

THE  
CHARGES  
OF A  
FREE-MASON,  
EXTRACTED FROM  
The Ancient **RECORDS** of LODGES  
beyond Sea, and of those in *England, Scotland,*  
and *Ireland*, for the Use of the *Lodges* in L  
ONDON:  
TO BE READ  
At The Making of NEW BRETHREN, or when the  
*MASTER* shall order it.

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The **General Heads**, VIZ<>

- I. Of GOD and RELIGION.
- II. Of the CIVIL MAGISTRATES, supreme and subordinate.
- III. Of LODGES.
- IV. Of MASTERS, *Wardens, Fellows, and Apprentices.*
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I. *Concerning* GOD and RELIGION.

A *Mason* is oblig'd by his Tenure, to obey the moral Law; and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a stupid Atheist nor an irreligious **Libertine**. But though in ancient Times Masons were charg'd in every Country to be of the Religion of that Country or Nation, whatever it was, yet 'tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that Religion in which all Men agree, leaving their particular Opinions to themselves; that is, to be *good Men and true*, or Men of Honour and Honesty, by whatever Denominations or Persuasions they may be distinguish'd; whereby Masonry becomes the *Center of Union*, and the Means of conciliating true Friendship among Persons that must have remain'd at a perpetual Distance.

## II. *Of the CIVIL MAGISTRATES supreme and subordinate.*

A *Mason* is a peaceable Subject to the Civil Powers, wherever he resides or works, and is never to be concern'd in Plots and Conspiracies against the Peace and Welfare of the Nation, nor to behave himself undutifully to inferior Magistrates; for as Masonry hath been always injured by War, Bloodshed, and Confusion, so ancient Kings and Princes have been much dispos'd to encourage the Craftsmen, because of their Peaceableness and *Loyalty*, whereby they practically answer'd the Cavils of their Adversaries, and promoted the Honour of the Fraternity, who ever flourish'd in Times of Peace. So that if a Brother should be a Rebel against the State he is not to be countenanc'd in his Rebellion, however he may be pitied as an unhappy Man; and, if convicted of no other Crime though the loyal Brotherhood must and ought to disown his Rebellion, and give no Umbrage or Ground of political Jealousy to the Government for the time being; they cannot expel him from the *Lodge*, and his Relation to it remains indefeasible.

## III. *Of LODGES.*

A LODGE is a place where *Masons* assemble and work: Hence that Assembly, or duly organiz'd Society of Masons, is call'd a LODGE, and every Brother ought to belong to one, and to be subject to its *By-Laws* and the GENERAL REGULATIONS. It is either *particular* or *general*, and will be best understood by attending it, and by the Regulations of the *General* or *Grand Lodge* hereunto annex'd. In ancient Times, no *Master* or *Fellow* could be absent from it especially when warn'd to appear at it, without incurring a sever Censure, until it appear'd to the *Master* and *Wardens* that pure Necessity hinder'd him.

The persons admitted Members of a *Lodge* must be good and true Men, free-born, and of mature and discreet Age, no Bondmen no Women, no immoral or scandalous men, but of good Report.

#### IV. *Of Masters, WARDENS, Fellows and Apprentices.*

All preferment among *Masons* is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the *Lords* may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the *Royal Craft* despis'd: Therefore no *Master* or *Warden* is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit. It is impossible to describe these things in Writing, and every Brother must attend in his Place, and learn them in a way peculiar to *this Fraternity*: Only *Candidates* may know that no *Master* should take an *Apprentice* unless he has sufficient Employment for him, and unless he be a perfect Youth having no Maim or Defect in his Body that may render him incapable of learning the *Art* of serving his *Master's LORD*, and of being made a *Brother*, and then a *Fellow-Craft* in due time, even after he has served such a Term of Years as the Custom of the Country directs; and that he should be descended of honest Parents; that so, when otherwise qualify'd he may arrive to the Honour of being the WARDEN, and then the *Master* of the *Lodge*, the *Grand Warden*, and at length the GRAND MASTER of all the *Lodges*, according to his Merit. No Brother can be a WARDEN until he has pass'd the part of a *Fellow-Craft*; nor a MASTER until he has acted as a *Warden*, nor GRAND WARDEN until he has been *Master* of a *Lodge*, nor **Grand Master** unless he has been a *Fellow-Craft* before his Election, who is also to be nobly born, or a *Gentleman* of the best Fashion, or some eminent *Scholar*, or some curious *Architect*, or other *Artist*, descended of honest Parents, and who is of similar great Merit in the Opinion of the *Lodges*. And for the better, and easier, and more honourable Discharge of his Office, the *Grand-Master* has a Power to chuse his own DEPUTY GRAND-MASTER, who must be then, or must have been formerly, the *Master* of a particular *Lodge*, and has the Privilege of acting whatever the GRAND MASTER, his *Principal*, should act, unless the said *Principal* be present, or interpose his Authority by a Letter

These Rulers and Governors, *supreme* and *subordinate*, of the ancient *Lodge*, are to be obey'd in their respective Stations by all the Brethren, according to the *old Charges* and *Regulations*, with all Humility, Reverence, Love and Alacrity.

#### V. *Of the Management of the CRAFT in working.*

All Masons shall work honestly on working Days, that they may live creditably on *holy Days*; and the time appointed by the Law of the Land or confirm'd by Custom, shall be observ'd.

The most expert of the *Fellow-Craftsmen* shall be chosen or appointed the *Master* or Overseer of the *Lord's Work*; who is to be call'd MASTER by those that work under him. The *Craftsmen* are to avoid all ill Language, and to call each other by no disobliging Name, but *Brother* or *Fellow*; and to behave themselves courteously within and without the *Lodge*. The

*Master*, knowing himself to be able of Cunning, shall undertake the *Lord's* Work as reasonably as possible, and truly dispend his Goods as if they were his own; nor to give more Wages to any Brother or *Apprentice* than he really may deserve.

Both the **Master** and the *Masons* receiving their Wages justly, shall be faithful to the *Lord* and honestly finish their Work, whether *Task* or *journey*; nor put the work to *Task* that hath been accustomed to *Journey*. None shall discover Envy at the Prosperity of a Brother, nor supplant him, or put him out of his Work, if he be capable to finish the same; for no Man can finish another's Work so much to the *Lord's* Profit, unless he be thoroughly acquainted with the Designs and Draughts of him that began it.

When a *Fellow-Craftsman* is chosen *Warden* of the Work under the *Master*, he shall be true both to *Master* and *Fellows*, shall carefully oversee the Work in the *Master's* Absence to the *Lord's* profit; and his Brethren shall obey him.

All *Masons* employed shall meekly receive their Wages without Murmuring or Mutiny, and not desert the *Master* till the Work is finish'd. A *younger* Brother shall be instructed in working, to prevent spoiling the Materials for want of Judgment, and for increasing and continuing of *Brotherly Love*.

All the Tools used in working shall be approved by the Grand Lodge. No *Labourer* shall be employ'd in the proper Work of *Masonry*; nor shall **Free Masons** work with those that are *not free*, without an urgent Necessity; nor shall they teach *Labourers* and *unaccepted Masons* as they should teach a *Brother* or *Fellow*.

## VI. Of BEHAVIOUR, VIZ.

### 1. *In the Lodge while constituted.*

You are not to hold private Committees, or separate Conversation without Leave from the *Master*, nor to talk of anything impertinent or unseemly, nor interrupt the *Master* or *Wardens*, or any Brother speaking to the *Master*: Nor behave yourself ludicrously or jestingly while the *Lodge* is engaged in what is serious and solemn; nor use any unbecoming Language upon any Pretense whatsoever; but to pay due Reverence to your *Master*, *Wardens*, and *Fellows*, and put them to worship.

If any Complaint be brought, the Brother found guilty shall stand to the Award and Determination of the *Lodge*, who are the proper and competent Judges of all such Controversies (unless you carry it by *Appeal* to the GRAND LODGE), and to whom they ought to be referr'd, unless a *Lord's* Work be hinder'd the mean while, in which Case a particular Reference may be made; but you must never go to Law about what concerneth *Masonry*, without an absolute necessity apparent to the *Lodge*.

## 2. **Behaviour** *after the LODGE is over and the Brethren not gone.*

You may enjoy yourself with innocent Mirth, treating one another according to Ability, but avoiding all Excess, or forcing any Brother to eat or drink beyond his Inclination, or hindering him from going when his Occasions call him, or doing or saying anything offensive, or that may forbid an *easy and free* Conversation, for that would blast our Harmony, and defeat our laudable Purposes. Therefore no private Piques or Quarrels must be brought within the Door of the *Lodge*, far less any Quarrels about *Religion*, or *Nations*, or *State Policy*, we being only, as *Masons*, of the *Catholick Religion* above mention'd, we are also of all *Nations*, *Tongues*, *Kindreds*, and *Languages*, and are resolv'd against **all Politics**, as what never yet conduct'd to the Welfare of the *Lodge*, nor ever will. This *Charge* has been always strictly enjoin'd and observ'd; but especially ever since the *Reformation* in BRITAIN, or the Dissent and Secession of these Nations from the *Communion* of ROME.

## 3. **Behaviour** *when Brethren meet without Strangers, but not in a Lodge form'd.*

You are to salute one another in a courteous Manner, as you will be instructed, calling each other *Brother*, freely giving mutual instruction as shall be thought expedient, without being ever seen or overheard, and without encroaching upon each other, or derogating from that Respect which is due to any Brother, were he not Mason: For though all *Masons* are as *Brethren* upon the same *Level*, yet *Masonry* takes no Honour from a man that he had before; nay, rather it adds to his Honour, especially if he has deserv'd well of the Brotherhood, who must give Honour to whom it is due, and avoid *ill Manners*.

## 4. **Behaviour** *in Presence of Strangers not Masons.*

You shall be cautious in your Words and Carriage, that the most penetrating Stranger shall not be able to discover or find out what is not proper to be intimated, and sometimes you shall divert a Discourse, and manage it prudently for the Honour of the *worshipful Fraternity*.

## 5. **Behaviour** *at Home, and in your Neighbourhood.*

You are to act as becomes a moral and wise Man; particularly not to let your Family, Friends and Neighbors know the Concern of the Lodge, &c., but wisely to consult your own Honour, and that of the *ancient*

*Brotherhood*, for reasons not to be mention'd here You must also consult your Health, by not continuing together too late, or too long from Home, after Lodge Hours are past; and by avoiding of Gluttony or Drunkenness, that your Families be not neglected or injured, nor you disabled from working.

## 6. **Behaviour** towards a strange *Brother*.

You are cautiously to examine him, in such a Method as Prudence shall direct you, that you may not be impos'd upon by an ignorant, false Pretender, whom you are to reject with Contempt and Derision, and beware of giving him any Hints of Knowledge.

But if you discover him to be a true and genuine *Brother*, you are to respect him accordingly; and if he is in want, you must relieve him if you can, or else direct him how he may be reliev'd: you must employ him some days, or else recommend him to be employ'd. But you are not charged to do beyond your Ability, only to prefer a poor *Brother*, that is a *good Man* and *true* before any other poor People in the same Circumstance.

Finally, All these **Charges** you are to observe, and also those that shall be recommended to you in *another Way*; cultivating BROTHERLY-LOVE, the Foundation and Cape-stone, the *Cement* and *Glory* of this Ancient *Fraternity*, avoiding all Wrangling and Quarreling, all Slander and Backbiting, nor permitting others to slander any honest Brother, but defending his Character, and doing him all good Offices, as far as is consistent with your *Honour* and *Safety*, and no farther. And if any of them do you Injury, you must apply to your own or his *Lodge*, and from thence you may appeal to the Grand Lodge, at the Quarterly Communication and from thence to the annual GRAND LODGE at the *Quarterly Communication*, and from thence to the *annual GRAND LODGE*, as has been the ancient laudable Conduct of our Fore-fathers in every Nation; never taking a *legal Course* but when the Case cannot be otherwise decided, and patiently listening to the honest and friendly Advice of *Master* and *Fellows*, when they would prevent your going to Law with *Strangers*, or would excite you to put a speedy Period to all *Law-Suits*, so that you may mind the *Affair* of MASONRY with the more Alacrity and Success; but with respect to *Brothers* or *Fellows* at Law, the *Master* and Brethren should kindly offer their Mediation, which ought to be thankfully submitted to by the contending Brethren; and if that submission is impracticable, they must, however, carry on their *Process*, or *Law-Suit*, without Wrath and Rancor (not in the common way) saying or doing nothing which may hinder *Brotherly Love*, and good Offices to be renew'd and continu'd; that all may see the *benign Influence* of MASONRY, as all true *Masons* have done from the beginning of the *World*, and will do to the End of *Time*.

## Amen so mote it be.

Reprinted from "The Constitutions of the Free-Masons. Containing the History, Charges, Regulations, &c. of that most Ancient and Right Worshipful Fraternity. For the Use of the Lodges." London: Printed by William Hunter, for John Senex at the Globe, and John Hooke at the Flower-de-luce over-against St. Dunstan's Church, in Fleet-street. In the Year of Masonry — 5723. Anno Domini — 1723

[92 pages plus dedication by J.T. Desaguliers and frontispiece engraved by John Pine in Aldersgate Street London. page size: 7 1/4 x 9 3/4"]

NOTE: This is a faithful reproduction taken from an original copy in the [Library](#) of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon. The long s has been replaced for readability with the conventional s. The usage of italics and small caps has been followed, black font is indicated by boldface. Transcribed by [Trevor W. McKeown](#).

Anderson's *Constitutions* has been reprinted many times with a number of changes. For example, a new edition, revised, enlarged and brought down to the year 1784, under the direction of the Hall Committee, by John Noorthouk, and printed by J. Rozea. Printer to the Society, No. 91, Wardour Street, Soho, was retitled, "Constitutions of the Antient Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons: Containing Their History, Charges, Regulations, &c., First Compiled by Order of the Grand Lodge, From their old Records, and Traditions, By [James Anderson](#), D.D.", while the Charges were retitled: "Constitutions of the Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons. Part V. Containing the Antient Charges, General Regulations of the Fraternity, Necessary Tables, &c.". The table of contents was omitted. The use of black font and most small caps was also omitted. A new [frontispiece illustration](#) featuring a trestleboard was inserted.

Wherever "ancient" appeared in Anderson's original, Noorthouk substituted "antient". Noorthouk also removed most abbreviations. The following differences occur between the two editions:

| <b>1784 Edition</b>  | <b>1723 Edition</b>  |
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| I. must otherwise have remained  | must have remained   |
| III ought to belong to one, and ought to be subject  | ought to belong to one, and be subject   |
| IV unless he has sufficient employment for him<br>a fellowcraft in due time, after he has served<br>No brother can be a warden, until he has passed the degree of a master mason; nor a master, until he has acted as a warden; nor grand warden, until he has been master of a lodge, and served the office of steward at a grand feast; nor deputy grand master, until he has served the office of grand warden; nor grand master, unless he has been a master of a regular lodge before his election, | unless he has sufficient Employment for him<br>a fellowcraft in due time, even after he has served<br>No brother can be a warden, until he has passed the part of a Fellow-Craft; nor a Master until he has acted as a Warden, nor Grand-Warden until he has been Master of a Lodge, nor Grand Master unless he has been a Fellow-Craft before his Election, |
| VI.2. catholic religion<br>politics  | Catholick Religion<br>Politicks  |
| VI.6. without rancour  | without Wrath and Rancor   |

Other editions will have their own idiocentricities. Some contemporary editions will omit the reference to "catholic religion"; note that "catholic" in its original sense meant "universal" and did not refer to Rome. Other versions will attempt to update the spelling and language, but all have maintained the sense and spirit of the original.