

Academia Lodge № 847

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Eureka!

The 1723 Constitutions



Frontispiece to James Anderson's **Constitutions of Free Masonry**
Engraved by John Pine, 1772 or 1723

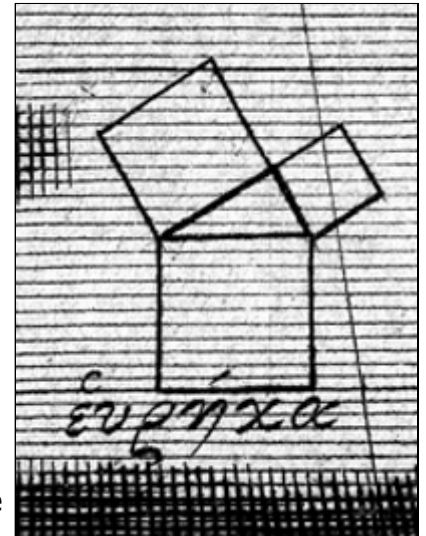
The scene depicts one Grand Master (the Duke of Montagu) passing the scroll of the Constitutions to the next (Philip, Duke of Wharton). Both Grand Masters are supported by their officers.

In the deep background it is possible to see what is most likely a depiction of the splitting of the Red Sea. This motif—recalling the successful flight of the Israelites from the Egyptians to the promised land—might signify here the survival of a tradition that had been in danger, but was now entering a time of security.

In the foreground of the picture is the Greek word **Eureka** (Archimedes' famous exclamation "I have found it!") below a representation of the 47th proposition of Euclid, a symbol which is traditionally associated with Past Masters.

In the sky directly overhead we see the sun approaching its meridian height, allegorized in the figure of Apollo Helios, Greek God of the Sun.

The overall impression of the picture is one of great triumph on many levels: the philosophical and scientific (represented by the 47th problem), organizational and traditional (shown in the cordial transfer of power and the scroll of Constitution between the Grand Masters), and the spiritual and transcendent (the crossing of the Red Sea and the approbation of heaven signified by Apollo). These various elements may strike us today as disjointed, but at the time they were viewed as harmonious. Then, as we learn in Anderson's text, history was not seen as a disconnected and random process, but a careful unfolding of a divine plan.



Detail, showing the 47th proposition from Euclid's first book of Geometry, with the Greek word **heurêka**.

To illustrate this, it might be best to cite some lines from **The Master's Song** by Anderson himself:

ADAM, the first of humane Kind,
 Created with GEOMETRY
 Imprinted on his **Royal** Mind,
 Instructed soon his **Progeny**
 CAIN & SETH, who then improv'd
 The lib'ral **Science** in the **Art**
 Of **Architecture**, which they lov'd,
 And to their Offspring did impart.

...

For Father ABRAM brought from UR
Geometry, the Science good;
 Which he reveal'd, without demur,
 To all descending from his Blood.
 Nay JACOB's Race at length were taught,
 To lay aside the Shepherd's **Crook**,
 To use **Geometry** were brought,

Whilst under **Phar'oh's** cruel Yoke,
 'Till MOSES **Master-Mason** rose,
 And led the HOLY LODGE from thence,
 All Masons train'd, to whom he chose,
 His curious Learning to dispense.
 AHOLIAB and BEZALEEL,
 Inspired Men, the TENT uprear'd;
 Where the **Shechinah** chose to dwell,
 And **Geometrick Skill** appear'd:

. . .

At length the GRECIANS came to know
Geometry, and learnt the Art,
 Which great PYTHAGORAS did show,
 And Glorious EUCLID did impart;
 Th' amazing ARCHIMEDES too,
 And many other Scholars good;
 'Till **ancient** ROMANS did review
 The **Art**, and **Science** understood.

. . .

And great **Palladio** did impart
 A Style by Masons justly prais'd:
 Yet here this mighty Rival **Jones**,
 Of **British** Architects the prime,
 Did build such glorious Heaps of Stones,
 As ne'er were match'd since **Cæsar's** Time.

. . .

Then let good Brethren all rejoice,
 And fill their Glass with chearful Heart,
 Let them express with grateful Voice
 The Praises of the wondrous **Art**;
 Let ev'ry Brother's Health go round,
 Not Fool or Knave but **Mason true**,
 And let our **Master's** Fame resound,
 The noble **Duke of MONTAGU**.

Anderson's poem makes it easier to understand the perspective that the entire sweep of history—from Adam to Moses, to Euclid and Archimedes, and finally to the Duke of Montagu—consists of **one great Masonic story**... the transmission of the primordial wisdom of Adam to the present day through the traditions preserved by the Masonic order.



Notes by Shawn Eyer, P.M.. Images provided by the Henry W. Coil Library & Museum, from a donation of Moreno Valley Lodge № 804.

Further Reading

- [Anderson's Constitutions](#) (GLBC&Y)
- Eric Ward. Dassigny, Youghal and All That. **Ars Quatuor Coronatorum** 88 (1975), 20–31.

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