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## RELIGION AND THE AMERICAN/YORK RITE - PART 2

Some arguments have been put forward that, rather than an opening of Freemasonry to all religions, Anderson's intention in his statement was a compliance with the increasingly popular Deistic movement. The concept of Deism, in contrast to Theism, professed a belief in God, which discounted religious rules and government. The reversed wording of the same sentiments, however, in the second Constitutions of 1738, when the word "Religion" is replaced with "Christian usages" have dispelled such doubts.



Freemasonry may well have adopted an open and tolerant attitude towards religion long before Anderson's constitutions of 1723, which is the normally accepted date for what has become known as the de-christianisation of the Craft. This term was not intended to refer merely to the fact that along with Jewish membership, other denominations were now allowed to become Freemasons. It was a reference to the removal by Anderson of Christian allusions in his Constitutions and the adoption of a wider view of

religion, accepting a belief in God irrespective of one's religion.

The term "Judeo/Christian" is used in reference to the ritual before these particular religious references were removed. This is because the tenets and teachings of Christianity has its roots in Judaism. This is why Jesus and the apostles commonly preceded their teachings with "it is written," or "the scriptures saith," and then proceeded to quote God's written law from the Old Testament. Jesus might have explained what the Old Testament laws meant in different words, such as by using parables and such, but nonetheless, the truths he taught are all found in the Old Testament. This is why these lessons were equally shared by Masons of Jewish, Christian, and Deistic faiths.

When the Premiere Grand Lodge was formed in London in 1717, there were

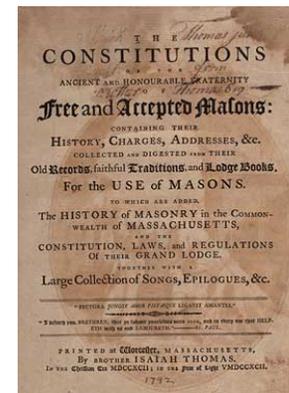


## FROM THE EDITOR

I would like to encourage all Sir Knights to submit articles, letters, pictures, or comments for inclusion into this supplement. Articles need to be submitted to me by the 1st of the month for the next issue. (Feb. 25th for the Mar. issue.)

an estimated 1000 Jewish people in England. Although their participation in Freemasonry would in any case be limited, the evidence shows that several had joined the Craft well before the dates attributed by the Rev. Dr. George Oliver (1782-1867). Dr. Oliver gave 1740 as the earliest date a Jewish Brother was initiated.

Jewish Masons could only be speculated to be participants by name only, since the religious affiliation of a Brother was nowhere recorded. This way of identification is not foolproof, but reasonably reliable. Thus, there is no evidence of anybody of the Jewish faith being made a Freemason before 1721. In that year, two Jewish Men, Nathan Blanch and John Hart, are recorded as being initiated in the time-immemorial Lodge of the Golden Lion No. 44. Both men appear on the 1725 engraved List of Lodges. By 1730 many more Brethren are identifiable and two, Moses Mendez and Samuel Lowman, are appointed Grand Stewards for the year 1738-1739.



As it was important for the Antients to publish their own Book of Constitutions as soon as possible, they did so as soon as the opportunity to dedicate it to a Grand Master of Noble blood had presented itself. Thus in September 1756, the Book of Constitutions of the Antients Grand Lodge saw the first light of day, with an extraordinary Hebrew title of "Ahimon Rezon."

The title is said to be Hebrew language, and has various meanings, such as: "To Help a Brother", "Will of Selected Brethren", "The Secrets of Prepared Brethren", "Royal Builders", and "Brotherly Secretary." The direct definition was only known by Laurence Dermott, and what it really meant remains a mystery.

