

THE CHARGES OF A
FREE-MASON

EXTRACTED FROM
THE ANTIENT RECORDS OF LODGES BEYOND SEA,
AND OF THOSE IN
ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND IRELAND
FOR THE USE OF LODGES
TO BE READ
AT THE MAKING OF NEW BRETHREN
OR WHEN THE MASTER
SHALL ORDER IT



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THE GENERAL HEADS OF THE
CHARGES OF A FREEMASON,
ETC., ETC.

- I. *Of God and Religion*
- II. *Of the Civil Magistrate, supreme and subordinate*
- III. *Of Lodges*
- IV. *Of Masters, Wardens, Fellows, and Apprentices*
- V. *Of the Management of the Craft in Working*
- VI. *Of Behaviour*
 1. *In the Lodge while constituted*
 2. *After the Lodge is over and the Brethren not gone*
 3. *When Brethren meet without Strangers, but not in a Lodge*
 4. *In presence of Strangers not Masons*
 5. *At Home and in the Neighbourhood*
 6. *Towards a strange Brother*

THE CHARGES OF A
FREE-MASON
ETC., ETC.

I. Concerning GOD and RELIGION

A MASON is obliged, by his tenure, to obey the moral law; and if he rightly understand the art he will never be a stupid atheist nor an irreligious libertine. He, of all men, should best understand that God seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh at the outward appearance, but God looketh to the heart. A mason is, therefore, particularly bound never to act against the dictates of his conscience. Let a man's religion or mode of worship be what it may, he is not excluded from the order, provided he believe in the glorious architect of heaven and earth, and practise the sacred duties of morality. Masons unite with the virtuous of every persuasion in the firm and pleasing bond of fraternal love; they are taught to view the errors of mankind with compassion, and to strive, by the purity of their own conduct, to demonstrate the superior excellence of the faith they may profess. Thus masonry is the centre of union between good men and true, and the happy means of conciliating friendship amongst those who must otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance.

*II. Of the CIVIL MAGISTRATE,
SUPREME and SUBORDINATE*

A MASON is a peaceable subject to the civil powers, wherever he resides or works, and is never to be concerned in plots and conspiracies against the peace and welfare of

ANTIEN CHARGES

the nation, nor to behave himself undutifully to inferior magistrates. He is cheerfully to conform to every lawful authority; to uphold, on every occasion, the interest of the community, and zealously promote the prosperity of his own country. Masonry has ever flourished in times of peace and been always injured by war, bloodshed, and confusion; so that kings and princes, in every age, have been much disposed to encourage the craftsmen on account of their peaceableness and loyalty, whereby they practically answer the cavils of their adversaries and promote the honour of the fraternity. Craftsmen are bound by peculiar ties to promote peace, cultivate harmony, and live in concord and brotherly love.

III. *Of LODGES*

A LODGE is a place where free-masons assemble to work and to instruct and improve themselves in the mysteries of the antient science. In an extended sense it applies to persons as well as to place; hence every regular assembly or duly organised meeting of masons is called a lodge. Every brother ought to belong to some lodge, and be subject to its by-laws and the general regulations of the craft. A lodge may be either general or particular, as will be best understood by attending it, and there a knowledge of the established usages and customs of the craft is alone to be acquired. From antient times no master or fellow could be absent from his lodge, especially when warned to appear at it, without incurring a severe censure, unless it appeared to the master and wardens that pure necessity hindered him.

The persons made masons or admitted members of a lodge must be good and true men, free-born, and of

ANTIEN CHARGES

mature and discreet age and sound judgement, 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 despised; therefore no master or warden is chosen by seniority, but for his merit. It is impossible to describe these things in writing, and therefore every brother must attend in his place, and learn them in a way peculiar to this fraternity. Candidates may, nevertheless, 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, 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 qualified, 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 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, who is also to be nobly born, or a gentleman of his best fashion, or some eminent scholar, or some curious architect, or other artist descended of honest

ANTIEN CHARGES

parents, and who is of singularly 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 the power to choose his own deputy grand master, who must then be, or have formerly been, the master of a particular lodge, and who has the privilege of acting whatever the grand master, his principal, should act, unless the said principal be present, or interpose his authority by letter.

These rulers and governors supreme and subordinate, of the antient lodge, are to be obeyed in their respective stations by all the brethren, according to the old charges and regulations, with all humility, reverence, love, and alacrity.

N.B. In antient times no brother, however skilled in the craft, was called a master-mason until he had been elected into the chair of a lodge.

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 confirmed by custom, shall be observed.

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 called 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.

ANTIEN CHARGES

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, nor 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 be finished.

A younger brother shall be instructed in working, to prevent spoiling the materials for want of judgement 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 employed in the proper work of masonry; nor shall free-masons work with those that are

ANTIEN CHARGES

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

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 impertinently 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 pretence 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 them by appeal to the grand lodge), and to whom they ought to be referred, unless a lord's work be hindered the meanwhile, 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 yourselves 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

ANTIEN CHARGES

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 universal religion above-mentioned; we are also of all nations, tongues, kindreds, and languages, and are resolved against all politics, as what never yet conduced to the welfare of the lodge, nor ever will.

3. BEHAVIOUR WHEN BRETHREN MEET WITHOUT STRANGERS, BUT NOT IN A LODGE FORMED

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 overseen or overheard, and without encroaching upon each other, or derogating from that respect which is due to any brother, were he not a 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 deserved 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.

ANTIEN CHARGES

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 neighbours, know the concerns of the lodge, &c., but wisely to consult your own honour, and that of your antient brotherhood, for reasons not to be mentioned 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 imposed 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 relieved. You must employ him some days, or else recommend him to be employed. 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 circumstances.

Finally.—All these charges you are to observe and also those that shall be communicated to you in another way; cultivating brotherly love, the foundation and copestone, the cement and glory, of this antient fraternity, avoiding all wrangling and quarrelling, all slander and backbiting, nor permitting others to slander any honest

ANTIEN CHARGES

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, as has been the antient laudable conduct of our forefathers 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, that so you may find 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 rancour (not in the common way), saying or doing nothing which may hinder brotherly love and good offices to be renewed and continued, 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

