

## Charge!

*The Antient Charges, the Old Charges and the Spirit of Brotherly Love: an entertainment for a Lodge meeting written by Bro. Dr David West.*

This entertainment was first performed by Bro. David West as Voice 1 and Bro. Ken Cownden as Voice 2, both of St Laurence Lodge, No. 5511. It was written to be performed at the Essex Masters Lodge No. 3256, although it had 'dress rehearsals' at The Chapter of Remembrance No. 7674 and at the Old Masonians Middlesex Lodge, No. 7568. It was subsequently performed at several lodges in Essex, Surrey and Middlesex.

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Voice 1 Brethren, our topic this afternoon is the Charges in Craft Freemasonry. We hope that you will agree with us that it is a fascinating subject, full of moral contemplation. In fact, one might well argue that the Charges are the centrepiece of Freemasonry, the moral content of our Masonic lives.

Voice 2 The word '*charge*' has many meanings. In today's mercenary world, we are used to being charged for just about everything. This is not the Masonic meaning, although most Lodges remind candidates for initiation to bring their cheque books with them!

Voice 1 We can charge a firearm or a glass.

Voice 2 Brother Wardens, how do you report your respective columns?

Lodge SW Fully charged in the West, WM!

Lodge JW Fully charged in the South, WM!

Voice 1 In this sense, the word means to fill or to load. We are all familiar with the charge of the light brigade, the most famous example of the meaning '*to attack impetuously.*'

Voice 2 I trust that no one here has been charged by the Old Bill lately? No? Good!

Voice 1 This is another meaning - '*to accuse.*' In Masonry to charge someone is '*to lay a command or injunction upon them, to exhort authoritatively.*'

Voice 2 How many charges do you think there are, Brethren, in Craft Freemasonry? Would someone like to hazard a guess? (*Get the audience to guess*)

Well, there are six obvious ones. Come on, you must remember. In the first degree, we have the charge beginning "*It is customary at the erection of all stately edifices to lay the first, or foundation, stone, at the NE corner of the intended building.*" Can anyone remember how the next sentence goes?

(*Get a Brother to quote the sentence that runs - "you being newly admitted into Freemasonry, are placed in the NE part of the Lodge, figuratively to represent that stone."*)

Well done! We are familiar with that charge but how about the charge after initiation, the one that begins "*Now that you have passed through the ceremony of your initiation ...*" Can anyone give us the next few lines?

*(Get a Brother to quote the sentence that runs - "I congratulate you on being admitted a member of our Ancient and Honourable Institution.")*

Well done again! We seem to be familiar with the first degree but can anyone remember how the charge in the second degree starts?

*(Get a Brother to quote the sentence that runs - "Masonry being a progressive science, when you were made an EAF you were placed in the NE part of the Lodge to show that you were newly admitted.")*

And how about the Charge after passing? Can anyone remember the start of that?

*(Get a Brother to quote the sentence that runs - "Brother, now that you have advanced to your second degree, we congratulate you on your elevation.")*

A bit tougher on the memory, isn't it? We do not see it done very often. OK, there are two more to go. What about the charge in the third degree? Can anyone tell us how that starts?

*(Get a Brother to quote the sentence that runs - "I will now beg you to observe that the light of a MM is but darkness visible.")*

And now a really tough one - what about the charge after raising?

*(Get a Brother to quote the sentence that runs "Brother ... your zeal for the Institution of Freemasonry, the progress you have made in the Art and your conformity to the general regulations have pointed you out as a proper object of our favour and esteem.")*

Voice 2 Well done Brethren!

Voice 1 So far we have six charges. A lot of moral exhortation! Actually, remembering the meaning of the word 'charge' as 'exhortation', we could argue that there are more than six. There is an exhortation in the third degree beginning ...

Voice 2 "Now that you have taken the SO of a MM, you are entitled to demand that last and greatest trial ..."

Voice 1 ... which reviews the moral instructions and charges previously laid on the Brother being raised. If we also remember the meaning of the word 'charge' as 'to lay a command or injunction upon', you might argue that the three addresses following the installation of a new Master, could also be included in our list. They charge the Master, the Wardens and the Brethren with specific duties.

Voice 2 So there are at least 10 Charges, exhortations to moral conduct, within Craft Masonry - a 'peculiar system of morality' after all. No wonder we are so good! I am reminded of a tale that our good friend and brother Leslie Berry once told us at the festive board. W. Bro. Leslie was for some time a policeman and he claims he once arrested a villain who, guessing that Leslie was on the square, tried to curry favour by asking if he could 'retire to restore his personal comforts', to which Leslie replied, 'By all means, and on your return, I shall direct your attention to an ancient Charge!' The old jokes are the best jokes, Brethren!

Voice 1 We refer to these charges as 'Antient'. Not all of them are very ancient, it turns out. However, the charge after initiation does go back a long way. The late W. Bro. Harry Carr, one of our most eminent Masonic historians, quotes a beautiful version of this charge from Smith's *Pocket Companion* published in 1735. It runs:

*"You are now admitted by the unanimous consent of our Lodge, a Fellow of our most Antient and Honourable Society:"*

Voice 2 Let's read this charge together. Earlier, we handed out some blue cards, numbered 1 through 6. The idea is that our Master reads the first part of the charge from card numbered 1 and the other Brethren with blue cards, follow, reading, in turn, card number 2, number 3 and so on until card number 6 which is the last one. Worshipful Master, will you start us off please.

WM Antient, as having subsisted from times immemorial, and honourable, as tending in every particular to render a man so, that will be but conformable to its glorious precepts. The greatest Monarchs in all ages, as well of Asia and Africa as of Europe, have been encouragers of the royal art and many of them have presided as Grand Masters over the Masons in their respective territories, not thinking it any lessening to their imperial dignities to level themselves with their Brethren in Masonry, and to act as they did.

Volunteer 2 The World's Great Architect is our supreme master, and the unerring rule he has given us is that by which we work. Religious disputes are never suffered in the Lodge; for as Masons, we only pursue the universal religion of the religion of nature. This is the cement which unites men of the most different principles in one sacred band, and brings together those who were the most distant from one another.

Volunteer 3 There are three general heads of duty which Masons ought always to inculcate, viz., to God, our neighbours and ourselves.

*(Voice 2 interrupts here and says - 'To order Brethren')*

To God, in never mentioning his name but with that reverential awe which becomes a creature to bear to his creator, and to look upon him always as the *sumum bonum* which we came into the world to enjoy; and according to that view to regulate our pursuits.

*(Voice 2 interrupts here and says - 'Be seated Brethren')*

Volunteer 4 To our neighbours, in acting upon the square, or doing as we would be done by. To ourselves, in avoiding all intemperances and excesses whereby we may be rendered incapable of following our work, or led into behaviour unbecoming our laudable profession, and in always keeping within due bounds and free from all pollution. In the state, a Mason is to behave as a peaceable and dutiful subject, conforming cheerfully to the government under which he lives. He is to pay a due deference to his superiors, and from his inferiors, he is rather to receive honour with some reluctance, than to extort it. He is to be a man of benevolence and charity, not sitting down contented while his fellow creatures, but much more his Brethren, are in want, when it is in his power (without prejudicing himself or family) to relieve them.

- Volunteer 5 In the Lodge, he is to behave with all due decorum, lest the beauty and harmony thereof should be disturbed and broke. He is to be obedient to the Master and presiding officers, and to apply himself closely to the business of Masonry, that he may sooner become a proficient therein, both for his own credit and for that of the Lodge. He is not to neglect his own necessary avocations for the sake of Masonry, nor to involve himself in quarrels with those who through ignorance may speak evil of, or ridicule, it.
- Volunteer 6 He is to be a lover of the arts and sciences, and to take all opportunities of improving himself therein. If he recommends a friend to be made a Mason, he must vouch him to be such as he really believes will conform to the aforesaid duties, lest by his misconduct at any time, the Lodge should pass under some evil imputations. Nothing can prove more shocking to all faithful Masons, than to see any of the Brethren profane or break through the sacred rules of their order, and such as can do it, they wish had never been admitted.
- Voice 2 Thankyou Brethren. That was beautifully done.
- Voice 1 That charge is 265 years old but most of it is familiar to us today. However, this charge does not appear, and nor does anything like it, in any of the exposures of the period, despite the publication in Smith's *Pocket Companion*. It is not in *Masonry Dissected*, not in *Three Distinct Knocks*. It is not in *Jachin and Boaz*, neither is it in *Shibboleth*. This charge - so important to us today that the Taylor's rubric states that '*This charge must be given,*' and Emulation simply assumes that it is given - this charge, as I say, does not appear and may not have formed part of the 18th century ritual.
- Voice 2 None of the other charges appear either. There is no charge, in any of the exposures - in or after - the first degree, the second degree or the third degree.
- Voice 1 In fact, the first time that we come across any one of them, in the ritual, is in William Preston's *Illustrations of Masonry*, first published in 1772. Even in this master work, truly a classic of Masonic writing, we find not a full charge after initiation, but only a description of its contents. In passing, we might note that in what Preston writes, we find echoes of what might be considered an eleventh charge in Craft Freemasonry, the *Long Closing*.
- Voice 2 (*Pause and look around.*) Some Brethren have not heard of the *Long Closing*? I am not surprised. As I understand it, it is not common outside Taylor's working and is not mentioned in the Emulation ritual book. With the Worshipful Master's permission, I shall give it at the end of the meeting.
- Voice 1 Even in Preston's formative work, we find a description only of the first degree charge. Even in his writings, there is nothing that indicates a second or third degree charge. These charges must be 19th century accretions to the body of the ritual. They are not very Antient Charges at all.
- Voice 2 Can we tell where they came from?
- Voice 1 I think we can. We have said that there is nothing in the 18th century exposures that resembles the charges as we have them today. However, there is something that is really ancient. The exposure *Shibboleth* which appears in 1762 has a 22 page introduction, some of which one has to say, is rather good. In part of this introduction, the author writes:

Voice 2 *“In order to display at large the principles of the ancient and modern masons, it will be necessary to recite some of the most important charges: we shall therefore begin with the former.”*

Voice 1 Now the Masonic historians amongst us might anticipate that the author is about to rehearse the points of difference between the Premier Grand Lodge, often known as the Moderns and the Grand Lodge of the Antients. However, this is not what the author of *Shibboleth* means. He is talking about the charges he says existed in olden times, one of which - mainly relevant to operative Masons I am sure - runs:

Voice 2 *“That no Mason shall be a common Gamester, to the disgrace of his Craft, or a Sycophant, Parasite or Pimp.”*

Voice 1 The author goes on to say that in the reign of King Edward III, these charges were revised. The first of the revised charges reads, he says:

Voice 2 *“That hereafter, at the admission of a brother, the constitutions, charges and monitions should be read by the master or warden.”*

Voice 1 So what were these charges that had to be read? We find no trace of the charges as we know them. So they must be something else. What the author is referring to are what today we know as the Old Charges. These Old Charges are different from the Ancient charges we have talked about so far and a memory of them survives in the charges read by the Secretary during the installation of the Master.

Voice 2 That makes twelve sets of charges in Craft Freemasonry, so far?

Voice 1 Indeed so. You will recall that during the ceremony, the Installing Master instructs the Master-elect to face the Secretary's table, as the Secretary reads from the Book of Constitutions.

Voice 2 Perhaps Brother Secretary would be kind enough to read the first two charges to remind us. (*Warn the Secretary beforehand! Secretary reads the first two charges.*) Thankyou Brother. These are indeed charges, but not at all like the charges in the ritual elsewhere. Perhaps the fact that the Secretary reads them while the other charges are spoken from memory should give us a clue. They are not exhortations to moral virtue so much as the rules of the fraternity. We learn the moral rules by heart but we rely upon the written word for the rules of the constitution.

Voice 1 The derivation of the charges read by the Secretary is deep in medieval history. The Old Charges or Ancient Constitutions, as they are often known, are the oldest element in Masonry and the strongest link that we have to our operative Brethren. In his 1986 Prestonian Lecture, Bro. Wallace McLeod, the most eminent of students of the Old Charges, says that *“texts of 113 copies of the Old Charges have come down to us, and there are references to fourteen more that are now lost.”* He tells us that 55 date from 1700; four were written about 1600; one is dated Christmas Day 1583, one is about 1400 or 1410 - and the oldest is the *Regius Poem* of 1390. Almost all the copies of these charges are handwritten, so giving rise to the name by which they are more academically known, *‘The Manuscript Constitutions.’*

- Voice 2           What were they used for?
- Voice 1           In the earlier days of speculative Masonry, copies seem to have been made specifically for initiates and perhaps given to them afterwards. One copy, known as the Sloane Manuscript, was written on 16 October 1646 at Warrington in Lancashire, expressly for the initiation of Elias Ashmole, after whom the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford is named. Ashmole records his initiation in his diary. It seems also that copies of the Old Charges acted like a warrant of constitution. It is as if the Lodge was not considered 'regular' unless a copy of the Old Charges was present.
- Voice 2           So, they were really important, at least up until the middle of the 18th century when they appear to die out?
- Voice 1           Yes, perhaps this is because part of them eventually appeared in print in Anderson's first *Book of Constitutions* published in 1723. The printed word removed their uniqueness - hastened perhaps by the rise of Grand Lodge and its system of warrants which provided a centralised, if more bureaucratic, avenue for Regularity.
- Voice 2           In many ways, this is a pity, because there is a great deal of beauty in the Old Charges. Let's take a look at them. We cannot do better than summarise Bro. McLeod's description:
- Voice 1           They generally run to about 3,500 words. They begin with an invocation to the 'Father of Heaven'. Then follows a description of the seven liberal sciences, 'one of which is Geometry, synonymous with Masonry.' They give a history of Masonry, commencing before Noah's Flood, passing through Jabal, Tubalcain, Nimrod, Abraham and his student Euclid ...
- Voice 2           Accuracy in history does seem to be their strong point!
- Voice 1           From Euclid the history proceeds to David, Solomon, Charles Martel (a king of France), St Alban in England, and thence to King Athelstan and his son Edwin, who is said to have called a great assembly of Masons in 930 AD. There follows the manner of taking the oath and an admonition, followed by a list of regulations. Some of these regulations, or charges, cover how a Master Mason must administer the trade (*the charges singular*) and others cover general behaviour (*the charges general*).
- Voice 2           It may come as some surprise to the Brethren that King Athelstan plays such a major part in the Old Charges. Few of us here would ever have heard of him.
- Voice 1           Well, he was certainly a significant figure to people in the middle ages. Athelstan was the son, perhaps illegitimate, of King Alfred the Great. He was born in 895 and ruled England between 924 and 939. His fame in the middle ages was justified. He was the first real King of England because, by conquest and politics, he brought together the disparate kingdoms that had existed to that time. As Bro. Dr Ashton tells us in his monumental series of papers for *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*:
- Voice 2           He held together "under a firm rule, a composite state which contained the English of Wessex and Mercia, the Britons of Cornwall, the Anglo-Danes of the Danelaw, the Norsemen, the Englishmen and Danes of the York Kingdom

*and northern England, and held overlordship of the Welsh princes and the Scottish Kings.”*

Voice 1 He was also “a monarch on the European stage.” He made alliances, through family marriages, with the Frankish kingdoms in France and the Saxons in Germany.

Voice 2 But most of all, he was celebrated as a Godly King:

Voice 1 *Rex pius Aethelstan, patulo famosus in orbe  
cuius ubique uiget gloria lausque manet*  
(continues reading the Latin quietly while Voice 2 begins to read more loudly in English. Voice 1 will finish two lines before Voice 2. The effect should be one of ‘simultaneous translation.’)

Voice 2 (audibly)

*Holy King Athelstan, renowned throughout the wide world  
whose esteem flourishes and whose honour endures everywhere  
whom God set as king over the English, sustained by the foundation  
of the throne, and as leader of his earthly forces  
Whosoever you are who look into this book abounding in  
love, shining with light, read its excellent divine doctrines  
which the king, filled with the holy spirit  
adorned with golden headings and places set with jewels  
and which, in his manner, he gladly dedicated to Christ Church  
and joyously made it accessible to sacred learning.  
He also embellished it by adorning its covers with patterned jewels,  
resplendent as if with various flowers.  
Whosoever thirsts to drink from streams of learning, let him come  
let him, bearing sweet honey, discover these waters.*

Voice 1 (quietly) *quem Deus Angligensis solii fundamine nixum  
quisquis amore fluens rutilans hoc luce volumen  
perspicis, eximia dogmata sacra lege -  
quod rex aureolis sacro spiramine fusus  
ornauit titulis gemmigerisque locis  
quodque libens Christi ecclesiae de more dicauit  
atque agiae sophiae nobilitauit ouans  
hoc quoque scematicis ornariet ora lapillis  
auxit ubique micans floribus ut uariis  
quisque sitit ueniat cupiens haurire flunta  
dulcia mella gerens inueniat latices*

Voice 1 As we have said, historical accuracy is not the strong point of the Old Charges. King Athelstan did not have a son called Edwin and there is no evidence for a gathering of Masons in York in 930AD. Nevertheless, Athelstan was clearly a mighty king and is credited with building churches and cathedrals all over the land.

Voice 2 Athelstan was very popular with our operative Brethren. Not only a great king but he provided them with a lot of building work as well!

Voice 1 We have no record of the Old Charges of this time, although it is very possible that something like them existed even then. After all, the author of *Shibboleth* says that the charges were revised in the time of Edward III.

- Voice 2 Edward III reigned from 1327 to 1377. His reign was eventful enough without having to worry about revising Masonic charges. It was the time of the 100 years war, the Black Prince, the Battle of Crecy and, not least, the Black Death which killed around 2 million people, perhaps one third of the population of England at the time. In the middle of all this, the King did find the time to go bankrupt! He was a busy lad!
- Voice 1 Whether the charges were revised in Edward's time or not, thereafter the Old Charges remain remarkably consistent. In a version that must have existed some 200 years after the time of King Edward, we find the charge:
- Voice 2 *And also that no mason shall use no lechery nor be a bawd*
- Voice 1 A 'bawd', by the way, is not very different from a 'pimp'!
- Voice 2 The first copy of the Old Charges that we have is known as the *Regius* Poem, from 1390, just after the death of Edward III. Perhaps we can read some of this together. It starts:
- Voice 1 *A good Wif was there of biside Bathe  
But she was somdel deef, and that was scathe*
- Voice 2 *(interrupts)* Pardon!
- Voice 1 Oh! I am sorry! That was not the *Regius* Poem but the *Wife of Bath's Tale* from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Geoffrey Chaucer died in 1400, only ten years after the *Regius* Poem was written. Both are products of that great flowering of the English language, which also saw the first translation of the Bible into English by the followers of John Wycliffe in 1382. Until this time, virtually all books and writing had been in Latin - and French had been the language of the educated classes.
- Voice 2 Listen to the opening of the *Regius* Poem - no, don't worry, we are not really going to ask you to try reading it! It is English but does not sound like it.
- Voice 1 *Whose wol bothe well rede and loke  
He may find write in olde boke  
Of grete Lordys and eke ladyysse  
That hade mony children y-fere y-wysse.*
- Voice 2 What does that mean?
- Voice 1 Well, it is a curiously domestic opening. It tells of how the great Lords and Ladies had no way of supporting their large brood of children and looked around for some way "*how they might best lead their life.*" They sought a career for their children that "*they might get their living thereby, both well and honestly in full security.*"
- Voice 2 In the 1950's, parents might have sent their kids to work in a high street bank, but in 1390 they sent them to be masons?
- Voice 1 I don't suppose for a moment they did. The main purpose of history, probably up to the 17th century, was less to set out facts, and more to give moral instruction.



Voice 2 We should be used to this. After all, the legends and stories of Freemasonry are not meant to be factually true but to be a lively way of communicating moral insights. The poem goes on to talk of a great clerk - or educated man - who was an outstanding Mason.

Voice 1 *This grete clerkys name wes clept Eucllyde  
His name hyt spradde ful wondur wide*

Voice 2 The world famous Euclid, who by the way lived around 300BC and had nothing to do with Abraham! According to the *Regius* manuscript, Euclid not only set up the science of masonry but also set out the rules of the trade - in a way that sounds familiar to us today.

Voice 1 *Bet this grete clerke more ordent he  
To him that was herre in this degre  
That he schulde teche the symplyst of wytte  
In that onest craft to be parfytte  
And so vchon schulle techyn othur  
And love togedur as systur and brothur*

Voice 2 According to the poem, Euclid laid the foundation stone of Masonry which forms the very strength of our order today - that no one should be called anything other than Brother and all Brothers should be equal:

Voice 1 *For cause they come of ladies burthe*

Voice 2 It is strangely moving that the very basis of Freemasonry, Brotherly Love, is so beautifully presented in this wonderful poem, written over 600 years ago and that this spirit continues through the copies of the Old Charges from that date forward - similar words and the same sentiments, through a history of almost unimaginable changes. Here are the words as they appear in about 1560:

Voice 1 *And that they should call each other, his fellow or his brother, and not his servant nor his knave ...*

Voice 2 Here are the words from 1723:

Voice 1 *The Craftsmen are to call each other by no disoblising name, but Brother or Fellow.*

Voice 2 And these are the exact same words that appear in the 1995 Book of Constitutions. As the *Regius* Poem runs, this time in translation:

Voice 1 *... masons should never one another call  
Within the craft amongst them all  
Neither subject nor servant, my dear brother  
Though he be not so perfect as is another*

Voice 2 This spirit flowers in another great Masonic poem, written half a century after the *Regius* poem. I am sure that you will recognise it. It is a poem full of longing for brotherly love, full of memory of the wonder of the experience:

Voice 1 *Full oft on Guv'ment service*

*This rovin' foot 'ath pressed,  
An' bore fraternal greetin's  
To the Lodges east an' west,  
Accordin' as commanded,  
From Kohat to Singapore  
But I wish that I might see them  
In my Mother-Lodge once more!*

Voice 2 *I wish that I could see them,  
My Brethren black and brown,  
With the trichies smellin' pleasant  
An' the hog-darn passin' down;  
An' the old khansamah snorin'  
On the bottle-khana floor,  
Like a Master in good standing  
With my Mother-Lodge once more.*

Voice 1 *Outside - "Sergeant! Sir! Salute! Salaam!"  
Inside - "Brother", an' it doesn't do no 'arm.  
We met upon the Level an' we parted on the Square,  
An' I was Junior Deacon in my Mother-Lodge out there!*

Voice 2 Does any Brother recall the poet? (*Look around for an answer.*) Yes, that's right. The words are from Rudyard Kipling's poem - the *Mother Lodge*.

Voice 1 So, the message of Masonry is the same, whether the words are from 1390, 1560, 1723, 1890 or 1995. As Brethren, saving your presence WM and Grand Officers, and in the words of the Long Working Tools in the second degree:

Voice 2 *"... yet ought no eminence of situation cause us to forget that we are Brothers and that he who is on the lowest spoke of fortune's wheel is equally entitled to our regard."*

Voice 1 The copies that follow the *Regius* Poem are all remarkably alike to each other. It is clear that they were copied one from another. The minor differences that occur are usually errors made in the copying, and these errors make it possible to back-track and tell which copy was made from which. It is even possible to re-create versions of the Old Charges that no longer exist. Such a version was re-created by Bro. McLeod as part of his Prestonian Lecture.

Voice 2 Let us read together part of this re-created document, a text that must have existed around the middle of the 16th century.

Voice 1 Just as when we looked at the *Regius* poem, we had in mind the 100 years war, the first English Bible, the Black Death and Chaucer, so in reading what is known as the '*Standard Original*', we can think of The Armada, Good Queen Bess, Sir Walter Raleigh and Shakespeare. The sentiments are the same - indeed the same as they are today in the time of the internet, the exploration of space and the genetic code.

Voice 2 We earlier handed out some green cards with numbers on them. As before, will our Master commence with card number one, then the Brother with card number two and so on until we reach the last card which is numbered nine? Green cards only please. Good? Off we go!

1            *The first charge is that ye shall be true men to God and the Holy Church; and that ye use no error or heresy, by your understanding or by discreet or wise men's teaching.*

2            *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 amend it if ye may, or else warn the King or his council thereof*

3            *And also that ye shall be true each to one 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.*

4            *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*

5            *And also that no Mason shall be a thief or a thief's fere, as far forth as he may know*

'fere' is pronounced 'fear'. It means 'friend'.

6            *And also that ye shall be true to the lord and master that you serve, and truly to see to his profit and advantage*

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

8            *And also that ye pay truly for your meat and drink where you go to board*

9            *And also ye shall do no villainy in that house whereby the Craft be slandered.*

Voice 2        Thankyou Brethren. So what happened to the Old Charges?

Voice 1        Once Grand Lodge appeared, a copy of the Old Charges was no longer necessary to prove regularity. Because so much of them was fantastical, the history in particular, and so much of them concerned trade regulations no longer relevant, the essence of them was re-written, during the second half of the 18th century, to become what we know as the Ancient Charges today. Actually, parts of the Old Charges are still there. We do not read them or use them, but the '*Charges General*', those that concern general behaviour, are in the current *Book of Constitutions*.

Voice 2        They are still the moral basis of our Fraternity. After all, Brethren: *(moves to centre of the Lodge and speaks from memory)*

*Our order, being founded on the purest principles of piety and virtue, should teach us to measure our actions by the rules of rectitude, square our conduct by the principles of morality and guide our conversations, aye, even our very thoughts within the compass of propriety. Hence we learn to be meek, humble and resigned; to moderate those passions, the excess of which deforms and disorders the very soul; to be faithful to our God, our country and our laws.*

Voice 1        Come Brethren, speak the words with us. Let us say them all together in a chorus of Masonry. *(Voice 1 reads along, supporting Voice 2.)*

Voice 2 *In like manner, our Order should create within our hearts, the amiable sentiments of honour, truth and virtue; it should lead us to shed a tear of sympathy o'er the failings of a Brother and to pour the healing balm of consolation into the wounds of the afflicted. Then the Brother who has thus far discharged his duties as a Freemason may patiently await his dying throb, that awful change which we must all experience when the soul takes wing through that boundless and unexplored expanse, and may the GAOTU then say, 'It is well finished,' and admit us to the Grand Lodge above where the divisions of time shall cease, and a glorious eternity burst open to our view. Such, my Brethren, are the true principles of Freemasonry, such, the beautiful tenets of the Craft, and may they be transmitted, pure and unsullied, through our respective Lodges, from generation to generation.*

Voice 1 Thankyou Brethren. Beautiful words are they not? However, I cannot but think that they lack the immediacy of the old charges:

Voice 2 *That no Mason shall be a common Gamester, a Sycophant, Parasite or Pimp.*

Voice 1 We thank you for your attention.

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## Long closing

Brethren. You are now about to quit this safe retreat of peace and friendship and mix again with the busy world. Amidst all its cares and employments, forget not those sacred duties which have been so frequently inculcated and so strongly recommended in this Lodge.

Be ye therefore discreet, prudent, and temperate. Remember that at this pedestal (puts hand on pedestal), you have solemnly and voluntarily vowed (removes hand) to relieve and befriend with unhesitating cordiality every Brother who might need your assistance; that you have promised to remind him in the most gentle manner of his failings and to aid and vindicate his character whenever wrongfully traduced; to suggest the most candid, the most palliating and the most favourable circumstances, even when his conduct is justly liable to reprehension and blame. Thus shall the world see how dearly Freemasons love each other.

But, my Brethren, you are expected to extend these noble and generous sentiments still further. Let me impress upon your minds, and may it be instilled into your hearts, that every human creature has a just claim on your kind offices. I therefore trust that you will be good to all. More particularly do I recommend to your care the household of the faithful, that by diligence and fidelity in the duties of your respective vocations, liberal beneficence and diffusive charity, by constancy and sincerity in your friendships; a uniformly kind, just, amiable and virtuous deportment, prove to the world the happy and beneficial effects of our ancient and honourable institution.

Let it not be said that you laboured in vain nor wasted your strength for nought; for your work is before the Lord and your recompense is with God. Finally Brethren, be of one mind, live in peace and may the God of love and mercy delight to dwell amongst you and bless you for evermore.