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## THE OLD CHARGES

THE PRESTONIAN LECTURE FOR 1986

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THE CHARGES OF A FREE-MASON<sup>5</sup>

(26 June 1986)

The 'Old Charges' have kindled the imagination of Freemasons for centuries, and hundreds of pages have been written about them. We might therefore imagine that the topic was by now exhausted. Even so, the younger brethren may need to be reminded of these remarkable relics, which one student, half a century ago, used to call the 'Title Deeds' of the Craft. And (who knows?) perhaps after all we shall be able to say something new about them. If it turns out that I can see somewhat farther than my predecessors, it is largely because I stand upon their shoulders. In particular there are three giants of an earlier age to whom I am indebted: William James Hughan (1841-1911), Wilhelm Begemann (1843-1914), and Herbert Poole (1885-1951). They all died before I became a Mason, and I know them only through their writings. As well, of course, I must express my thanks to those who have helped me personally - particularly the late Bro. Harry Carr; Bro. J. M. Hamill, the Librarian and Curator of Freemasons' Hall; and the former Librarian and Curator, Bro. T. O. Haunch.

If you open your Book of *Constitutions of the Ancient Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons under the United Grand Lodge of England* at the very beginning, right after the 'Summary of the Antient Charges and Regulations' you will find ten pages entitled. 'The Charges of a Free-Mason.' Virtually the same pages occur in *The Book of Constitution* of the Grand Lodge under which I was initiated.

Thirty-four years ago, when I became a Mason, I read through these pages. Because they came near the beginning, it seemed natural to assume that they were important. Some parts sounded a little like the ritual. 'The persons made masons or admitted members of a lodge must be good and true men, free-born, and of mature and discreet age and sound judgment, no bondmen, no women, no immoral or scandalous men, but of good report' (m). 'A man . . . is not excluded from the order, provided he believe in the glorious architect of heaven and earth' (i).

Other parts seemed perfectly true, and beautifully expressed in the kind of English that we have forgotten how to write. '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' (i). This much could be related to the Craft as I understood it, and it lent credence to the remainder.

I remember being upset when I was urged to stay for the festive board, because I felt I should go home and attend to my studies. Didn't my brethren know their Masonic jurisprudence? There it was in black and white. 'You may enjoy yourselves with innocent mirth, treating one another according to ability, but avoid all excess, or forcing any brother to eat or drink beyond his inclination, or hindering him from going when his occasions call him . . .' (vi.2). My occasions were calling me, and they were hindering me from going.

But what was one to make of other portions? 'No master should take an apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him' (iv). The master, knowing himself to be able of cunning, shall undertake the lord's work as reasonably as possible, and truly expend his goods as if they were his own; nor to give more wages to any brother or apprentice than he really may deserve.' 'All the tools used in working shall be approved by the grand lodge' (v).

Such rules as these cannot apply in any literal sense to most of us. Why then are they printed for every Mason? The reason is historical. In its present form more than 99% of the wording goes back two hundred and fifty years. This is not the occasion to rehearse the tale of how the Premier Grand Lodge of England was instituted on 24 June 1717; or to tell the full story of the learned but undisciplined Presbyterian clergyman, the Reverend James Anderson, late Grand Warden. We note simply that in 1723, Anderson, with the approval of the Grand Lodge, published the most influential work on Masonry ever printed, the first book of *the Constitutions of the Free-Masons*. Suffice it to say that he included a section entitled '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

London: to be read At the making of New Brethren, or when the Master shall order it.' Apart from a dozen or so tiny changes, the modern wording is identical.

ANDERSON'S SOURCES FOR 'THE CHARGES OF A FREE-MASON'

Where did Anderson find this material? The second edition of his *Constitutions*, printed in 1738, has a historical section that reveals a bit more. (Strictly speaking, we ought to say that it *would* reveal more if we could take it seriously. Elsewhere much of

Anderson's narrative can be shown to be imaginative and fanciful; in this portion of the story we can neither refute him nor confirm him.) He reports that at the Annual Festival on 24 June 1718, when the Grand Lodge was one year old, the new Grand Master, George Payne, 'desired any Brethren to bring to the Grand Lodge any old *Writings* and *Records* concerning *Masons* and *Masonry* in order to shew the Usages of antient Times; And this Year several old Copies of the *Gothic Constitutions* were reduced and collated.'

Even in those early days there were reticent Masons who did not choose to risk disclosure. In his narrative of 1720, Anderson says, 'This Year, at some *private* Lodges, several very valuable *Manuscripts* . . . concerning the Fraternity, their Lodges, Regulations, Charges, Secrets, and Usages... were too hastily burnt by some scrupulous Brothers, that those Papers might not fall into strange Hands.'

The next year, at the Quarterly Communication of 29 September 1721, the Grand Master, His Grace the Duke of Montagu and the Grand Lodge, 'finding Fault with all the Copies of the *old Gothic Constitutions*, order'd Brother *James Anderson*, A.M., to digest the same in a new and better Method.' The end result of these labours was the first book of *Constitutions*, which was duly approved by the Grand Lodge, and printed in 1723. Even as he asserted, James Anderson did make use of the old manuscripts which he termed 'the Old Gothic Constitutions,' and which today are usually known as the 'Old Charges' or 'Old Manuscript Constitutions.' We can tell from the wording of his text that by the time of his second edition, in 1738, he had obtained access to at least six of them, and that he quoted and paraphrased them quite extensively.

#### THE OLD CHARGES.- NUMBER, DATE, LOCATION, FORM, NAMES, MASONIC AFFINITIES

Despite the destruction wrought by zealous brethren in 1720, the texts of 113 copies of these Old Charges have come down to us, and there are references to fourteen more that are now lost. Nearly two-thirds of them are earlier than the first Grand Lodge of 1717 — at least 63, perhaps as many as 75. Fifty-five go back before 1700. Four were written about 1600, one is dated Christmas Day 1583, one is about 1400 or 1410, and one goes all the way back to 1390.

Most are located in England; London alone has fifty-two. Eleven are in Scotland — none of them earlier than 1650; four are in the United States; one was last heard of in Germany; and one has wandered to Canada — the Scarborough Manuscript of about 1700, which is kept in the offices of my mother Grand Lodge.

The Old Charges present various aspects. Some fourteen are known only from printed transcripts. A few are handwritten on separate sheets of paper or vellum; about thirty-three are written on sheets that are fastened together in book form; but the typical shape, represented by more than fifty versions, is a scroll or roll of paper or parchment, between three and fourteen inches wide, and anything up to fourteen and a half feet in length.

The copies are known by various conventional titles. Sometimes they are named for the present owner (Antiquity, Supreme Council); or sometimes for a former owner (Fisher, Wood); or the scribe (Crane, Foxcroft); or a name written on the manuscript (Chadwicke, Scarborough); or the place of discovery (Wakefield); or the printer (Briscoe, Roberts); or the first man to publish a transcription (Cooke, Dowland); or a friend or benefactor of the owner (Cama, Strachan); or a notable Mason at the time of discovery<sup>1</sup> (Devonshire, King George VI); or the similarity to another text (Harris No 2); or a combination of two of these reasons (Bolt-Coleraine, Levander-York).

Their connection with operative lodges is guaranteed by the contents; but their association with speculative Freemasonry is also well attested. Nearly a quarter (24) have been owned for over 200 years by private lodges in England or Scotland. Another 20 have some traceable connection with lodge meetings or lodge officers; for example, one, as we can tell by the handwriting, was copied by the man who was Clerk of the lodge at Edinburgh from 1675 to 1678 (Kilwinning); three are by the Clerk to the London Masons' Company in

#### 22 *Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge*

677/78 (Bain, Phillipps No 1, Phillipps No 2); one is by the Clerk to the London Society of Freemasons in 1686 (Antiquity); another five are by the Secretary to Grand Lodge from 1727 to 1733 (Fisher, Songhurst, Spencer, Supreme Council, Woodford).

#### THE OLD CHARGES: CONTENTS

The strangest thing about these one hundred and thirteen texts is that they all say basically the same thing. The only possible explanation is that they are all related, and go back to a single original, now lost. Evidently it was edited and reedited dozens of times, and copied and recopied hundreds of times in the years between 1350 and 1717, all over England and Scotland. The versions that survive represent only a small fraction of the ones actually penned. The text is relatively short, and in its most common form runs to about 3500 words. For facility of reference, the basic text has been arbitrarily divided into numbered chapters and sections.

Let us summarize the contents, with a few typical examples of the wording.

(1) They all begin with an Invocation: 'The might of the Father of Heaven, with the wisdom of the glorious Son, through the grace and goodness of the Holy Ghost, that be three persons in one Godhead, be with us at our beginning, and give us grace so to govern us here in our viving that we may come to His bliss that never shall have ending. Amen' (Chapter 1).

(2) Then comes an announcement of the purpose and contents (Chapter 2), followed by a brief description of the seven liberal sciences (Chapter 3); one of them is Geometry, which is synonymous with Masonry. Then we have a proof of the fundamental nature of Geometry (Chapter 4). 'For it teacheth mete and measure, ponderation and weight, of all manner of things on earth. And there is no man that worketh any raft, but he worketh by some mete or measure; nor no man that buyeth or selleth, but by measure or weight, and all this is Geometry. And these merchants and craftsmen find all other of the seven sciences; and especially the ploughmen, and tillers of all manner of grain (both corn and ræds), vine-planters, and setters of other fruits. For Grammar nor Rhetoric, nor Astronomy nor none of all the other sciences, can find a man measure or mete without Geometry. Wherefore methinketh that science is most worthy that findeth all other.'

(3) Then there is an extended Traditional History of Geometry, Masonry, and Architecture, taking up over half of the text. It is based in the first instance on the Bible, the only book that most people ever saw or heard in the Middle Ages. The art of building was invented, we are told, before Noah's Flood, by Jabal; and metal-founding was discovered by his brother Tubal-cain. They knew that God would send destruction for sin, so they wrote their arts on two great pillars, that were found after the Flood (Chapters 5, 6). Then we hear about Nimrod, and the Tower of Babel (Chapter 7); and how Abraham went to Egypt, and taught the liberal arts and sciences to the Egyptians; and how he had a student Euclid (Chapters 8, 9, 10; this brings together two men who lived 1600 years apart); how King David loved Masons well (Chapter 11); how

omon built the temple, with the help of King Hiram and his master Durlui - whose name is not what we would expect (Chapter 12). One man who worked at Solomon's Temple later went to France, and taught the art to Charles Martel — who in reality came 1700 years later (Chapter 13); subsequently the Craft was brought to England, in the time of Saint Alban — a leap backwards of 500 years (Chapter 14); and finally about the year 930, Prince Edwin called a great assembly of Masons in the city of York, and established the regulations used 'from that day until this time' (Chapters 15, 16).

(4) Then we have the manner of taking the oath; usually, for some reason, given in Latin; a literal translation runs. 'Then let one of the elders hold the Book, so that he or they may place their hands upon the Book, and then the rules ought to be read' (Chapter 17).

(5) Next comes the admonition: 'Every man that is a Mason take right good heed to these charges, if that you find yourselves guilty in any of these, that you may amend you against God. And especially ye that are to be charged, take good heed that ye may keep these charges, for it is a great peril for a man to foreswear himself upon a Book' (Chapter 18).

(6) Next come the regulations or Charges proper. Some are to administer the trade: 'No Master shall take upon him no lord's work, nor no other man's work, but that he know himself able and cunning to perform the same ...' (20.2). 'Also that no Master take no work but that he like it reasonably ...' (20.3). These are the ones that are still quoted almost *verbatim* in 'The Charges of a Free-Mason.' Others do not concern trade matters at all, but are intended to regulate behaviour. No doubt they were essential in a community of

### *The Old Charges*

123

of masons who were thrown together in close proximity for twenty-four hours a day. Still, they are unexpected, and serve to mark the masons' lodge as different from most other craft organizations. 'Ye shall be true liege men to the King without treason or falsehood...' (19.2). 'And also that every Mason keep true counsel of lodge and of chamber . . .' (19.4). 'You shall not take your fellow's wife in villainy, nor desire ungodly his daughter nor his servant' (19.7). 'And also that no Fellow slander another behind his back, to make him lose his good name or his wordly goods' (20.9). 'And that no Fellow go into the town in the night time there is a lodge of Fellows, without a Fellow with him, that may bear him witness that he was in honest places' (20.14). 'And also that every Mason shall receive and cherish strange Fellows when they come over the country, and set them to work;... and if he have no money for him, he shall refresh him with money to the next lodge' (20.19). Chapters 19, 20).

(7) Finally comes the Oath: 'These charges that we have rehearsed, and all other that belong to Masonry, ye shall keep, so help you God and Halidom, and by this Book to your power. Amen' (Chapter 21).

### THE OLD CHARGES: PURPOSE AND FUNCTION

It is fair to ask what the Old Charges were used for. To begin with, the rules and orders served a practical purpose. They clearly were intended to regulate the Craft. Twenty-five of the copies actually bear the heading 'Constitution' or 'Constitutions'; two more (Gateshead, Levander-York) are hand-written on extra sheets of paper bound in with the printed text of the *Constitutions*; four (Aitchison's Haven, Alnwick, Kilwinning, Thistle) were written in lodge Minute books, and one (Aberdeen) in the lodge's mark book.

We also know that occasionally they were treated like a Warrant of Constitution. The old Scottish lodge at Stirling had a copy of the Old Charges, written on a single sheet of parchment; it had been mounted and framed, and the members believed that their meetings would not be legal unless the manuscript was exhibited in the lodge-room. Another text, the Aberdeen Manuscript, has as the heading 'The Mason Charter.' In former days the Lodge of Hope, in Bradford, regarded its scroll as the authority for conferring the Mark Degree.

In a sense, the Old Charges also served as The Work, because they described certain procedures that were to be followed when any man was made a Mason, and they included little bits of ritual, such as the Invocation, and the Obligation. It is clear that some of them were actually used at lodge meetings. One (the one in Canada) bears an endorsement, describing a gathering at Scarborough in Yorkshire, in 1705. Another (Sloane No 3848) was written on 16 October 1646, at Warrington, expressly for the initiation of the antiquary Elias Ashmole. Yet another (York No 4), dated 1693, includes a list of the members of the lodge.

We see that they provided ordinance, authority, and ritual, three practical matters. But as well they must have had a psychological effect. They inculcated in masons a sense of respect and reverence for their craft. They told how it went back to antediluvian times, how it was connected with famous buildings in the Sacred Writings, and how it could number among its adherents even monarchs themselves. This was no servile trade of recent devising, but an ancient and honorable institution.

### TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND ITS ROLE

The next question is, what do you do with 113 texts, all nearly identical? Do you copy out each of them as accurately as you can, and then publish your transcription? Well, you may. In fact, this is what has been done with the Old Charges. Exactly one hundred of them have been published. But there is another way of approaching them, and that requires a digression.

The craft of printing from movable type reached Europe at some time about 1450. Before that date, all literary works, all legal documents, all political propaganda, had to be transcribed by hand. Copies were few in number, and no two were identical. Each one was unique, laboriously written one at a time by an individual scribe. If you have ever had to copy out an extensive text, you will realize that mistakes were inevitable. So far as books by ancient authors are concerned, someone has said that the transmitted text 'in physical terms means a monk whose knowledge of Latin hovers between insufficient and non-existent, copying in a bad light from a manuscript in an unfamiliar hand, feeling miserably cold and

looking forward to his dinner' (James Willis, *Phoenix* 20, 1966, 319—320). No doubt much the same could be said of those who copied out the words of the Old Charges.

The introduction of the printing press had two wonderful effects. It meant that a large number of identical copies could be made. And it introduced a standard of accuracy previously undreamt of. Before publication the editor now could read proof and correct its type as often as he wanted. When we come to consider literary works written since 1500, we can normally assume that almost

every word on the printed page accurately reflects the intent of the author.

For older works the case is far otherwise. We do not in most instances have the author's own handwritten text. What we do have are transcripts, at an unknown number of removes. Sometimes there are a very few copies, or even only one (for example, Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens*, and the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*). At other times a great many copies exist (thus, *The Bible*, and Virgil's *Aeneid*). In either event, if we want to recover the author's actual words, we cannot simply transcribe the text of a single manuscript, for, as we have seen, scribes are prone to error. We must make use of a discipline known as 'Textual Criticism.' The business of textual criticism,' in the words of one authority, 'is to produce a text as close as possible to the original' (Paul Maas, *Textual Criticism*, Oxford, 1958, 1).

An example or two may serve to establish the utility of the process. In the Greek text of the Old Testament, in the Book of *Zechariah*, chapter 12, verse 6, some manuscripts read, 'or the pitcher be broken at the fountain' (*epi ten pegeri*), but Tischendorf's great *Code Sinaiticus* has, 'or the pitcher be broken on the ground' (*epi ten pegen*). When we print our authoritative text, how do we choose between them? Again, do you recall the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse? Is the second one riding on a red horse (*hippos pyrrhos*) or a horse of fire (*hippos pyros*)? Both readings occur in manuscripts of *The Revelation of St John the Divine*, chapter 6, verse 4. Or to take a third example, in Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida*, Book 1, line 949, some versions have, 'The rose waxeth swoote and smothe and softe.' Others have, 'The lillie wexith white, smothe and soft.' Presumably *both* cannot be correct. We must choose. But on what basis?

Or again, consider Shakespeare's *Richard III*; towards the end of Act 4, when William Catesby enters with news of the fugitive traitor, the first Quarto edition of 1597 has him announce:

My liege, the Duke of Buckingham is taken,  
That's the best newes; that the Earle of Richmond  
Is with a mightie power landed at Milford,  
Is colder tidings, yet they must be told.

An edition published in London in 1700 lets Catesby say,

My liege, The Duke of Buckingham is taken,

and then has Richard interrupt him with the words,

Off with his head. So much for Buckingham.

A very good line! So good in fact that Sir Laurence Olivier kept it in his film version of the play (1956)! But how do we decide whether it really belongs there?

'A hundred years ago it was [the] rule to count the MSS and trust the majority.' But we now know that 'MSS must be weighed, not counted,' and one good one outweighs forty bad ones (A. E. Housman, *Juvenalis Saturae* corrected edition, Cambridge, 1931, xiii). Should we then follow the best one, correcting it here and there from other sources when it falls into manifest error? This procedure attracted the scorn of one of the masters of invective, who commented as follows:

To believe that wherever a best MS gives possible readings it gives true readings, and that only when it gives impossible readings does it give false readings, is to believe that an incompetent editor is the darling of Providence, which has given its angels charge over him lest at any time his sloth and folly should produce their natural results and incur their appropriate penalty. Chance and the common course of nature will not bring it to pass that the readings of a MS are right wherever they are possible and impossible wherever they are wrong: that needs divine intervention; and when one considers the history of man and the spectacle of the universe I hope one may say without impiety that divine intervention might have been better employed elsewhere. How the world is

*The Old Charges*

125

managed, and why it was created, I cannot tell; but it is no feather-bed for the repose of sluggards (A. E. Housman, *Manilii Astronomicon*, London, 1903, xxxii).

Well, then, we can guess, on the strength of our understanding of the author's practice, or the sense demanded by the context. If we are well-trained and sensible, we shall be right some of the time. But there is another way, which minimizes the guesswork. It involves determining the family relationships of the various manuscripts, and then inferring what must have stood in the ancestor of all the extant versions. That is the way in which the text of ancient authors is normally recovered. That is 'textual criticism.' Though many of the manuscripts of the Old Charges postdate the introduction of printing, they behave much like earlier manuscripts, and they may be approached in exactly the same way.

#### THE FAMILIES OF THE OLD CHARGES

The manuscripts of the Old Charges exhibit a basic similarity, but they fall readily into 'families,' each of which displays a large measure of textual uniformity. This classification was first worked out by the great masonic scholar Dr Wilhelm Begemann in 1888. There are eight families, each indicated by a name and a code letter.

A	Regius Manuscript	(1 text)
B	Cooke Family	(3 texts)
C	Plot Family	(6 texts)
T	Tew Family	(9 texts)
D	Grand Lodge Family	(53 texts)
E	Sloane Family	(21 texts)

F	ROBERTS family	(10 texts)
G	Spencer Family	(6 texts) and then
H	a residue of sundry versions	(8 texts)

In addition there are 14 'missing manuscripts,' which are known only from passing allusions; they are labelled with the letter X. Each of the 127 versions is designated by a code or abbreviation, which consists of a letter (to mark the family) and a serial number. In the two larger families a second letter is used as well, to point to a particular branch.

Actually, apart from A, which is in a class by itself, the families fall into two great groups. One (which is made up of Families B and C) clearly stems from an original composed before 1400; it was verbose and leisurely, in short 'Mediaeval.' At some date in the sixteenth century it was completely revised; a lot of the excess verbiage was pruned away, and the whole thing was made much crisper and easier to read. This new text, which is called the 'Standard Original' Version, does not survive, but was the ancestor of Families T, D, E, F and G.

What needs to be done is to recover the original text of the 'Mediaeval' version and of the 'Standard Original.' This can be done with a fair measure of certainty. The Mediaeval Version is not hard to reconstruct. The Standard Original is somewhat more laborious, but in an Appendix to this paper, we present a tentative text of it. Before we turn to consider it, we may appropriately explain how it was reconstructed.

#### WORKING OUT THE RELATIONSHIPS

First we must work out some of the relationships of the various copies. We do this by making detailed comparisons of the readings of individual passages. We take a portion of the text in which we are reasonably sure what the original said, and then we note which manuscripts diverge from it. We shall generally find that a certain group of texts will share a whole series of these new readings, and we may safely assume that they are all descended from a common ancestor. Sometimes the new reading will arise from a misunderstanding; sometimes it will be a modernization of an old word; sometimes it will be an expansion of the text, or an abbreviation of it. Let us cite a few examples.

20.18, in the regulations: 'And also that no Master nor Fellow set no layer, within the lodge nor without, to hew mould stones with no mould of his own making.' The final phrase, 'with no mould of his own making,' is omitted in over fifty texts, all belonging to the Grand Lodge family.

7.4, when Nimrod's stonemasons were helping to build the city of Nineveh; the original reading was, 'When he sent them forth.' Some thirty-five manuscripts read this as 'When

#### 26 *Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge*

they went forth;' this helps to define the Tew, Sloane, and Roberts Families.

1, the Invocation begins, 'The might of the Father of Heaven.' Apparently in one copy the first three were illegible or torn away, and the transcriber filled in the gap by writing in their place, 'O Lord God the Father of Heaven.' There are eight descendants, all in the Tew Family.

8.3, talking of Egypt in the time of Abraham: 'And in his days it befell that the lords and estates of the realm had so many sons that the land gotten, some by their wives and some by other ladies of the realm, for that land is a hot land, and plenteous of generation.' Someone had trouble with the writing, and converted the passage into nonsense: 'for that land is a holy land and plenshed generation.' Fifteen manuscripts have this or something like it. They belong to the Sloane Family.

In chapter 7.4 we are told that when Nimrod sent his Masons forth, 'he gave them a charge on this manner.' Some thirty or forty lines further on, when Euclid had finished teaching his students, we are likewise told in chapter 10.1 that 'he gave them a charge on this manner.' Apparently on one occasion a copyist was interrupted in his work when he had written the first passage. On his return he wrongly took it up with the identical words in the second passage, leaving out the intervening two and a half chapters. There are five descendants exhibiting this peculiarity — the Lansdowne Branch of the Grand Lodge Family.

2.1, the address 'Good brethren and Fellows' was corrected or misread as 'Good Deacons and Fellows;' this reading is shared by two copies, which make up the Stirling Branch of the Grand Lodge Family.

13.7, the text explains how Charles Martel was elected King of France. 'And when he was in his estate,' says the usual version, 'he took many Masons.' But one copyist misread the word 'estate' (or actually 'state'), and wrote, 'when he was in his stall.' There are five descendants, all in the Thorp Branch of the Sloane Family.

By proceeding in this fashion, it is possible eventually to draw up a full table of the relationships of all the manuscripts in the branch. When we can use the table to reconstruct the ancestor of the branch.

#### CRIBAL PERSONALITIES

A study of the individual copies confirms that each writer has his own personality, and some of them are quite strongly marked. Most of them try conscientiously to copy exactly what is before them. If the words they imagine they see don't make sense, well, so be it! They still transcribe them. Thus, in 2.1, the writer of the Embleton Manuscript (E.d.7) read 'craft' as 'ghost.' In 10.6 the Boyden Manuscript (D.e.44) copied 'lineage' as 'learage.' In 14.1 the Lansdowne Manuscript (D.d.2) converted 'for any' - an alternative reading for 'of any' - into 'Foragine' (and later members of the branch, D.d.15, 42, 48, inevitably 'corrected' this into 'foreign'). In 14.5 the Phillipps Manuscript No 3 (D.b.31) has 'nurses' instead of 'nuncheons.' Two members of the York Branch (D.c.17, 37) wrote 'evill any' for 'villainy' in 19.7. And three members of the Hope Branch (E.c.5, 8, 18), in 20.19, transcribed 'stones' as 'sconder' or 'scounder.' Some of these corruptions would be utterly unintelligible if we did not have other texts to provide the correct reading.

Unfamiliar names are particularly vulnerable, and so frequently we meet such monstrosities as 'Harmonise' instead of 'Harmerines' (D.b.41), 'Mirth' for 'Nimrod' (D.h.55), 'Nimmorah' for 'Nineveh' (D.e.49), 'Evesidde' for 'Euclid' (T.7), 'Fireland' for 'Jerusalem' (D.i.11), 'Brenithmen' for 'Frenchmen' (E.d.13), or 'Hoderine' in place of 'Edwin' (E.c.5, 8).

Some scribes, if they come to a passage they cannot read at all, will leave a space just the right length. Thus, the writer of the Antiquity Manuscript (D.d.15) could not read the word 'paynim' or 'pagan' in 14.2, and left a blank. (Of course, if in turn a later copy is made, then sometimes the blank is closed up, or filled in by guesswork, and we lose all indication that anything is awry. So two younger relatives of the Antiquity Manuscript, D.d.42 and 48, filled in the gap for the word 'pagan' by guessing 'mason'.) Again, in 13.2, some scribe could not read the ill name of 'Naymus Grecus,' and so he transcribed 'space Grecus' (D.a.4, 5, 39); later members of the family were less punctilious, and closed up the gap, writing simply 'Grecus,' with no hint that anything was missing (D.a.8, 29, 43).

Occasionally we encounter someone with a bit of initiative, someone who is not afraid to rewrite a phrase or two in the interest of clarity, or what he takes to be clarity. Such a one was the man who wrote the Huddleston Manuscript (D.e.49). The text he was copying defined music by saying, 'it teacheth voice of tongue, harp or organ' (3.7). He embellished

us and wrote that it teacheth to sing and pray on harp and organ and other instruments.

Again, when Mark Kypling in 1693 copied out his version of the Old Charges (York Manuscript No 4, E.c.9), he apparently decided that the historical section concluded too abruptly. He therefore inserted a retrospect at the end of Chapter 16: 'Now you have heard in particular how this noble and famous Craft of Masonry was first invented; and how miraculously it was preserved; and, since, how it hath been loved and cherished both by kings and potentates, from its first beginning to this very day; and how it should and ought still to be loved and kept in high repute and estimation by all manner of persons whatsoever.'

From time to time a studious type intervenes. A few of them made a habit of checking assertions against their Bible, and sometimes they would substitute a scriptural quotation for the original version. Thus, in 5.9 the original told how Tubal-cain 'found smith's craft, of gold, silver, copper, iron and steel.' One group of copies (D.a.29 and Family G) carries instead the statement that Tubal-cain was the 'instructor of every artificer in brass and iron' — words which come from Genesis 4:22.

Only rarely do we find a creative editor, one who works over the whole text thoroughly, bringing the language up to date and introducing new material. Such men were responsible for the Harris Branch, the Roberts Family, the Spencer Family, and above all the Raymond Manuscript. Estimable people, I'm sure, but my only comment as a student of the text is, thank Heaven there weren't more of them.

#### THE RECONSTITUTED TEXT

The text that we finally recover (printed in the Appendix to this paper) does not hold any real surprises. It is close in wording to many of its offspring, though it does not coincide with any of them. It is certainly more authoritative and readable than its earliest surviving descendant, the Grand Lodge Manuscript No. 1. In hundreds of places the readings differ. In most, to be sure, the difference is not substantive; but in several dozen there is a real distinction; to cite but a single example, in 20.4 an indispensable negative is omitted.

Its exact date is uncertain, but we can determine the limits within which it was composed. The Grand Lodge Manuscript No. 1 (D.a.1) was written in 1583. We know as well of two earlier descendants that are no longer extant. The Melrose Manuscript No. 2 (D.sundry.12) is certified to be transcribed from a lost original of 1581, and the Levander-York Manuscript (D.b.41) purports to be copied from a text of 1560. All of these versions, as we can tell from the text, are not copied directly from the Standard Original, but stand at several removes distant. It follows that the Standard Original must have been written somewhat before 1560. Likewise, it must postdate 1470, because it clearly derives from the Plot Family, which mentions 'our late sovereign lord King Henry the Sixth.' The extreme limits then seem to be 1470 and 1560. Those who know about such things say that 'the language and style hardly suggest a date before the first half of the sixteenth century' (Douglas Knopp and G. P. Jones, *The Genesis of Freemasonry* Manchester, 1947, 76). Perhaps Poole's pronouncement, 'some such date as 1520-40,' is as good as any (*Gould's History of Freemasonry*, revised by Herbert Poole London, 1951, 1.36).

The text has a distinct flavour of Middle English. Words that were current 450 years ago, but are now obsolete or changed in meaning, occur regularly:

- 'an' (= if);
- 'behest' (= promise);
- 'clerk' (= scholar);
- 'cry' (= proclaim or proclamation);
- 'cunning' (= skill or skilful);
- 'curious' (= skilful);
- 'depart' (= divide or share);
- 'deserve' (= serve);
- 'drew to' (= came to);
- 'fere' (= companion);
- 'find' (= support or provide for);
- 'get' (= beget);
- 'Halidom' (= that which you regard as sacred);
- 'hight' (= called);
- 'journey' (= day's work);
- 'mete' (= measure);

- 'mo' (= more in number);
- 'nuncheons' (= light refreshments);
- 'paynim' (= pagan);
- 'practic' (= practice);
- 'sithen' (= thereupon);
- 'take' (= hand over or give);
- 'travel' (= exertion);
- 'tree' (= timber);
- 'wit' (= know);
- 'worship' (= honour);

and so on.

Biblical names are used in the Latin forms which were familiar in the Vulgate, rather than in the Hebrew ones that became current after the Reformation; thus, Ada for Adah, Jabel for Jabal, Nemrod for Nimrod, Ninive for Nineveh, Noe for Noah, Salomon in place of Solomon, Sara for Sarah, Sella for Zillah, and Sem instead of Shem.

#### WHY BOTHER?

There are many reasons why the effort of reconstructing a lost manuscript is worthwhile. Not least is the sheer intellectual satisfaction of bringing order out of chaos. There are practical benefits as well. If you are concerned with the contents of the Old Charges, the material you need to consider is reduced to manageable bulk. You no longer have to worry about 113 distinct texts, all of equal evidential value. And you are sure that you are dealing with the author's original intention, rather than with a casual misreading.

Now, instead of arguing about which variant reading we should follow, we have a single text. Let us take a passage where there is a wide range of variants. In 14.5 we are told that St Alban raised the wages of masons from a penny a day, and made it right good. But what did a penny do? Some versions say two shillings a week, others two and six, yet others three, or three and six, or even four or four and six. What

as the original figure: textual criticism enables us to say that the Standard Original and the Mediaeval Original both had two shillings and pence. It is at least possible that this figure may have some implications for dating the original composition of the Mediaeval Version. If it represents the actual wage that was then current, it points to the mid-fourteenth century. The average pay for masons was fivepence a day (or 1/6 a week) at Oxford during the decade 1351-1360 (Douglas Knoop and G. P. Jones, *The Mediaeval Mason*, 3rd edition, Manchester, 1967, 11). On other grounds the date of the original (known as the 'New Long History') had been set between 1350 and 1390 (Douglas Knoop, G. P. Jones, and Douglas Hamer, *The Two Earliest Masonic MSS.* Manchester, 1938, 59).

Or again, consider the name of the architect of Solomon's Temple. In modern Masonry of course he is called Hiram Abif, a form which goes back ultimately to the Bible, 2 Chronicles 2:13 and 4:16. You will see it hinted from time to time that the name of Hiram was a masonic secret, transmitted by word of mouth through the middle ages, while written texts carried instead the 'substitute name' Aymon; this (we are told) is a corruption of the Hebrew word meaning 'master workman.' In two texts (D.e.13, 14) the architect is called 'Apleo,' which (we are assured) is another Hebrew 'substitute name,' meaning 'the secret.' Speaking for myself, I do not believe *any* of this. Aymon, or more probably Aynon, was certainly the form in the Standard Original. Where other names appear instead, they arise from one of two causes. One is a simple misunderstanding, of the sort that we have noted elsewhere. Aymo (in which the suprascript stroke represents a final N) as written in a script of about 1600 could easily have been misread as Apleo. The second is conscious correction. The name Hiram begins to appear about 1675, and it occurs in eighteen copies. And we can *prove* that in each of these texts the new name was introduced by one of those scribes who consulted their Bibles, and found the name Hiram there; we can prove it because in *every* instance he gives a Biblical reference or allusion. Probably at least some of these scribes checked their Bible because the name before them was illegible or unfamiliar. In short, there is no evidence for any 'secret doctrine' here.

Once the details of relationship are worked out, we can proceed to make inferences about where and when the lost intermediaries were made. This will tell us a great deal about the building masons of the period before the first Grand Lodge: where they were located, how they communicated, how often they moved on to a new job, and how far they moved. We

may also be able to say that a certain manuscript was *not* in such-and-such a place at such-and-such a time. For example, in a recent issue of *AQC*, it was asserted that in 1665 the Grand Lodge Manuscript No. 1 was in Edinburgh, and that a copy of it was made for the use of Lodge Kilwinning. I can now challenge this assertion, for the Kilwinning Manuscript is not a copy of the Grand Lodge Manuscript.

Or again, in recent years there has been an effort to push the introduction of 'Speculative Masonry' back into the sixteenth century, and to suggest that all the versions of the Old Charges except for the two oldest, the Regius (A) and the Cooke (B.I), are in fact speculative. According to this hypothesis, the older text, which belonged to the operative masons, was revised for some non-operative organization not too long before 1580. To be sure, there is no evidence whatsoever for non-operative Masons in England before 1600; but even beyond that, we now see that the Grand Lodge Manuscript No. 1 is not an isolated phenomenon, but is really part of a continuing tradition that is considerably older.

#### DIVIDENDS

As you browse among the Old Charges, from time to time you reap dividends — little extra bits added in a single copy, or a set of manuscripts. Sixteen versions have a further body of regulations, apparently added about 1650, headed 'The Apprentice Charge,' including: 'And that he shall not purloin nor steal the goods of his master or dame, nor absent himself from their service, nor go from them about his own pleasure by day or by night without license of one of them.' This is clearly operative.

Another special group of rules, called 'The New Articles,' is found in four members of the Roberts Family. They are said to have been adopted in 1663. They include: 'That no person shall be accepted a free mason unless he be one and twenty years old or more.' This probably concerns the non-operative Craft.

Particularly interesting are the small additional texts, or 'fillers,' added in a very few copies. Some are injunctions to govern behaviour: 'Do all as you would be done unto' and 'Pray heartily for all Christians' (D.h.18); 'Provoke nobody; mock nobody; swear not; dispraise nobody; be against nobody; nothing is long lasting' (D.c.37); 'Man, do not foreswear yourself; fear God, honour the King' (both in Latin, D.d.48); 'Praise God always' (in Latin, D.e.49); 'Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man' (Ecclesiastes 12:13; D.d.15, 42, 48); scriptural exhortations to live in brotherly harmony (1 Corinthians 1:10; H.7); and to dwell in the house of learning (Ecclesiasticus 51:23; E.a.10,H.7).

Some of the additions are specifically masonic. As many as fifteen versions include either a rendering or a description of the arms of the Masons' Company, which serves to acknowledge the connection with the operative craft. There are scriptural tags that allude to the craft of building (Psalm 127:1; D.sundry.6), and to craftsmen (Ecclesiasticus 9:17; E.a.10), to the works and wisdom of God (Psalm 104:24; E.d.22), and to the raging of the heathen (Psalm 2:1; in Hebrew, D.sundry.54); the traditional verses that commence, 'In the beginning' (Genesis 1:1; in Hebrew, D.sundry.54; John 1:1; D.a.1). There are texts on scorning the profane (in Latin, from the Roman poet Horace; T.6), and on the virtues of the mathematical sciences (in Latin and Greek, again in T.6). There are notes on the size of the stones in Solomon's Temple (D.b.41); on the date at which the Company of Masons was incorporated (D.e.19); a list of the eleven metals (in badly garbled Latin; E.d.13; the architect of the temple was a metal-founder). Five versions have a brief Latin summary of the seven liberal arts and sciences, which runs like this (I translate): 'Grammar speaks logic teaches truth; Rhetoric colours words; Music sings; Arithmetic counts; Geometry weighs; Astronomy cultivates the stars.'

In three copies a section of the traditional text is found confined with a series of 'Orders' that are clearly operative ('That no mason shall take any work by task or by day, other than the King's work, but that at the least he shall make three or four of his fellows acquainted therewith ...'); fines are assessed on the members for infraction (E.a.10, signed by the members; E.a.19, H.2).

One copy (D.g.34), clearly speculative, is written on some pages inserted into a copy of the *Freemason's Calendar* for 1781; in addition to the Old Charges we find several pages copied here from Preston's *Illustrations of Masonry* (second edition, 1775; pages 50—56, 132-136).

There are sometimes brief hints of ritual or procedure beyond what we already know.

the Dumfries Manuscript No. 4 (H.I), of about 1710, has a whole series of questions and answers, of the sort that we know were used in early lodges ('Where lies the key of your lodge? In a bone box . . .'). The Carmick Manuscript (H.7) of 1727 has a drawing of the lodge — a precursor of the Tracing Board. Four texts in the Harris Branch have the following instructions: 'Then let the person that is to be made a Mason choose out of the lodge any one Mason who is to instruct him in those secrets which must never be committed to writing; which Mason he must call his tutor. Then let the tutor take him into another room and show him all the whole mystery, that at his return he may exercise with the rest of his fellow Masons.' Two other manuscripts, closely related, have something similar. This must be at least as old as 1650. And six out of this same group have an oath of secrecy, again going back at least to 1650.

There are occasional personal notes that make us feel we know these unknown brethren better. One writer, of 1693, has added a subscription explaining why he copied the text: 'These for my cousin John Kipling, with my kind love to him presented' (E.c.8). Or again, 'You faster, George Webster, 1722, being 27 years old, March the 25' (F.5).

#### RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

In this paper I have tried to do several things: (1) to introduce you to the Old Charges; (2) to explain how we can work out the relationships of the various copies; (3) to recover a text which is older than any surviving copies; (4) to argue that this is worth doing.

Incidentally, I hope that you have learned a bit more about the men who wrote our manuscripts. We have seen the constant tension between fidelity and utility. Some scribes regarded the texts they were copying almost as sacred relics; they transcribed what was before them with as much accuracy as they could muster, even when it had gaps in the text, or did not make sense. Others treated the Old Charges as working documents, which had to be intelligible; they modernized the language, filled the gaps, corrected the errors. But most of their alterations were casual surface changes, and had little fundamental effect on the contents.

What now remains to be done? Well, we can attempt to improve the text of the Standard Original Version. We can continue to study the text in detail, and see what it tells us about the Craft in the first half of the sixteenth century — a period from which this sort of evidence has hitherto been lacking. We can set out the evidence for the affinities of the various families of the Old Charges; then it will be easy to describe the peculiarities of each new descendant, and to set forth its relationships. And we can proceed to trace the paths by which this text spread across England and even into Scotland.

#### CONCLUSION

There is one other class of dividend that I neglected to mention in its proper place, and it might be an appropriate note on which to close. From time to time the manuscripts include poems or songs about the Craft. Some of them are not very good ('Come all you masons, hear what I do say ...' **D.c.37**; 'Masters kind, prove true in mind ...,' **D.h.24**; 'Master Hiram from near the sea ...' **D.sundry.54**; 'To our Lodge we invite Lords, Gentlemen, and Knights . . .,' **E.a.23**; 'Of all the world a part it is inferred . . .,' H.7). One or two are quite amusing ('The Prophecy of Brother Roger Bacon,' **D.e.13**; 'A *caput mortuum* here you see . . .,' H.I). One of my favourites is a bit of verse written soon after 1600, and copied at the beginning of three versions of the Old Charges (**D.c.3**, 27, 7). It is an anagram; that is, if you take the first letter of each line in order, they spell a word: MASONRIE.

M uch might be said of the noble art,  
A craft that's worth esteeming in each part.  
S undry nations' nobles, and then- kings also -  
O h, how they sought its worth to know!  
N imrod, and Solomon the wisest of all men,  
R eason saw to love this science then.  
I '11 say no more, lest by my shallow verses I,  
E ndeavouring to praise, should blemish Masonrie.

*The Old Charges*

131

#### APPENDIX i.

#### A TENTATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE 'STANDARD ORIGINAL' VERSION OF THE OLD CHARGES IN MODERN SPELLING

*The Purpose of Reconstituting a Lost Text.* More than three-quarters of the known copies of the 'Old Charges of Masons' are descended from a text that was written in the first half of the sixteenth century. This text, which is conventionally known as the 'Standard Original' Version, was an edited and revised form of an older version that was current among masons in the Middle Ages. The 'Standard Original' does not survive, but it may be reconstructed by working backwards from its many descendants. When once recovered the text will be of interest for at least two reasons. (1) It will be earlier than any of the copies derived from it. (2) It will be free of the scribal errors and additions that have crept into the later copies.

*The Method.* One who claims to give you a lost text may seem at first glance to be either a magician or a charlatan. The first glance is deceptive. The text is reconstructed in accordance with the same scientific principles that are used to edit *any* work that survives in a number of manuscript copies. The technique is regularly followed in the constitution of texts of the Greek and Latin Classics. The initial stage of the project is to work out the affinities of the various copies. Then we can draw up a family tree, or '*stemma*.'

It appears that only two copies were made of the Standard Original Version. One was the ancestor of Families D and G; the other gave rise to Families T, E, and F. We can reconstruct these two texts and compare them. Where the readings coincide, they will generally give us the reading of the Standard Original. For example, at 4.1, the ancestors of Families T, E, and D all had 'These be the seven liberal sciences,' and this must be inherited from their parent. (Here the two younger families, F and G, both have, 'Note, I pray you, that these seven . . .,' and are not

relevant for our purposes.)

Where the descendants disagree, sometimes we can compare them with an earlier progenitor, the Mediaeval Version, which may be reconstructed from the members of the Plot Family and the Cooke Manuscript. If this older text coincides with either of the later texts, we can be reasonably sure that the shared reading is what stood in the Standard Original. For example, in chapter 7.5, Nimrod instructed his Masons that they should serve their lord truly for their pay,' and then his reason is given. The ancestor of Families D and G says 'so that he [i.e., the lord] might have worship and all that belong to him.' The ancestor of Families T, E, and F had 'so that he [i.e., Nimrod] might have worship for sending them to him.' Evidently several words in the text had been obliterated; the scribe could read only 'so that he might have worship ... ng t im,' and he had to fill in the gap on his own. But which is the earlier reading, 'belong' or 'sending'? The Plot Family (C) has 'So that I may have worship and thanks for sending you . . .,' and the Cooke Manuscript (B.I) has almost the same thing in lines 403—406. We conclude that T, E and F preserve the true reading.

Again, in 20.1, Families D and G read, 'These be the charges in general that belongeth to every true Mason to keep,' while Families T and E read, '... that every Mason should hold.' (Family F omits this clause.) Family C has '... that every Mason should hold,' and this must be the original reading.

In passages where the Mediaeval Text is utterly different from the Standard Original, then we are forced to choose one of the two later readings on grounds that may be more or less subjective. For example, in Chapter 1, God is invoked to 'govern us in our living' (T, E, F has adapted this to 'govern our lives'), or to 'govern us here in our living' (D, G). I have chosen the latter, because it makes a more pointed contrast between man's transitory sojourn on Earth and the everlasting bliss of the next world. Again, in 13.1, the builders who spread Masonry abroad are called 'glorious craftsmen' (T, E; 'and these craftsmen' in F), or 'curious craftsmen' (D, G). I prefer the latter, because the epithet 'curious' (in the sense of careful) is more appropriate.

Very occasionally neither branch is correct, and we may have to resort to Conjectural Emendation. For example, in 16.3, Prince Edwird decrees that the book must be read when a new Mason is made. Families D and G continue, 'and for to give him his charge.' Family T has either 'and to give him his charge' or 'for to give him his charge.' Family E has 'and to give him his charge.' Family F has a paraphrase, 'that he might fully understand what

articles, rules, and orders he was obliged to observe,' which is clearly not original. The original version was 'and so to give him his charge;' the 'o' (with a long s) was misread as 'fo,' and corrected to 'for,' and then some scribes, instead of writing both 'and' or 'for,' chose between 'f' and 'eem.' Again, in 20.6 we are told that he that shall be made Mason should 'be able in all manner of degrees' (D, G), or 'be able over all sciences [or 'vers]' (£), or 'be a man [or anena] on [or within] all sides' (C; Families T and F omit the clause). The original text was 'be able on all sides.'

There is one place where the text is demonstrably wrong. In 5.13 one of the two antediluvian pillars of stone was made of *laterus*. This must have been a misreading for *lateres*, the Latin word for baked brick. But 'baked brick' makes no sense here; it is not a kind of stone, and it will not float. So I have retained the nonsense word *laterus*, to which the scribe evidently assigned some meaning of his own.

The text offered below is closer to the original, and more accurate, than any other that has hitherto been available; it will not be correct in every detail. Further study will inevitably offer refinements. (Similarly, whenever a new text of a Classical author is published, the editor invariably introduces a certain number of improvements.)

In Classical texts it is usual to provide an *apparatus criticus*, or list of significant variant readings, that will show the sources of the text adopted by the editor. To do so in the present instance would add considerably to the cost of production without appreciably increasing the joy of the readers for whom it is intended. So we have, with regret, omitted it. The editor seeks consolation in the words of one of his teachers.:

We should hope ... for a seemly elegance in our editions and resent it as an outrage if we open a copy . . . only to find a horrible *apparatus criticus* lurking at the bottom of the page like some open sewer at the end of a gracious promenade ... Let an editor make the best text he can, and then present [it] in tranquil stateliness . . . Textual criticism exists in order to give us a text; when that has been made the bye-products should be destroyed or hidden (Gilbert Norwood, *Pindar*, Berkeley, 1945, 7).

The text given below has been arbitrarily divided into chapters and sections. The chapters are marked by brief titles and figures in the margin. The sections are distinguished by raised numerals in the body of the text. These indicators were not present in the original, but have been inserted to facilitate reference.

In a version which is reconstituted from many texts, any one of which may be idiosyncratic and inconsistent in its spelling and punctuation, there would clearly be little use in attempting to reproduce the exact form of the original. Accordingly we have, with few exceptions, followed modern spelling and punctuation.

*he Stemma.* Rather than attempting to show the relationship of all 113 texts — indeed, some details are not yet clear — we shall content ourselves with a *stemma* that shows how the different families are connected.

A TENTATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF  
THE 'STANDARD ORIGINAL' VERSION OF THE OLD CHARGES  
IN MODERN SPELLING

*Chapter One. Invocation*

The might of the Father of Heaven, with the wisdom of the glorious Son, through the grace and goodness of the Holy Ghost, that be three persons in one Godhead, be with us at our beginning, and give us grace so to govern us here in our living that we may come to His bliss

that never shall have ending. Amen.

### *Chapter Two. Purpose and Contents*

<sup>1</sup> Good Brethren and Fellows, our purpose is to tell you how and in what manner this worthy Craft of Masonry was begun, and afterwards how it was founded by worthy kings and princes, and many other worshipful men; <sup>2</sup> And also to them that be here we will declare the charge that belongeth to every true Mason to keep. <sup>3</sup> For in good faith, any ye take heed thereto, it is well worthy to be kept for a worthy craft and a curious science.

### *Chapter Three. The Seven Liberal Sciences*

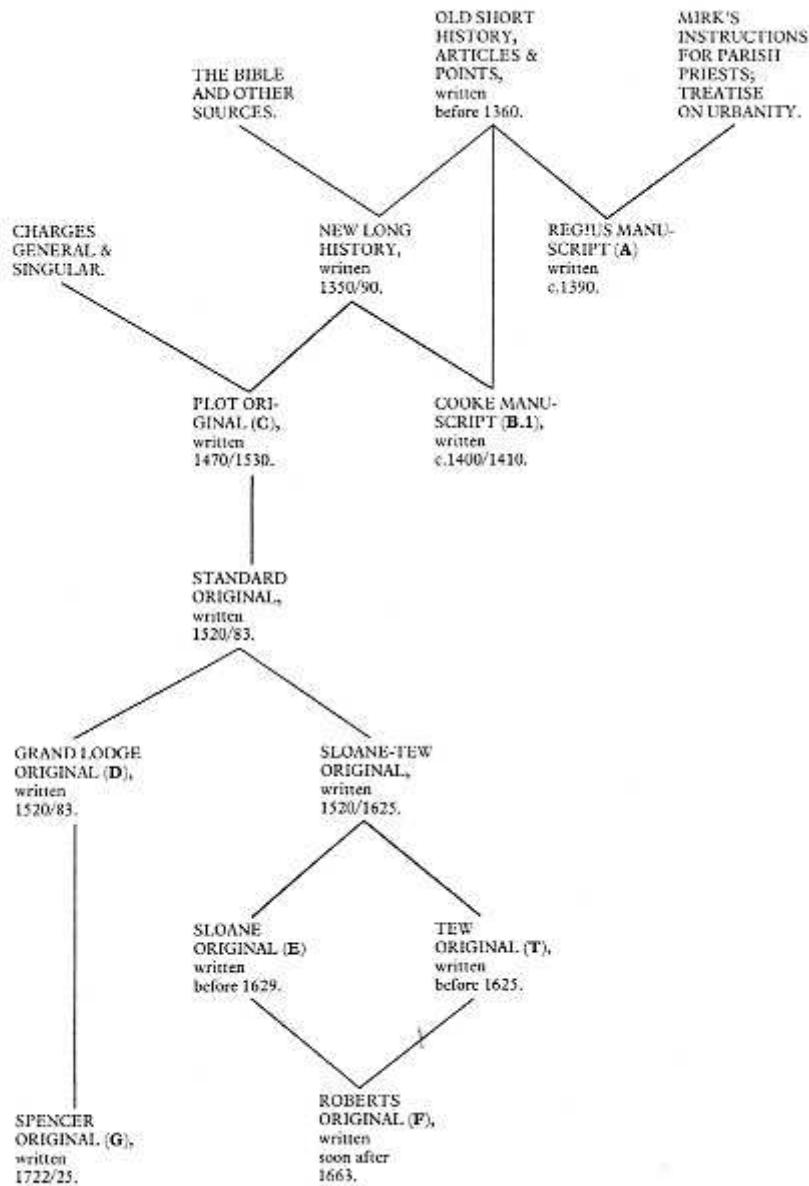
<sup>1</sup> For there be seven liberal sciences, of the which it is one of them, and the names of the seven sciences be these. <sup>2</sup> The first is Grammar, that teacheth a man to speak truly and to write truly. <sup>3</sup> The second is Rhetoric, that teacheth a man to speak fair and in subtle terms. <sup>4</sup> The third is Dialectic, that teacheth a man to discern or know truth from falsehood. <sup>5</sup> The fourth is Arithmetic, that teacheth a man to reckon and account all manner of numbers. <sup>6</sup> The fifth is Geometry, that teacheth a man mete and measure of the earth and all other things, of the which science is Masonry. <sup>7</sup> The sixth is Music, that teacheth a man the craft of song, and voice of tongue, organ, harp and trumpet. <sup>8</sup> The seventh is called Astronomy, that teacheth a man to know the course of the sun, moon and stars.

### *Chapter Four. Geometry: The Fundamental Science*

These be the seven liberal sciences, the which seven be all found by one science, that is to say, Geometry. <sup>2</sup> And thus may a man prove that all the sciences of the world be found by Geometry. <sup>3</sup> For it teacheth mete and measure, ponderation and weight, of all manner of things on earth. <sup>4</sup> And there is no man that worketh any craft, but he worketh by some mete or measure; nor no man that buyeth or selleth, but by measure or weight, and all this is Geometry. <sup>5</sup> And these merchants and craftsmen find all other of the seven sciences; and especially the ploughmen, and tillers of all manner of grain (both corn and seeds), vine-planters, and setters of other fruits. <sup>6</sup> For Grammar nor Rhetoric, nor Astronomy nor one of all the other sciences, can find a man measure or mete without Geometry. <sup>7</sup> Wherefore methinketh that science is most worthy that findeth all other.

### *Chapter Five. The Two Pillars*

<sup>1</sup> How this worthy science was first begun I shall you tell. <sup>2</sup> Before Noe's Flood there was a man that was called Lamech, as it is written in the Bible, in the fourth chapter of Genesis. <sup>3</sup> And this Lamech had two wives, the one hight Ada and the other Sella. <sup>4</sup> By his first wife Ada he got two sons, the one hight Jabel and the other Jubal. <sup>5</sup> And by the other wife Sella he got a son and a daughter. <sup>6</sup> And these four children founded the beginning of all the crafts in the world. <sup>7</sup> And this eldest son Jabel found the craft of Geometry; and he departed flocks of sheep, and lands in the field, and first wrought a house of stone and tree, as it is noted in the chapter abovesaid. <sup>8</sup> And his brother Jubal found the craft of Music, song of tongue, harp and organ. <sup>9</sup> And the third brother Tubalcain found smith's craft, of gold, silver, copper, iron, and steel. <sup>10</sup> And the sister found the craft of weaving. <sup>11</sup> And these children knew that God would take vengeance for sin, either by fire or water. <sup>12</sup> Wherefore they wrote the sciences that they had found, in two pillars of stone, that they might be found after Noe's Flood. <sup>13</sup> And the one stone was marble that would not burn with fire; and the other stone was called *laterus*, that would not drown in water.



*Chapter Six. How the Pillars were found after the Flood*

<sup>1</sup> Our intent is to tell you truly how and in what manner these stones were found, that these sciences were written in. <sup>2</sup> The great Hermarines, that was Chus's son, the which Chus was son unto Sem, that was Noe's son (the same Hermarines was afterward called Hermes, the father of wise men), he found one of the two pillars of stone, and found the sciences written therein, and taught them to other men.

*Chapter Seven. Nemrod*

<sup>1</sup> And at the making of the Tower of Babylon, there was Masonry first made much of. <sup>2</sup> And the King of Babylon, that hight Nemrod, was a Mason himself and loved well the Craft, as is said with the Master of Stories. <sup>3</sup> And when the city of Ninive and other cities of the East should be made, Nemrod, the King of Babylon, sent thither sixty Masons at the roagation of the King of Ninive his cousin. <sup>4</sup> And when he sent them forth he gave them a charge on this manner: <sup>5</sup> That they should be true each of them to other; and that they should love truly together; and that they should serve their lord truly for their pay, so that he might have worship for sending them to him. <sup>6</sup> And other mo charges he gave them; and this was the first time that ever any Mason had any charge of his Craft.

*Chapter Eight. Euclid*

<sup>1</sup> Moreover, when Abraham and Sara his wife went into Egypt, and there he taught the seven sciences to the Egyptians; <sup>2</sup> And he had a worthy scholar that hight Euclid, and he learned right well, and was master of all the seven sciences. <sup>3</sup> And in his days it befell that the lords and states of the realm had so many sons that they had gotten, some by their wives and some by other ladies of the realm, for that land is a hot land and plenteous of generation, that they had no competent livelihood to find their children, wherefore they made much care. <sup>4</sup> And when the King

of the land made a great council and a parliament, to wit how they might find their children, and they could find no good way.<sup>3</sup> And then they did cry throughout the realm, if there were any man that could inform them, that he should come unto them, and he should be well rewarded for his travel, that he should hold himself well pleased.

#### *Chapter Nine. Euclid teaches Geometry in Egypt*

<sup>1</sup> After this cry was made, then came this worthy clerk Euclid, and said to the King and all his great Lords: <sup>2</sup> 'If ye will, take me your children to govern, and to teach them the seven sciences, wherewith they may live honestly as gentlemen should; <sup>3</sup> Under condition that ye will grant me a commission, that I may have power to rule them as the science ought to be ruled.' <sup>4</sup> Which the King and his council granted him anon, and sealed the commission. <sup>5</sup> And then this worthy doctor took to him these lords' sons, and taught them the science of Geometry in practice, for to work in stones all manner of worthy works that belonged to building of temples and churches, castles, manors, towers, and all other manner of buildings.

#### *Chapter Ten. Euclid's Charge*

<sup>1</sup> And he gave them a charge on this manner. <sup>2</sup> The first was that they should be true to the King and to the lord that they served. <sup>3</sup> And that they should love well together, and be true each one to other. <sup>4</sup> And that they should call each other his Fellow or else his Brother, and not servant nor his knave, nor none other foul name. <sup>5</sup> And that they should truly deserve for their pay of the lord or Master that they serve. <sup>6</sup> And that they should ordain the wisest of them to be Master of the Work, and neither for love nor great lineage nor riches nor favour, to set another that hath little cunning to be Master of the lord's Work, whereby the lord should be evil served and they ashamed. <sup>7</sup> And also that they should call all the governor of the work 'Master' in the time that they work with him. <sup>8</sup> And other many more charges that are too long to tell. <sup>9</sup> And to all these charges he made them swear the great oath that men used at that time. And ordained for them reasonable pay that they might live honestly by. <sup>10</sup> And also that they should come and assemble together every year once, how they might work best to serve their lord for his profit and their own worship. And to correct within themselves if they had trespassed. <sup>11</sup> And thus was the Craft grounded there. And that worthy clerk gave it the name of Geometry; and now it is called in this land Masonry.

36 *Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge*

#### *Chapter Eleven. David*

<sup>1</sup> Sithen long after, when the Children of Israel were come into the Land of Behest, that is now called amongst us the Country of Jerusalem, King David began the temple that is called *Templum Domini*, and is named with us the Temple of Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> And the same King David loved well Masons, and cherished them much, and gave them good pay. <sup>3</sup> And he gave them the charges and manners as he had it out of Egypt, given by Euclid, and other charges more that ye shall hear afterwards.

#### *Chapter Twelve. Salomon*

<sup>1</sup> And after the decease of King David, Salomon, that was son unto David, performed out the temple that his father had begun. <sup>2</sup> And he sent after Masons of divers lands, and gathered them together, so that he had fourscore thousand workers of stone, and were all named Masons. And he had three thousand of them that were ordained to be Masters and Governors of his Work.

<sup>4</sup> And there was a King of another region that men called Hiram, and he loved well King Salomon, and gave him timber to his work. <sup>5</sup> And he had a son that hight Aynon, and he was master of Geometry, <sup>6</sup> And was chief Master of all his Masons, and master of all his graving and carving, and of all other manner of Masonry that belonged to the temple. <sup>7</sup> And this witnesseth the Bible, *in Libro Regum tertio, capitulo quinto*. And this same Salomon confirmed both charges and manners that his father had given to Masons. <sup>8</sup> And thus was that worthy Craft of Masonry confirmed in the country of Jerusalem and in many other kingdoms.

#### *Chapter Thirteen. Charles of France*

<sup>1</sup> Curious craftsmen walked about full wide into divers countries, some because of learning more craft, and some to teach their craft. <sup>2</sup> And so it befell that there was a curious Mason that hight Naymus Grecus, that had been at the making of Salomon's temple. <sup>3</sup> And he came into France, and there he taught the science of Masonry to men of France. <sup>4</sup> And there was one of the royal line of France that hight Charles Martell. <sup>5</sup> And he was a man that loved well such a craft, and drew to this Naymus Grecus abovesaid, and learned of him the Craft, and took upon him the charges and manners. <sup>6</sup> And afterwards, by the grace of God, he was elect to be King of France. <sup>7</sup> And when he was in his estate he took many Masons, and did help to make men Masons that were none, and set them on work, and gave them both charges and manners, and good pay, as he had learned of other Masons; <sup>8</sup> and confirmed them a charter from year to year, to hold their assembly, and cherished them much. And thus came the Craft into France.

#### *Chapter Fourteen. Saint Alban*

<sup>1</sup> England in all this season stood void of any charge of Masonry, until the time of Saint Alban. <sup>2</sup> And in his days, the King of England that was a paynim, did wall the town about that is now called Saint Albans. <sup>3</sup> And Saint Alban was a worthy knight, and was chief steward with the king, and had the governance of the realm, and also of the making of the town walls; <sup>4</sup> And he loved well Masons and cherished them much. And he made their pay right good, standing as the realm did then; <sup>5</sup> For he gave them two shillings sixpence a week, and threepence to their uncheons. <sup>6</sup> And before that time throughout all the land a Mason took but a penny a day and his meat, until Saint Alban amended it. <sup>7</sup> And

ave them a charter of the king and his council for to hold a general council, and gave it the name of assembly, And thereafter he was himself, and helped to make Masons, and gave them charges, as you shall hear afterwards.

#### *Chapter Fifteen. Athelstan and Edwin*

<sup>1</sup> Right soon after the decease of Saint Alban there came great wars into England of divers nations, so that the good rule of Masonry was destroyed until the time of King Athelstan, that was a worthy King in England, and brought the land into good rest and peace, and builded many great works of abbeys and castles and divers other buildings. <sup>2</sup> And he loved well Masons, and he had a son that hight Edwin, and he loved Masons much more than his father did. <sup>3</sup> And he was a great practiser in Geometry, wherefore he drew him much to commune and talk with Masons, and to learn of them the Craft. <sup>4</sup> And afterward,

#### *The Old Charges*

137

for love that he had to Masons and to the Craft, he was made a Mason. <sup>5</sup> And he got of the King his father a charter and a commission, to hold every year once an assembly where they would within the realm, and to correct within themselves faults and trespasses that were done within the Craft. <sup>6</sup> And he held himself an assembly at York; and there he made Masons, and gave them charges, and taught them the manners, and commanded that rule to be holden ever after, and gave them the charter and commission to keep, and made an ordinance that it should be renewed from King to King.

#### *Chapter Sixteen. The Assembly at York*

<sup>1</sup> And when this assembly was gathered together, he made a cry, that all old Masons and young that had any writing or understanding of the charges that were made before in this land or in any other, that they should shew them forth. <sup>2</sup> And when it was proved, there were found some in French, some in Greek, some in English, and some in other languages, and the intent of them was found all one. <sup>3</sup> And he made a book whereof, how the Craft was founded; and commanded that it should be read or told when any Mason should be made, and so to give him his charge. <sup>4</sup> And from that day until this time Masonry hath been kept in that form, as well as men might govern it. <sup>5</sup> And furthermore at divers assemblies have been put and ordained certain charges more by the best advice of Masters and Fellows.

#### *Chapter Seventeen. The Manner of Taking the Oath*

*une unus ex senioribus teneat librum, ut ille vel illiponant manus super librum, et tunc praecepta debent legi.*

#### *Chapter Eighteen. The Admonition before the Charge*

<sup>1</sup> Every man that is a Mason take right good heed to these charges, <sup>2</sup> If thajt you find yourselves guilty in any of these, that you may mend you against God. <sup>3</sup> And especially ye that are to be charged, take good heed that ye may keep these charges, <sup>4</sup> For it is a great peril for a man to foreswear himself upon a Book.

#### *Chapter Nineteen. The Charges General*

<sup>1</sup> The first charge is that ye shall be true men to God and the Holy Church; and that ye use no error nor heresy, by your understanding or by discreet or wise men's teaching.

<sup>2</sup> And also that ye shall be true liege men to the King without treason or falsehood; and that ye know no treason or treachery, but that ye mend it if ye may, or else warn the King or his council thereof.

<sup>3</sup> And also ye shall be true each one to another; that is to say, to every Master and Fellow of the Craft of Masonry that be Masons allowed, ye shall do to them as ye would they should do to you.

<sup>4</sup> And also that every Mason keep true counsel of lodge and of chamber, and all other counsel that ought to be kept by the way of Masonry.

<sup>5</sup> And also that no Mason shall be a thief or theif's fere, as far forth as he may know.

<sup>6</sup> And also that ye shall be true to the lord and master that ye serve, and truly to see to his profit and advantage.

<sup>7</sup> And also you shall call Masons your Fellows or Brethren, and no other foul name; nor you shall not take your Fellow's wife in villainy, nor desire ungodly his daughter nor his servant.

<sup>8</sup> And also that ye pay truly for your meat and drink where you go to board.

<sup>9</sup> And also ye shall do no villainy in that house whereby the Craft may be slandered.

#### *Chapter Twenty. The Charges Singular*

<sup>1</sup> These be the charges in general that every Mason should hold, both Masters and Fellows. Rehearse I will now other charges singular for Masters and Fellows.

<sup>2</sup> First, that no Master shall take upon him no lord's work, nor no other man's work, but that he know himself able and cunning to perform the same, so that the Craft have no slander nor disworship, but that the lord may be well and truly served.

<sup>3</sup> And also that no Master take no work but that he take it reasonably, so that the lord may be well and truly served with his own good, and the Master to live honestly and pay his fellows truly their pay, as the manner of the Craft asketh.

<sup>4</sup> And also that no Master nor Fellow shall supplant other of their work; that is to say, if he have taken a work, or else a Master of a lord's work, he shall not put him out, except he be unable of cunning to end the work.

<sup>5</sup> And also that no Master or Fellow take no apprentice to be allowed his apprentice, but for seven years; and that the apprentice be able of birth and limbs, as he ought to be.

<sup>6</sup> And also that no Master nor Fellow take no allowance to be made Mason, without the consent of his Fellows, at the least five or six; and that he that shall be made Mason be able on all sides, that is to say, that he be freeborn and of good kindred, and no bondman, and that he have his right limbs, as a man ought to have.

<sup>7</sup> And also that no Master nor Fellow take no lord's work to task that was wont to go to journey.

<sup>8</sup> And also that every Master shall give pay to his Fellow but as he may deserve, so that he be not deceived by false workmen.

<sup>9</sup> And also that no Fellow slander another behind his back, to make him lose his good name or his worldly goods.

<sup>10</sup> And also that no Fellow, within the lodge or without, misanswer another ungodly without reasonable cause.

<sup>11</sup> Also that every Mason shall reverence his elder, and put him to worship.

<sup>12</sup> And also that no Mason shall play at hazard or at dice, nor no other unlawful games, whereby the Craft may be slandered.

<sup>13</sup> And also that no Mason shall be no ribald in lechery, to make the Craft to be slandered.

<sup>14</sup> And that no Fellow go into the town in the night time there as is a lodge of Fellows, without a Fellow with him, that may bear him witness that he was in honest places.

<sup>15</sup> And also that every Master and Fellow shall come to the assembly if it be within fifty miles about him, if he have any warning, to stand there at the reward of Masters and Fellows.

<sup>16</sup> And also that every Master and Fellow if they have trespassed shall stand at the reward of Masters and Fellows, to make them accord if they may; and if they may not accord them, to go to the common law.

<sup>17</sup> And also that no Master nor Fellow make no mould nor square nor rule to no layer.

<sup>18</sup> And also that no Master nor Fellow set no layer, within the lodge nor without, to hew mould stones with no mould of his own making.

<sup>19</sup> And also that every Mason shall receive and cherish strange Fellows when they come over the country, and set them to work, as the manner is; that is to say, if they have mould stones in place, he shall set him a fortnight at the least on work, and give him his pay; and if he have no stones for him, he shall refresh him with money to the next lodge.

<sup>20</sup> And also that every Mason shall truly serve the lord for his pay; and truly make an end of your work, be it task or journey, if you may have your pay according as you ought to have.

#### *Chapter Twenty-One. The Oath*

These charges that we have rehearsed, and all other that belong to Masonry, ye shall keep, so help you God and Halidom, and by this Book to your power. Amen.

#### APPENDIX 2. A LIST OF THE OLD CHARGES BY FAMILY AND BRANCH

The texts are listed below according to their conventional classification, which is in general terms correct. It has not been revised since 1947, when the Devonshire Branch (D.e.) was formed by the union of two closely related branches. Versions discovered since that date have been inserted in the same family or branch as their closest relatives. Still, it is clear that certain small adjustments will have to be made, particularly by dividing the Dowland and Dumfries branches (**D.b**, **D.h**), both of which as they are now constituted include widely divergent texts.

Dates are included for the sake of convenience. They are the conventional ones, except in a few instances in which fresh evidence has been uncovered. In those cases a correction has been entered without comment.

Poole's revision of *Gould's History of Freemasonry*, in volume 1 (London, 1951), on pages 48—76, provides brief descriptions of all the versions of the Old Charges known up to that date, together with references to published facsimiles and transcriptions.

Pages of Family and Branches.







