facts, no one at the time would think any the worse of him for that.⁴⁷

Conclusions

In assessing the *Constitutions of 1723*, and particularly the 'History' it contains, it is important to remember that Anderson was not attempting to compile the first authentic 'History of Freemasonry'. As the Revd. A.F.A. Woodford pointed out, in 1878:⁴⁸

... Anderson has been the subject of much unfair criticism. He was not ordered to write a new and florid history of Freemasonry or to compile one on his own authority; but he was to "peruse, correct, and digest into a new and better method, the history, charges, and regulations of the ancient fraternity," and this he certainly did.

⁴⁴ *AQC* 36 (1923) 105.

⁴⁵ *AQC* 36 (1923) 107-108.

⁴⁶ The five volumes of the 'Little Masonic Library' were reprinted by the Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., Inc. of Richmond, Virginia, in 1946 and again in 1977.

⁴⁷ *Book 1, Little Masonic Library*, (Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co. Inc., Richmond, Virginia; 1977), p. 176.

⁴⁸ The Revd. A.F.A. Woodford, *Kenning's Masonic Cyclopædia and Handbook of Masonic Archæology, History and Biography* (1878), p. 27.

Woodford went on:

We do not expect to find in oral traditions, or ancient legends, the correctness of historical annals, and we should only take Anderson's "History of Freemasonry" for what it is – for what it professed to be, – a lucid representation of the old cherished Constitutions and legends of Freemasonry.⁴⁹

In 1946, H.L. Haywood suggested that:

Nobody in Grand Lodge took the legend to be actual history. Desaguliers was one of the most learned men in England; Payne was a scholar; Anderson himself [...] was signally honoured for his learning by Aberdeen, a University hard to please. Other Grand Lodge leaders, such as the Duke of Montague [*sic*] and Martin Clare, were also of great intelligence. None of them could have dreamed of foisting off on their friends the old legends as a treatise of veridic history.⁵⁰

Anderson's 'History' is high romance – an idealist fiction. Sir David Brewster,⁵¹ the author of Lawrie's *History*, offered an opinion much more in keeping with our view today when, referring to both Anderson and Preston, he described: '... a certain class of men, a little over-anxious for the dignity of their order have represented it [*the origin of Freemasonry*] as coeval with the world ...'⁵²

It is a great error to assume that the motives of our own time are the same as those of the past, and to judge the actions of historical figures by the standards we hold dear today. Henry Wilson Coil concluded:

It is perhaps unfair to criticise Anderson as severely as some have done, for example Lionel Vibert [...] who, in denouncing Anderson, almost outdid Anderson's extravagances. He attributes too much to Anderson's dishonesty and too little to his incapacity and credulity. [...]

We must judge a man by his lights, by the time in which he lived and the conditions under which he worked [...] Was Preston more reliable on facts than Anderson? No. Was Hutchinson? No. Was Dr. Oliver? No. Was Mackey? Not until he was caught up in the sweep of the realistic school of Woodford, Hughan, Gould and others about 1870.⁵³

With regard to the other deficiencies in the *Constitutions of 1723*, and even in Anderson the man, we should in a truly Masonic spirit '... drop a tear of sympathy over the failings of a Brother'⁵⁴ and be grateful to Anderson for giving us one of the earliest documents of the Craft,

⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that the much more esoteric *Royal Masonic Cyclopædia of History, Rites, Symbolism, and Biography*, edited by Kenneth R.H. Mackenzie a year earlier, contained no criticism of Anderson whatsoever, in its two short entries on 'Anderson' and the 'Book of Constitutions'.

⁵⁰ Haywood, H.L., *Supplement to Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* (Volume III) (Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co. Inc., New York; 1946), p. 1157.

⁵¹ Coil, H.W., *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia* (Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co. Inc., New York; 1961), p. 49.

⁵² Brewster, Sir D., *The History and Illustration of Masonry, Compiled from an Ancient Publication*, (London, 1826), p. 7.

⁵³ Coil, H.W. *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia* (1960), p. 49.

⁵⁴ *Emulation Ritual*, Address to the Brethren.

without which we would have very little or no information about this very interesting, early period in our development.

APPENDIX 1

Published Masonic Papers by Lionel Vibert

Ars Quatuor Coronatorum

- 'The Compagnonnage; a Tentative Inquiry,' *AQC* 33, (1920)
- 'Influence of Contemporary History on Old Charges' (*Inaugural Address*) *AQC* 34 (1921)⁵⁵
- 'Anderson's Constitutions of 1723,' *AQC* 36 (1923)
- 'The Second Degree: A Theory,' *AQC* 39 (1926)
- 'Incorporation of the Company of Freemasons, Carpenters etc. Oxford,' *AQC* 40 (1927)
- 'Engravings of the Portrait of Anthony Sayer,' *AQC* 41 (1928)
- 'The Early Freemasonry of England and Scotland,' *AQC* 43 (1930)
- 'Some Early Elu Manuscripts,' *AQC* 44 (1931)
- 'Chaucer and Henry Yevele,' *AQC* 44 (1931)
- 'Royal Freemasons,' *AQC* 50 (1937)
- 'The Interlaced Triangles of the Royal Arch,' *AQC* 80 (1967)
- 'Freemasonry in the Two Kingdoms (England & Scotland),' *AQC* 85 (1972)
- 'A Lodge in the 14th Century,' *AQC* 89 (1976)

Transactions of the Lodge of Research Leicester

- 'Patron Saints, Patrons and Founders,' 1921-2
- 'Freemasonry before Grand Lodges,' 1923-4
- 'Development of the Trigradal System,' (*Prestonian* 1925) 1925-6
- 'A Survey of Masonic Research,' 1933-4
- 'Vestiges of Early Days,' 1935-6
- 'The Candidate and the First Degree,' 1937-8

Manchester Association for Masonic Research Transactions

- 'Anderson's Constitutions of 1723,' 12 (1921-2)
- 'Vestiges of Early Days,' 16 (1925-6)
- 'Freemasonry in the Two Kingdoms before Grand Lodges,' 19 (1928-9)
- 'A Survey of Masonic Research,' 24 (1934)

Transactions of the Somerset Masters Lodge No, 3746

- 'The Ancient Charges and Regulations,' 2 Part 2 (1920)
- 'Development of the Trigradal System' (*Prestonian* 1925), 3 Part 3 (1925)
- 'Evolution of the Second Degree' (*Prestonian* 1926), 3 Part 3 (1926)
- 'The Legislation of the Craft,' 4 Part 1 (1927)⁵⁶
- 'What is the Craft?' 4 Part 2 (1928)
- 'Masonry among Prisoners of War' (*Inaugural Address*), 4 Part 4 (1930)
- 'A Survey of Masonic Research,' 6 Part 1 (21), (1935)

⁵⁵ This paper was later included in *The Treasury of Masonic Thought* (Dundee, 1924).

⁵⁶ This was his presidential address to the Bristol Masonic Society.

APPENDIX 2

Papers Delivered by Lionel Vibert to the Bristol Masonic Society

- 17/2/1920 'Masonry in India.'
17/3/1922 'The Book of Constitutions of 1723.'
20/3/1925 'Vestiges of Early Days.'
15/12/1925 'The Facsimile Wm. Watson Roll of the Old Constitutions of Masonry date 1687.'
24/4/1926 'The Evolution of the Second Degree.' (*Prestonian Lecture for 1926*)⁵⁷
28/1/1927 'Patron Saints, Patrons and Founders.'
29/9/1927 'The Legislation of the Craft.' (*Presidential Address*)
20/11/1934 'The Candidate and Our Duty towards Him.'
18/2/1937 'Freemasonry among Prisoners of War.'⁵⁸

APPENDIX 3

Biographical Sources:

- Toast to W.M. by Herbert Bradley, I.P.M., *AQC* 34 (1921) 217-219.
Obituary in *AQC* 52 (1939) 2-3.
'In Memoriam' in *Transactions of the Somerset Masters Lodge No. 3746* (1938) 518-521.
Obituary in *The Masonic Record* 19 (1938-1939) 41.
Obituary Notice in *The Freemason* 78 (24th December 1938) 363.
Toast to W.M. by Herbert Bradley, I.P.M., in *AQC* 34 (1921) 217-219.
Read, W., 'The "Extended" Working in the Board of Installed Masters: the 1926 Debate and Decision' *AQC* 84 (1971) 26-46. Prolonged discussion – pp. 46-68.
Cartwright, E.H., 'The Ceremony of Opening and Closing a Board of Installed Masters', *Miscellanea Latomorum* 25 (1940) 49-58.
Information supplied by the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Freemasons' Hall, Gt. Queen St., London.

⁵⁷ See *Collected Prestonian Lectures Volume 1 (1925-1960)*.

⁵⁸ This lecture was given at very short notice instead of 'A Lecture Dealing with Operative and Speculative Masonry', the author of which was unable to attend because of illness.