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## The Ancient Charges of Free and Accepted Masons

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The Ancient Charges, also called the Old Charges, (I'll be using both these terms interchangeably in this presentation), are a set of rules, duties, and moral obligations ascribed to the early operative stone masons of England. Any one wishing to work in the trade and join a local Lodge of this guild had to swear to and abide by these rules. Over the centuries, as the society changed and the importance of these workers in stone declined, others joined their local groups, not to work the stone, but to take advantage of their advanced learning, their freedom to assemble, and to explore the seven Liberal Arts and Sciences. Eventually the operative masons were completely replaced by men who never touched stone, these of course, we now refer to as speculative Masons. In order to join the Lodges, as the local groups of stone workers were called, they too had to swear to the same set of rules, or charges, as the operative masons. Partly for tradition's sake, and also because of their moral value, we still have these ancient charges as an integral part of our modern Masonic organization. To quote Mr. W. J. Hughan, from his 1895 book "The old Charges of British Freemasons", *"Ultimately, the Old Charges from beginning to end became obsolete, and were only preserved as objects of curiosity, copied to exhibit the ancient customs, and accepted simply as containing Regulations of the Brotherhood, when mainly, if not exclusively, operative. So long as the Fraternity lasts they should be revered, studied and followed in spirit as far as possible."*

If you look at our current Constitutions, May 2017, version 1.8, as posted on our Grand Lodge web site, you will actually find two versions of the Ancient Charges, the first, starting on page 8, are written out in full, and the second version, starting at page 14, is a 15 point summary of the same Charges. What are they and where do they come from?

We'll start with some history. Whence come you, my Brother? Well, the short answer is "We really don't have a clear answer", so let's go with a longer answer and dig into the murky details a bit. I have included a handout showing an historical timeline

comparing some Masonic, British, and world events. I found this very helpful in keeping myself organized as to how all this information relates. What we know of the “Ancient Charges” has come to us through a number of old, to very old manuscripts, many of them actually in the form of scrolls. Starting from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century and through to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century there are over 70 such manuscripts which contain some form of these “charges”. Unfortunately, none of them is the origin or source for the charges, they all claim to be copied from, or refer to a previous document, the very original of which has not yet been discovered.

The earliest of these documents is the Regius Poem, also known as the Halliwell Manuscript, which is dated to around 1390. It is unique amongst all these the manuscripts of early Masonry in that it is written in verse as a poem rather than in normal prose as the others are. This may seem somewhat peculiar, but I believe that this points to the early period of the original from which it is copied. Here is a passage from R. F. Gould’s “History of Freemasonry Throughout the World”, Vol. 1, that might explain it.

*“It must be remembered that the first laws of all nations were composed in verse and sung (see Goguet, Origine des Lois, vol. I, p. 29). Palgrave, in his History of the Anglo-Saxons (1867, p. 128) tells us that Aldheim, Bishop of Sherborne, could find no mode of commanding the attention of his townsmen so efficacious as that of standing on the bridge and singing a ballad which he had composed.”*

The previously mentioned book “*The Old Charges of British Freemasons*” shows how these many documents have been organized into a series of “families” based on their similarities and differences, and what appears to be their source. If you look at the “Manuscript Families” side of the handout, you will see the general layout of this family structure, including their date. As you may notice, many of the dates are not exact, but rather an estimated range of when they appear to have been produced, based upon the style of the calligraphy and the form of the English used. I do not intend to spend time

detailing the family structures but I will highlight several of the manuscripts in more detail as part of this presentation. My intent in providing this chart is to give you some idea of the complexity of trying to trace the origins of our Ancient Charges and the volume of material that was already available in the late 1800's.

One of the things that I find interesting about these manuscripts is that the Charges do not exist in isolation, almost all of the documents have a standard three part format; they start with an invocation to God, typically in the form of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, NOT the Great Architect of the Universe, but more on that later; next comes a fanciful history of the Craft, usually starting with Lamech, Noah's father, and his offspring, then onto Euclid and even Hermes Trismegistus, and eventually on through to King Athelstan of England; the third part consists of the actual charges. These "histories", and I use the word in quotations, are obviously contrived and unrealistic. Here is a sample from the Haddon Manuscript, dated 1723 and numbered D32 in the Families.

*"How that this worthy science was first begun, I shall tell you: Before Noah's flood there was a man that was called Lamech, it is written in the bible, in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis, and this Lamech had two wives, and the one wife's name was Adah, and the other Zillah: By the first he had two sons, and the one was called Jabal, and the other Jubal; and by the other wife Zillah, he got a son and a daughter, and these four children founded the beginning of all the sciences in the world. And the elder son Jabal founded the science of Geometry, and he departed flocks of sheep, and land in the field, and first wrought houses of stone and timber, as it is noted in the chapter aforesaid. And his brother Jubal found the science of Music, as song, harp and organ: and the third brother Tubal-Cain found smith's craft of gold silver copper iron and steel, and the daughter found the craft or knowledge of weaving, and these children knew well that God would take vengeance for sin, either by fire or water, wherefore they wrote their sciences that they had found in two pillars of stone that they might be found out after Noah's flood.*

*And the one pillar of stone was marble, for that would not be burnt with fire. And the stones whereof the other pillar made was called Laterns, and that would not drown in any water.”*

*“Our intent is to tell you truly how and in what manner these stones were found, that these sciences were written in. The great Hermermes that was the son of Cub who was the son of Shem, who was the son of Noah. The same Hermermes was afterwards called Hermes the father of the wise men, he found out the two pillars of stone and found the sciences written there and he taught it to other men: And at the making of the tower of Babylon then was Masonry first made much of. And the king of Babylon who was called Nembroth was a Mason himself and loved the science as it is said with Masters of Stories, and when the City of Nineveh, and the other great cities of the east should be made, Nembroth the King of Babylon sent thither sixty Masons at the request of the King of Nineveh his cousin, and when he sent them he gave them a charge in this manner.”*

I have quoted from this 1723 Manuscript rather than an earlier manuscript because the English is much more readable. In the words of Henry Sadler, from his “Masonic Facts & Fictions”, in reference to one of these documents written in the court style, “*The question uppermost on my mind on first glancing at this precious relic, was In what language was it written? for the “court writing” seems to suggest the idea that a whole army of spiders, after carefully marching through an ink puddle, might have undergone a course of severe drilling in very close order at different periods on this long strip of parchment.*” Here is an example from the Buchanan document (D7) of the early 1600’s – the story line is the same, but the writing is harder to follow, and then there is the spelling ...

*“And at the makeing of the Tower of Babilon there masonrye was much made of: the King of Babilon that height Nemorth and Nemorth himself was a Mason: and loved well the Craft as is said with Masters of Histories and when the Citie of Neneve and other cities of the East Asia should bee made this Nemorth King of Babilon sent thither*

*60 masons at the desire of the Kinge of Neneve his cousin and when they went forth he gave them a charge in this manner ....”*

Going back several steps farther to the Cooke manuscript of the early 1400’s, here is the same part of the history, but the original is almost unreadable by us today because of the language and spelling.

*“And this same CamNemroth be gan [the] towre of babilon and he taught and he taught to his werkemwn [the] crafte of masuri and he had wit hym mony masonys mo than [40] thousand. And he louyd & chereshed them well And hit is wryten in policronicon and in the master of stories and in other stories mo.”*

And so our imagined history starts. From there it goes on to Abraham and Sarah, and then into Egypt to Euclid, who also gave us some more charges. It moves on to Kings David and Solomon and the building of the Temple at Jerusalem, where it says “... and the same King David loved well Masons, and cherished them much, and gave them good pay, and gave them the Charges and Manners as he had learned before given by Euclid, and other charges more that ye shall hear afterwards, ....” It also mentions King Hiram of Tyre and his son Aynon, who “... was a Master of Geometry, and was Chief Master of all the Masons, and master of all his graving, and carving and of all manner of Masonry that belonged to the Temple....”, an intriguing alternative to our current Hiram Abif story. It then mentions a man with the name Naymus Graecus, who was at the building of King Solomon’s Temple and also much later, came to France, became King, and introduced the science of Masonry and the Charges into that part of Europe. Later it gets to England “*England in all this season stood void as of any Charge of Masonry, until St. Alban’s time, ....*” And finally on to King Athelstan who “... loved well Masons, and he had a son called Edwin and he loved Masons much more than his father did, and he was a great practiser in Geometry ....”, which leads us to the York Legend.

The York Legend is essentially the story of the first Assembly and Charter of Masons in England, supposed to have taken place in the year 926, which you will see is the first entry on the Masonic timeline. The Dr. Plot manuscript of 1686 (C1), describes it this way:

*“... [the Charges were] brought into England by St. Amphibal, and first communicated to St. Alban, who set down the Charges of masonry, and was made paymaster and Governor of the Kings works, and gave them Charges and Manners as St. Amphibal had taught him. Which were after confirmed by King Athelstan, whose youngest son Edwyn loved well masonry, took upon him the charges and learned the manners, and obtained for them of his father a free-Charter. Whereupon he caused them to assemble at York, and to bring all the old Books of their craft, and out of them ordained such charges and manners, as they then thought fit: which charges in the said Schrole or Parchment volum, are in part declared: and thus was the craft of masonry grounded and confirmed in England.”*

A nice story, but there are problems; three of the manuscripts say that the location of the assembly was at Windsor, not at York, but most importantly, King Athelstan is not recorded as having married or having had any children, so who was Edwin? A few of the manuscripts refer to Edwin as the King's brother and a few others as his cousin.

That's the general form of how the Old Charges came into speculative Masonry as told by these various manuscripts. Even the Reverend James Anderson copied and “enhanced” this history in his *“The Constitutions of the Free-Masons”* of 1723 and its second edition of 1738. As well as the history he also combined, and in some cases rewrote, the Old Charges. Again, from the aforementioned *“Masonic Facts & Fictions”* we have *“... the first General Regulations which he states were compiled by Bro. George Payne in 1720 and approved by Grand Lodge on St. John Baptist's Day 1721, and which he, Anderson, within a few months, was ordered by the Grand Master, “peruse, correct*

*and digest into a new and better method,” the result being the Constitutions of 1723, ....”* There was considerable controversy over some of these changes, but they were accepted by the Premier Grand Lodge. Some of Anderson’s changes survived the union of the Moderns and the Ancients that formed the United Grand Lodge of England in 1813. For an excellent commentary on Anderson’s work, I recommend “*Anderson’s Constitutions of 1723*” by Lionel Vibert, as published in “*The Builder*” of August 1923.

Show of hands, in the usual Masonic manner, right hand upraised, who here has heard the Ancient Charges read out in your home lodge in the past 12 months? How about in the last 5 years? Let me quote from the Constitutions of the Grand Lodge of New Brunswick, section 101:

***Antient Charges*** – *The Master of every Lodge is to cause the antient charges to be read in open Lodge once every year.*

Now let me quote from the Obligation of the Entered Apprentice Degree that each of us has sworn to as part of the process of becoming a Master Mason.

*I further promise and swear that I will stand to and abide by the Laws and Constitutions of Freemasonry together with the particular regulations of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge within whose jurisdiction I may reside, so far as the same shall come to my knowledge.*

As most of you here are Past Masters, or current Masters of a Lodge, you should not be pleading ignorance of our Constitution. Why are we not all doing this as required by our Constitution? Are they too boring? Do we not understand them? Are they no longer relevant? My hope for this presentation has been to make them a bit more palatable by providing you with some of their history and relevance as it applies to our Craft and at this time to fulfill the requirements of section 101 of our Constitution.

Here are the Ancient Charges as written in the Constitutions and General Regulations of the Grand Lodge of the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons of New Brunswick, along with some commentary:

### **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 practice 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.

To my mind, rewriting this first charge is the most important change that came to Masonry, taking it from a strictly Christian fraternity to one that is non-denominational. Looking at the Haddon and Buchanan manuscripts as examples, we can read the original – from the Haddon: *“The first charge is that thou shall be true to God and Holy-Church, ...”* and from the Buchanan manuscript we have *“The charges are that you be true men to God and his holy church; ...”* to our current *“A Mason is oblig'd by his Tenure, to obey the moral law; ...”* No more mention of God or church. With that one change, we became the organization that we are today, accepting Brothers of every faith.

## **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 the nation, not to behave himself undutifully in inferior magistrates. He is cheerfully to conform to every lawful authority; to uphold on every occasion the interest of the community and zealously to 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.

This may well be the key Charge that kept Freemasonry from being abolished by the British parliament in 1799 when a law, the Unlawful Societies Act, was passed. Part of it's intent was to outlaw and abolish all organizations and societies which required their members to swear an oath of secrecy and that held private meeting. Through the efforts of lobbying and probably the emphasizing of this regulation, Freemasonry was granted an exemption from the law. That and the fact that many of the parliamentarians were Masons may also helped.

## **III. Of Lodges**

A Lodge is a place where Freemasons assemble to work and to instruct and improve themselves in the mysteries of their antient science. In an extended sense it applies to persons as well as to place; hence every regular assembly, or duly organized 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 mature and discreet age and sound judgment; no bondsmen, no women, no immoral or scandalous men, but of good report.

The term Lodge originally referred to the on-site building that held the stone masons' tools and in which they would meet and discuss their business. Also of note here is that masons could be fined or otherwise penalized for not attending meetings. The Cooke manuscript seems a bit extreme on this point of attending the assemblies and proper behaviour. The second Charge says "*That every master of this art be warned, before, to come to his congregation that they come duly, but if they may [be] excused by some manner [of] cause. But, nevertheless, if they be found rebel[lious] at such congregations, or faulty in any manner [of] harm of their lords, and reproof of this art, they should not be excused in no manner [with]out taking peril of death, ....*" Many of the manuscripts even gave a distance within which this mandatory attendance would apply. Remember the time frame of these documents as some of them proclaimed a 50 mile limit, this would have entailed a serious bit of travelling in the 16 and 1700's.

In my readings I have come across an interesting take on why the "born a free man" stipulation. It has to do with Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac. Ishmael was Abraham's first born son and should have gotten the family inheritance, however, he was the son of Hagar, a bondswoman of the household and not Abraham's wife. When Sarah, his true wife, bore Isaac a year later, she insisted that that Isaac get the inheritance as he was not born in bondage as Ishmael, but as a free man and thus entitled to that right. I

believe that it likely has more to do with the fact that a bondsman is already obligated to a master and would be obliged to tell him the secrets of Masonry if so ordered.

#### **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, until he has been a fellow-craft before his election, who is also to be nobly born, or a gentleman of the best fashion, or some eminent scholar, or some curious architect, or other artist descended of honest parents, and who is of singularly great merit in the opinion of the Lodges. 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 Master-mason until he had been elected into the chair of a Lodge.*

The first part of this section puts in doubt the standard practice of progressing a Mason through the Chairs simply based on what Office he had last year as is commonly done in most Lodges.

Remembering that the Old Charges were all written for operative masons, it is understandable that they placed great emphasis on the initiate being a “perfect youth”, as the Haddon manuscript puts it “... *that the Apprentice be able of birth (that is to say) free born and of Limbs whole as a man ought to be.*” Our charges are written with a speculative mason in mind and avoid the “*having no maim or defect in his body*” issue by adding “*that may render him incapable of learning the art*”. So we take his mental abilities to be more important than his physical limitations. We are not the only jurisdiction to have revised this ancient charge, here is an example from the Grand Lodge of Illinois. Because of the injured soldiers returning from the First World War, in 1918 Austin H. Scrogin, the Grand Master of Illinois at that time, “*argued that the old standard “the perfect youth” theory was a relic that should be abandoned because so many of the soldiers serving were suffering serious wounds that in and of themselves should not disqualify a man from becoming a Freemason. Changes to the Illinois code were later changed dropping these limitations.*” This is from an article in the on-line forum *Midnight Freemason*, by WB Gregory J. Knott, posted November 9, 2018.

Also, to explain the last note a bit, originally, there was no 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree, only Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts, the title Master Mason was reserved for a man who was sitting, or had sat, in the East. In Hamill’s “*The Craft*” he says “*The third degree is believed to have been a late development originating in the 1720’s.*” and “*The `making’ and second degree were often conferred on the same evening, but the third degree took some time to gain acceptance. In many of the issues of the engraved List of Lodges in the*

*late 1730's and 1740's there are lodges referred to as 'Master's Lodges' and it is believed that their function was purely the conferring of the Master Mason degree"*

#### **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 who work under him. The craftsmen are to avoid all ill language, and to call each other by no disobliging name, but brother or fellow; and to behave themselves courteously within and without the Lodge. The Master, knowing himself to be able of cunning, shall undertake the lord's work as reasonably as possible, and truly dispend his goods as if they were his own; nor to give more wages to any brother or apprentice than he may really 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 of 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 judgment and for increasing and continuing of brotherly love.

All the tools used in working shall be approved by the Grand Lodge.

No labourer shall be employed in the proper work of masonry; nor shall freemasons work with those that are not free, without an urgent necessity; nor shall they teach labourers and unaccepted masons, as they shall teach a brother or fellow.

We must be aware of the changes in the usage of words as the English language has evolved over the centuries. For example, the term “able of cunning” now has a somewhat negative and deceptive connotation, but when it was written it simply meant “having sufficient intelligence”, or as we might now say, “having the smarts needed”.

The section that starts with “*A younger brother shall be instructed in working to prevent spoiling the materials ...*” could well be the most important charge that we are not paying adequate attention to and thus probably a prime contributor to our retention problem. Think “mentored” instead of “instructed in work” and the material in danger of being spoiled is the candidate himself.

The Harris Manuscript No. 1 (D26) of the late 1600’s and the Dumfries No. 3 (D25) of the same time period have an interesting reference to a term that we use completely differently today. In Hughan’s “*The Old Charges*” we find “*The eleventh regulation in the two MSS, has the singular reference to a “Lewis” as being nearly allied to Cowan, (an equivalent to the term “Loss” or “Layer”,) not as understood by the Craft in later years.*”

*“You shall not make any Mold, Square or Rule for any that is but a Lewis. A Lewis is such an one as hath served an Apprentiship to a Mason, but is not admitted afterwards according to this manner and Custom of making Masons.”*

## **VI. Of Behaviour, Viz**

### *1.—In the Lodge while Constituted*

You are not to hold private committees, of separate conversation, without leave from the Master, nor talk of anything impertinently or unseemly, nor interrupt the Master or Wardens, or any brother speaking to the Master; not 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 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 purpose. 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 mention; we are also of all nations, tongues, kindreds and languages, and are resolved against all politics, as was never yet conducted to the welfare of the Lodge, nor ever will.

Some of the ancient charges also forbid the playing of cards and other forms of gambling as well as our current restrictions on discussing religion and politics

*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 should be cautious in your words and carriage, that the most penetrating stranger shall not be able to discover or find out what is not proper to be intimated; and sometimes you shall divert a discourse, and manage it prudently for the honour of the worshipful fraternity.

*5.—Behaviour at Home and in Your Neighbourhood*

You are to act as becomes a moral and wise man; particularly not to let your family, friends or neighbours know the concerns of the Lodge, etc; 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 the Lodge hours are past; and by avoiding of gluttony and 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 people in the same circumstances.

The Ancient Charges, as recorded in these 70 some manuscripts, number anywhere from as many as 35 to as few as 9 items or articles, some listing each point separately, and some combining multiple articles under a single heading, as the Grand Lodge of New Brunswick has done to come up with our 11 sections. In some cases an article has been completely dropped from our list, for example, “4 - *And also that no Mason shall be a thief, nor thievishly given for as forth as he may witt or know.*” and “8 - *And also that you pay truly for your Meat and Drink, where you go to board.*” from the Haddon manuscript. Others have been written into our ritual rather than listed separately here, think of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree Obligation when you hear this one from the Cooke manuscript; “*The 7<sup>th</sup> Point – that he covet not the wife, not the daughter, of his masters, neither of his fellows, but if it be in marriage, nor hold concubines, for discord that might fall amongst them.*”

And now to finish the Ancient Charges section of our NB Constitutions and Regulations.

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 capstone; the cement and glory of this antient fraternity; avoiding all wrangling and quarrelling, all slander and backstabbing, nor permitting others to slander any honest brother, but defending his character and doing him all good offices, as far as is consistent with your honour and safety, and no farther. And if

any of them do you injury, you must apply to your own or his Lodge; and from thence you may appeal to the Grand Lodge, at the annual 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 the Masters and fellow, 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 to the end of time.

Amen, so mote it be

And I too am coming to an end with this presentation, but I want to leave you with a few questions for your contemplation and possible discussion:

1. Having heard the “history” concerning the sciences being preserved on two pillars by Lamech’s children, does this suggest a reason for King Solomon having erected two nonstructural pillars in the porch of his temple?
2. Why was it deemed necessary to have such a fanciful “history”?
3. The original charges were written at a time of strict feudal and top-down government, how is it that these charges are so egalitarian?

4. With respect to Article No. 2, the “no treason and obey the laws” clause, how do we justify touting the leaders of the American and French Revolutions as great Freemasons?

Thank you for bearing with me through this presentation.

Bro. Hans Erdmann  
Templum Phoenix #57  
November, 2018

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