



## 4,000BC or Anno Lucis

Presented in Open Lodge to the Brethren of Oracle Lodge 1003

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by

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I visited a Lodge in Mountmellick last year which had an inscription on the wall

*'IN THE YEAR 5788'*

referring to the year in which the Lodge was consecrated. How would you arrive at such a date? Are you familiar with the Masonic calendar? This paper attempts to answer those questions. Historical dates can be awkward to pin down with any accuracy; this has not deterred historians and scholars in their quest for the truth.

In calculating dates of biblical events each school of thought has its own different take on when the important biblical events took place. Bishop James Ussher took it upon himself to answer when exactly Christ appeared on earth.

Ussher lived in times of great history, having been born during the reign of Elizabeth and passing in 1656, under Cromwell. Ussher was a brilliant scholar and entered Trinity College in Dublin at the age of thirteen, ordained at twenty and awarded his professorship at Trinity by the age of twenty-seven. He was made head of the Anglo-Irish church in 1625. Ussher's chronology was detailed in *The Annals Of The Old Testament*; a monumental work in Latin of two thousand pages which occupied twenty years of Ussher's life.

Ussher intended to establish an infallible date for creation which could withstand any challenge. He located and studied thousands of books and manuscripts written in many different languages, and by the time of his death he had amassed over 10,000 volumes. Ussher calculated that the time lapse between the creation of the earth and the advent of Christ is 4004 years. He arrived at that figure by adding the ages of the twenty-one generations of people of the Hebrew-derived Old Testament beginning with Adam and Eve. If the bible is to be believed they were an exceptionally long lived lot. Genesis says that Adam celebrated a 930th birthday and Methuselah a 969th. I will leave to your judgement as to the accuracy of this evidence and thank the bishop for his incredible efforts and meticulousness in writing this exceptional tome. If there is a flaw in Ussher's reasoning, he worked on the premise that the bible is inerrant.

## **ANNO LUCIS**

Anno Lucis is a Masonic term which means 'Year of Light'. The earliest mention of Anno Lucis is on an unusual certificate issued in England in 1777 by the Premier Grand Lodge to a craft lodge called the Lodge of Alfred which is now defunct. The certificate permitted the Lodge to 'in their usual place to make, pass and raise masons'. How is this unusual? Well the certificate was issued because members of the Lodge who held Grand Rank made, passed and raised a candidate

who was absent (due to military service). The Grand Officers duly did this at Freemasons' Hall and issued a certificate recording the event dated '15th Day of February Anno Lucis 5777.

Firstly Anno Lucis and the abbreviation A.L. cannot be taken to mean the same, I have found several terms that it could signify. Throughout the Eighteenth century the abbreviation A.L. was used on various Warrants and Constitutions and with greater frequency after the formation of the United Grand Lodge in 1813, but as stated earlier it did not always stand for *anno lucis*, there are several terms which could be abbreviated as A.L.

In 1732 three jewels which were presented to Dr Richard Rawlinson of Castle Lodge bearing an inscription in Latin which includes the date '*Anno Lat. 5732*'. Lat is an abbreviation of *Latomorum* which comes from *Lautomus* and is derived from the Greek meaning '*of stonecutters*'.

Therefore it would not be unreasonable to say '*anno Latomorum*' can be read as '*in the year of freemasons*'.

The Masonic year differs from the common year in two respects, firstly it commences on the 24th of June which happens to be *Saint John the Baptist's day* and in respect to a Craft Lodge 4000 years is added to the *common year* to calculate the Masonic year, e.g, this is 2005 which, in Masonic terms, is expressed as *Anno Latomorum 6005*.

The abbreviation 'A.L' can also apply to Anno Lithotomorum which is found in the minutes of a Lodge at Salisbury dating from 1735. The prefix 'litho' derives from Greek and refers to stone. *Lithotomic* is defined as meaning stonecutting and so it is possible the 18th century writer of those minutes intended them to mean 'the Year of Masonry'.

Another phrase to consider is Anno Laotomiae. This appears on both banners and certificates. One such certificate was issued in the Beaufort Lodge No 167, Bristol. This certificate is a printed document, printed in English on the right and in Latin on the left. The former refers to '*the Year of Masonry 5814*' and the latter has '*Anno Laotomiae*' which must be taken as a direct translation.

Finally there is yet another term to consider. In 1752 we have the first list of Lodges published by the *Grand Lodge of the Antients* and engraved by Ellis in which he uses 'Anno Lap'. We can safely assume he refers to '*Anno Lapidariorum*' which translates as 'in the year of the stonecutters'.

The four phrases all beginning with the letters A.L are, for the most part, used with some regularity on certificates and banners though so far Anno Lucis appears once up to early nineteenth century. The other terms appear with greater frequency and translate roughly as '*Year of Masonry*'.

What is the origin of Anno Lucis? Well my research suggests the country is France and from the higher degrees of freemasonry.

Anno Lucis refers to the light of freemasonry; '*L'an de la Grande Lumiere*' means 'year of the great light' which has been found on certificates as early as 1755 on French Masonic documents relating to the Higher Degrees.

The same French phrase (sometimes with minor variations) was constantly used throughout the second half of the 18th century, with greater frequency in relation to Higher Degrees. The certificates in question included that French phrase meaning 'the Year of Light' sometimes in full, sometimes abbreviated.

What conclusions can be drawn? I suggest that A.L. probably represents **Anno Latomorum** and means '**Year of Masonry**' and that **Anno Lucis** came from the continent and its origin may stem from the Higher Degrees.

### *References*

'*ANNO LUCIS ET AL*' by Bro. Harry Mendoza, Transactions of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No2076 London.

'*Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*', Macoy.

'*Ussher Sets The Date for Creation*' from 'The scopes Trial' homepage by Doug Linder. (<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/FTrials/scopes/scopes.htm>)