

**The Constitutions And The Ethics**

James Anderson

Benedict de Spinoza

Foreword by

Michael R. Poll

## The Constitutions And The Ethics

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## Foreword

Benedict de Spinoza was not a Freemason. At least, not as we know Freemasonry today. But his works inspired generations at a time when free speech was not a right, but a dream. The works of Spinoza were not, however, universally viewed as enlightened philosophy, but a threat to many in power and outlawed in more than one area. If his works not been of such a profound nature, they would not have been viewed as such a threat by despots nor enjoyed their significant underground respect.

At the time when Speculative Freemasonry was being born, the works of philosophers and those deemed to be enlightened, were devoured by the Seekers of Light, often read in secret gatherings or alone at night. Those with the desire to advance themselves, as well as grow in knowledge and, then, teach that knowledge, were inspired and recognized the unique value of Spinoza.

Freemasonry was created as a moral society. It professed at its creation, and professes today, to take moral men and make them better. How do you make someone "better"? Spinoza's *The Ethics* when read as one of the creators of Speculative Masonry might have read it, provides an amazing look at what might have been the mindset and intention of the early Speculative Freemasons. *The Ethics* explains what is viewed by Spinoza as "better" and how one might be able to achieve this state. It explains the relationship of mankind and his search for God. When read with Anderson's *Constitutions of 1723*, we can find meaning in some of the words of this old Masonic charge which might have previously been ignored.

While Spinoza's *The Ethics* is not normally classified as a "Masonic work," its influence on the early Speculative Freemasons must not be minimized. It is a work which should be read and studied by all Freemasons. It is suggested that both works be read more than once as the reader might find new discoveries with each reading.

If your goal is to grow and advance, read the following pages and allow your mind to absorb.

Michael R. Poll  
2009



## The Constitutions And The Ethics

THE  
CONSTITUTIONS  
OF THE  
FREE-MASONS.

CONTAINING THE  
*History, Charges, Regulations, &c.*  
of that most Ancient and Right  
Worshipful *FRATERNITY*.

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For the Use of the LODGES.

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L O N D O N :

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 Mafonry — 5723  
*Anno Domini* — — 1723



TO  
His GRACE the DUKE of  
*MONTAGU.*

*My Lord,*

**B**Y Order of his *Grace* the  
DUKE of WHARTON,  
the present Right Wor-  
shipful GRAND-MASTER  
of the *Free-Masons*; and, as his  
*Deputy,*

*DEDICATION.*

*Deputy*, I humbly dedicate this Book of the *Constitutions* of our ancient *Fraternity* to your *Grace*, in Testimony of your honourable, prudent, and vigilant Discharge of the Office of our GRAND-MASTER last Year.

I need not tell your GRACE what Pains our learned AUTHOR has taken in compiling and digesting this Book from the old *Records*, and how accurately he has compar'd and made every thing agreeable to *History* and *Chronology*, so as to render these New CONSTITUTIONS

*DEDICATION.*

STITUTIONS a juſt and exact Account of *Mafonry* from the Beginning of the World to your *Grace's* MASTERSHIP, ſtill preferring all that was truly ancient and authentick in the old ones: For every Brother will be pleas'd with the Performance, that knows it had your GRACE'S Perufal and Approbation, and that it is now printed for the Uſe of the *Lodges*, after it was approv'd by the GRAND-LODGE, when your GRACE was GRAND-MASTER. All the *Brotherhood* will ever remember the Honour your GRACE has done them,  
and

*DEDICATION.*

and your Care for their Peace,  
Harmony, and lasting Friendship:  
Which none is more duly sensible  
of than,

*My LORD,*

Your GRACE'S

*Most oblig'd and*

*Most obedient Servant,*

*And faithful Brother,*

J.T. DESAGULIERS  
Deputy Grand-Master.

## *Anderson's Constitutions of 1723*

Ancient Charges of a FREE MASON  
The Ancient Records of Lodges beyond the Sea  
To Be Read At The Making of New Brethren, or When The Master  
Shall Order It. THE GENERAL HEADS, viz.:

### **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 an 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 Time of Peace. So that if a Brother should be a Rebel against the State he is not to be countenanced in his Rebellion, however he may be pitied as any unhappy Man; and, if convicted of no other Crime though the Loyal Brotherhood must and ought to disown hi 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 organized Society of Masons, is call'd a Lodge, and every