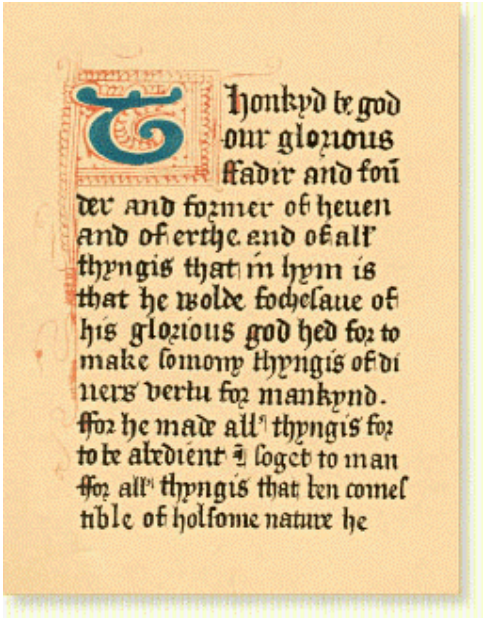
MATTHEW COOKE MANUSCRIPT

Translated by Bro. George William Speth

The Matthew Cooke Manuscript (British Museum: "Additional M.S. 23,198") was written c1450. A transcript of a yet older document, it was written by a Speculative Mason.

The Cooke MS. was most certainly in the hands of Mr. George Payne, when in his second term as Grand Master in 1720 he compiled the General Regulations, and which Anderson included in his own version of the Constitutions published in 1723. Anderson himself evidently made use of lines 901-960 of the MS.

This version is a faithful transcription taken from G.W. Speth's Commentary appended to the Lodge Quatuor Coronati facsimile in Vol. II of its Antigrapha, published in 1890.


Thonkyd be god
our glorious
fadir and fou
der and former of heuen
and of erthe and of all
thyngis that in hym is
that he wolde fochelaue of
his glorious god hed for to
make somony thyngis of di
uers vertu for mankynd.
ffor he made all thyngis for
to be obedient and soget to man
for all thyngis that ben comel
uble of holsome nature he

THANKED be God, our glorious Father, the founder and creator of heaven and earth, and of all things that therein are, for that he has vouchsafed, of his glorious Godhead, to make so many things of manifold virtue for the use of mankind. For he made all things to be subject and obedient to man. All things eatable of a wholesome nature he ordained for man's sustenance. And moreover, he hath given to man wit and the knowledge of divers things and handicrafts, by the which we may labour in this world, in order to therewith get our livelihood and fashion many objects, pleasant in the sight of God, to our own ease and profit. To rehearse all these matters here were too long in the writing or telling, I will therefore refrain ; but I will nevertheless, tell you some ; for instance, how and in what manner the Science of Geometry was first

invented, and who were the founders both thereof and of several other crafts, as is declared in the Bible, and other histories.

How, and in what manner this worthy Science of Geometry took its rise, I will tell you, as I said before. You must know that there are seven liberal sciences, from which seven all other sciences and crafts in the world sprung ; but especially is Geometry the first cause of all the other sciences, whatsoever they be.

These seven sciences are as follows:

The first, which is called the foundation of all science, is grammar, which teaches to write and speak correctly.

The second is rhetoric, which teaches us to speak elegantly.

The third is dialectic, which teaches us to discern the true from the false, and it is usually called art or sophistry (logic).

The fourth is arithmetic, which instructs us in the science of numbers, to reckon, and to make accounts.

The fifth is Geometry, which teaches us all about mensuration, measures and weights, of all kinds of handicrafts.

The sixth is music, and that teaches the art of singing by notation for the voice, on the organ, trumpet, and harp, and of all things pertaining thereto.

The seventh is astronomy, which teaches us the course of the sun and of the moon and of the other stars and planets of heaven.

Our intent is to treat chiefly of the first foundation of Geometry and who were the founders thereof. As I said before, there are seven liberal sciences, that is to say, seven sciences or crafts that are free in themselves, the which seven exist only through Geometry. And Geometry may be described as earth-mensuration, for Geometry is derived from geo, which is in Greek "earth," and metrona or a measure. Thus is the word Geometry compounded and signifies the measure of the earth.

Marvel not because I said that all sciences exist only through the science of Geometry. For there is no art or handicraft wrought by man's hands that is not wrought by Geometry which is a chief factor (notabulle cause) thereof. For if a man work with his hands he employs some sort of tool, and there is no instrument of any material in this world which is not formed of some sort of earth (ore) and to earth it will return. And there is no instrument or tool to work with that has not some proportion, more or less. And proportion is measure, and the instrument or tool is earth. And Geometry is earth-mensuration therefore I affirm that all men live by Geometry. For all men here to this world live by the labour of their hands.

Many more proofs could I give you that Geometry is the science by which all reasoning men live, but I refrain at this time because the writing of it were a long process.

And now I will enter further into the matter You must know that among all the crafts followed by man in this world, Masonry has the greatest renown end the largest share of this science of Geometry, as is stated in history, such as the Bible, and the Master of History," and in the Policronicon a well authenticated (or trustworthy) chronicle, and in the history called Beda De Imagine Mundi, and Isodorus Ethomolegiarum Methodius Episcopus & Martiris. And many others say that Masonry is the chief part of Geometry and so methinks it may well be said, for it was the first founded, as is stated in the Bible, in the first book of Genesis and the fourth chapter. And moreover all the learned authors above cited agree thereto. And some of them affirm it more openly and plainly, precisely as in Genesis in the Bible.

Before Noah's Flood by direct male descent from Adam in the seventh generation, there lived a man called Lamech who had two wives, called Adah and Zillah. By the first wife, Adah, he begat two sons, Jabal and Jubal. The elder son Jabal was the first man that ever discovered geometry and masonry, and he made houses, and is called in the Bible the father of all men who dwell in tents or dwelling houses. And he was Cain's master mason and governor of the works when he built the city of Enoch, which was the first city ever made and was built by Cain, Adam's son, who gave it to his own son Enoch, and give the city the name of his son and called it Enoch, and now it is known as Ephraim. And at that place was the Science of Geometry and Masonry first prosecuted and contrived as a science and as a handi-craft. And so we may well say that it is the first cause and foundation of all crafts and sciences. And also this man Jabel was called the father of shepherds. The Master of History says, and Beda De Imagine Mundi and the Policronicon and many others more say, that he was the first that made partition of lands, in order that every man might know his own land and labour thereon for himself. And also he divided flocks of sheep, that every man might know his own sheep, and so we may say that he was the inventor of that science.

And his brother Jubal or Tubal was the inventor of music and song, as Pythagoras states in Polycronicon, and the same says Isodorous. In his Ethemolegiis in the 6th book he says that he was the first founder of music and song, and of the organ and trumpet; and he discovered that science by the sound of the weights of his brother's, Tubal-Cain's, hammers.

And of a truth, as the Bible says, that is to say, in the fourth Chapter of Genesis, Lamech begat by his other wife Zillah a son and a daughter, and their names Tubal Cain, that was the son, and the daughter was called Naamah. And according to the Policronicon, some men say that she was Noah's wife; but whether this be so or not, we will not affirm.

Ye must know that this son Tubal Cain was the founder of the smith's craft and of other handicrafts dealing with metals, such as iron, brass, gold and silver as some learned writers say; and his sister Naamah discovered the craft of weaving for before her time no cloth was woven, but they span yarn and knit it and made such clothing as they could. And as this woman Naamah invented the craft of weaving it was called woman's-craft.

And these four brethren knew that God would take vengeance for sin, either by fire or water. And they were much concerned how to save the sciences they had discovered,

and they took counsel together and exercised all their wits. And they said there were two kinds of stone of such virtue that the one would not burn, called marble, and the other named "Lacerus" would not sink in water. And so they devised to write all the sciences they had found on these two stones, so that if God took vengeance by fire the marble would not burn, and if by water the other would not drown, and they besought their elder brother Jabal to make two pillars of these two stones, that is of marble and of "Lacerus," and to write on the two pillars all the sciences and crafts which they had found and he did so. And therefore we may say that he was the wisest in science, for he first began and carried out their purpose before Noah's flood,

Fortunately knowing of the vengeance that God would send, the brethren knew not whether it would be by fire or water. They knew by a sort of prophecy that God would send one or the other, and therefore they wrote their sciences on the two pillars of stone. And some men say that they wrote on the stones all the seven sciences, but [this I affirm not]. As they had it in mind that a vengeance would come, so it befell that God did send vengeance, and there came such a flood that all the world was drowned and all men died save only eight persons. These were Noah and his wife and his three sons and their wives, of which sons all the world is descended, and they were named in this wise, Shem, Ham and Japhet. And this flood is called Noah's Flood, for he and his children were saved therein. And many years after the flood, according to the chronicle, these two pillars were found, and the chronicle says that a great clerk, Pythagoras, found the one, and Hermes the philosopher found the other, and they taught the sciences that they found written thereon.

Every chronicle and history and many other writers and the Bible especially relate the building or the tower of Babel; and it is written in the Bible, Genesis, Chap. x how that Ham, Noah's son, begat Nimrod, who grew a mighty man upon the earth and waxed strong, like unto a giant. He was a great king and the beginning of his kingdom was the kingdom of Babilon proper, and Erech and Arend and Calnch and the land of Shinar. And this same Ham began the tower of Babel and taught his workmen the Craft of Masonry and he had with him many masons, more than 40,000, and he loved and cherished them well. And it is written in Polycronicon, and in the Master of History, and in other histories, and beyond this the Bible witnesses in the same 10th chapter, as it is written, that Ashur who was of near kindred to Nimrod went forth from the land of Shinar and built the City of Nineveh and Plateas *(sic)* and many more. For it is written "Do terra illa" [&c.]

It is but reasonable that we should plainly say how and in what manner the Charges of the Mason's Craft were first founded, and who first gave it the name of Masonry And you most know that it is stated and written in the Polycronicon and in Methothus Episcopus and Martiris that Ashur who was a worthy lord of Shinar, sent to Nimrod the king to send him Masons and workmen of the Craft that they might help him make his city which he was minded to make. And Nimrod sent him 3000 masons. And as they were about to depart and go forth, he called them before him and said to them, "Ye must go to my cousin Ashur to help him build a city, but see to it, that ye be well governed, and I will give you a Charge that shall be to your and my profit.

"When you come to that lord, look that you be true to him, even as you would be to me, labour at your Craft honestly, and take a reasonable payment for it such as you may deserve. Love each other as though you were brothers and hold together

staunchly. Let him that hath most skill teach his fellow, and be careful that your conduct amongst yourselves and towards your lord may be to my credit, that I may have thanks for sending you and teaching you the Craft." And they received the charge from him, being their lord and master, and went forth to Ashur and built the city of Nineveh in the country of Plateas *(sic)* and other cities also that are called Calah and Rosen, which is a great city between Calah and Nineveh. And in this manner the Craft of Masonry was first instituted and charged as a science.

Elders of Masons before our times had these charges in writing as we have them now in our Charges of the story of Euclid, and as we have seen them written both in Latin and in French.

But it is only reasonable that we should tell you how Euclid came to the knowledge of Geometry, as stated in the Bible and in other histories. In the XlIth chapter of Genesis it is told how Abraham came to the land of Canaan and our Lord appeared unto him and said, "I will give this land to thy seed." But a great famine reigned in that land and Abraham took Sarah, his wife, with him and made a journey into Egypt to abide there whilst the famine lasted. And Abraham, so says the chronicle, was as a wise man and a learned. And he knew all the seven sciences and taught the Egyptians the science of Geometry. And this worthy clerk Euclid was his pupil and learned of him. And he first gave it the name of Geometry ; although it was practiced before his time, it had not acquired the name of Geometry. But it is said by Isodoras in the 5th Book and first Chapter of Ethomolegiarum that Euclid was one of the first founders of Geometry and gave it that name.

For in his time, the river of Egypt which is called the Nile so overflowed the land that no man could dwell therein. Then the worthy clerk Euclid taught them to make great walls and ditches to keep back the water, and by Geometry he measured the land and parceled it out into sections and caused every man to enclose his own portion with walls and ditches and thus it became a country abounding in all kinds of produce, and of young people and of men and women : so that the youthful population increased so much as to render earning a livelihood difficult. And the lords of the country drew together and took counsel how they might help their children who had no competent livelihood in order to provide for themselves and their children, for they had so many. And at the council amongst them was this worthy Clerk Euclid and when he saw that all of them could devise no remedy in the matter be said to them "Lay your orders upon your sons and I will teach them a science by which they may live as gentlemen, under the condition that they shall be sworn to me to uphold the regulations that I shall lay upon them." And both they and the king of the country and all the lords agreed thereto with one consent.

It is but reasonable that every man should agree to that which tended to profit himself ; and so they took their sons to Euclid to be ruled by him and he taught them the Craft of Masonry and gave it the name of Geometry on account of the parceling out of the ground which he had taught the people at the time of making the walls and ditches, as aforesaid, to keep out the water. And Isodoris says in Ethomologies that Euclid called the craft Geometry.

And there this worthy clerk Euclid gave it a name and taught it to the lord's sons of that land whom he had as pupils.

And he gave them a charge. That they should call each other Fellow and no otherwise, they being all of one craft and of the same gentle birth, lords' sons. And also that the most skilful should be governor of the work and should be called master ; and other charges besides, which are written in the Book of Charges. And so they worked for the lords of the land and built cities and towns, castles and temples and lords' palaces.

During the time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt they learned the craft of Masonry. And after they were driven out of Egypt they came into the promised land, which is now called Jerusalem, and they occupied that land and the charges were observed there. And [at] the making of Solomon's Temple which king David began, King David loved masons well, and gave them [wages] nearly as they are now. And at the making of the Temple in Solomon's time, as stated in the Bible in the third book of Kings and the fifth chapter, Solomon held four score thousand masons at work. And the son of the king of Type was his master mason. And in other chronicles and in old books of masonry, it is said that Solomon confirmed the charges that David his father had given to masons. And Solomon himself taught them their usages differing but slightly from the customs now in use.

And from thence this worthy science was brought into France and into many other regions.

At one time there was a worthy king in France called Carolus Secondus, that is to say Charles the Second. And this Charles was elected king of France by the grace of God and also by right of descent. And some men say he was elected by good fortune, which is false as by the chronicles he was of the blood royal. And this same king Charles was a mason before he became king. And after he was king he loved masons and cherished them and gave them charges and usages of his devising, of which some are yet in force in France ; and he ordained that they should have an assembly once a year and come and speak together in order that the masters and follows might regulate all things amiss.

And soon after that came St. Adhabelle into England and he converted St. Alban to Christianity. And St. Alban loved well masons and he was the first to give them charges and customs in England, And he ordained [wages] adequate to pay for their toil.

And after that there was a worthy king in England, called Athelstan, and his youngest son loved well the science of Geometry ; and he know well, as well as the masons themselves, that their handicraft was the practice of the science of Geometry. Therefore he drew to their councils (or took counsel, or lessons, of them) and learned the practical part of that science in addition to his theoretical (or book) knowledge. For of the speculative part he was a master. And he loved well masonry and masons. And he became a mason himself. And he give them charges and usages such as are now customary in England and in other countries. And he ordained that they should have reasonable pay. And he purchased a free patent of the king that they might hold an assembly at what time they thought reasonable and come together to consult. Of the which charges, usages and assembly it is written and taught in our Book of Charges; wherefore I leave it for the present.

Good men! for this cause and in this way Masonry first arose. It befell, once upon a time, that great lords had so many free begotten children that their possessions were not extensive enough to provide for their future. Therefore they took counsel how to provide for their children and find them all honest livelihood. And they sent for wise masters of the worthy science of Geometry, that through their wisdom they might provide them with some honest living. Then one of them that was called Euclid a most subtil and wise inventor regulated [that science] and art and called it Masonry. And so in this art of his he honestly taught the children of great lords according to the desire of the fathers and the free consent of their children. And having taught them with great care for a certain time they were not all alike capable of exercising the said art, wherefore the said master Euclid ordained that those that surpassed the others in skill should be honored above the others. And [comman]ded to call the more skilful "master" and for [him] to instruct the less skilful. The which masters were called masters of nobility, of knowledge and skill in that art. Nevertheless they commanded that they that were of less knowledge should not be called servants or subjects, but fellows, on account of the nobility of their gentle blood. In this manner was the aforesaid art begun in the land of Egypt by the aforesaid master Euclid and so it spread from country to country and from kingdom to kingdom

Many years after, in the time of king Athelstan, sometime king of England, by common assent of his Council and other great lords of the land on account of great defects found amongst masons, a certain rule was ordained for them.

Once a year or every three years as might appear needful to the king and great lords of the land and all the community, congregations should be called by the masters from country to country and from province to province of all masters, masons and fellows in the said art. And at such congregations those that are made masters shall be examined in the articles hereafter written and be ransacked whether they be able and skilful in order to serve the lords to their profit and to the honor of the aforesaid art. And moreover they shall be charged to well and truly expend the goods of their lords, as well of the lowest as of the highest ; for those are their lords for the time being of whom they take their pay in recompense of their service and toil.

The first article is this. That every master of this art should be wise, and true to the lord who employs him, expending his goods carefully as he would his own were expended; and not give more pay to any mason than he knows him to have earned, according to the dearth (or scarcity and therefore price) of corn and victuals in the country and this without favoritism, for every man is to be rewarded according to his work.

The Second article is this. That every master of the art shall be warned beforehand to come to his congregation in order that he may duly come, there, unless he may [be] excused for some cause or other. But if he be found [i.e., accused of being] rebellious at such congregation, or at fault in any way to his employer's harm or the reproach of this art, he shall not be excused unless he be in peril of death. And though he be in peril of death, yet must, he give notice of his illness, to the master who is the president of the gathering.

The [third] article is this. That no master take no apprentice for a shorter term than seven years at least, for the reason that such as have been bound a shorter time can not

adequately learn their art, nor be able to truly serve their employer and earn the pay that a mason should.

The fourth article is this. That no master shall for any reward take as an apprentice a bondsman born, because his lord to whom he is a bondsman might take him, as he is entitled to, from his art and carry him away with him from out the Lodge, or out of the place he is in. And because his fellows peradventure might help him and take his part, and thence manslaughter might arise ; therefore it is forbidden. And there is another reason ; because his art was begun by the freely begotten children of great lords, as aforesaid.

The fifth article is this. That no master shall pay more to his apprentice during the time of his apprenticeship, whatever profit he may take thereby, than he well knows him to have deserved of the lord that employs him ; and not even quite so much, in order that the lord of the works where he is taught may have some profit by his being taught there.

The sixth article is this. That no master from covetousness or for gain shall accept an apprentice that is unprofitable ; that is, having any maim (or defect) by reason of which he is incapable of doing a mason's proper work.

The seventh article is this. That no master shall knowingly help or cause to be maintained and sustained any common nightwalker robber by which night-walking they may be rendered incapable of doing a fair day's work and toil: a condition of things by which their fellows might be made wrath.

The eighth article is this. Should it befall that a perfect and skilful mason come and apply for work and find one working who is incompetent and unskillful, the master of the place shall discharge the incompetent and engage the skilful one, to the advantage of the employer.

The ninth article is this. That no master shall supplant another. For it is said in the art of masonry that no man can so well complete a work to the advantage of the lord, begun by another as he who began it intending to end it in accordance with his own plans, or [he] to whom he shows his plans.

These regulation following were made by the lords (employers) and masters of divers provinces and divers congregations of masonry.

[First point] To wit : whosoever desires to become a mason, it behoves him before all things to [love] God and the holy Church and all the Saints ; and his master and follows as his own brothers.

The second point. He must give a fair day's work for his pay.

The third [point]. He shall hele the counsel or his fellows in lodge and in chamber, and wherever masons meet.

The fourth point. He shall be no traitor to the art and do it no harm nor conform to any enactments against the art nor against the members thereof : but he shall maintain it in all honour to the best of his ability.

The fifth point. When he receives his pay he shall take it without murmuring, as may be arranged at the time by the master; and he shall fulfill the agreement regarding the hours of work and rest, as ordained and set by the master.

The sixth point. In case of disagreement between him and his fellows, he shall unquestioningly obey the master and be silent thereon at the bidding of his master, or of his master's warden in his master's absence, until the next following holiday and shall then settle the matter according to the verdict of his fellows ; and not upon a work-day because of the hindrance to the work and to the lord's interests.

The seventh point. He shall not covet the wife nor the daughter of his master or of his fellows unless it be in marriage neither shall he hold concubines, on account of the discord this might create amongst them.

The eighth point. Should it befall him to be his master's warden, he shall be a true mediator between his master and his fellows : and he shall be active in his master's absence to the honour of his master and the profit of the lord who employs him.

The ninth point. If he be more wise and skilful than his fellow working with him in the Lodge or in any other place, and he perceive that for want of skill, he is about to spoil the stone upon which he is working and can teach him to improve the stone, he shall instruct and help him ; so that love may increase the more amongst them and the work of his employer be not lost.

When the master and fellows, being forewarned are come to such congregations, the sheriff of the country or the mayor of the city or alderman of the town in which the congregation is held, shall if need be, be fellow and associate of the master of the congregation, to help him against disobedient members to maintain the rights of the realm.

And at the commencement of the proceedings, new men who have never been charged before are to be charged in this manner. Ye shall never be thieves nor thieves' maintainers, and shall do a fair day's work and toil for your pay that you take of the lord, and shall render true accounts to your fellows in all matters which should be accounted for to them, and love them as yourselves. And ye shall be true to the king of England and to the realm : and that ye keep with all your might and [power] all the aforesaid articles.

After that an enquiry shall be held whether any master or fellow summoned to the meeting, have broken any of the before said articles, which, if they have done, it shall be then and there adjudicated upon.

Therefore be it known; if any master or fellow being forewarned to come to the congregation, be contumacious and appear not ; or having trespassed against any of the aforesaid articles shall be convicted ; he shall forswear his masonry and shall no longer exercise the craft. And if he presume so to do, the sheriff of the country in

which he may be found at work shall put him in prison and take all his goods for the use of the king, until his (the king's) grace be granted and showed him.

For this cause chiefly were these congregations ordained ; that the lowest as well as the highest might be well and truly served in the aforesaid art throughout all the kingdom of England.

Amen, so mote it be.

NOTES

Excerpted from a commentary thereon by G. W. Speth, P.M., Secretary, *Quatuor Coronatorum Antigrapha. Masonic Reprints* of the Lodge Quatuor Coronati, No. 2076, London. Volume II: 1890 [frontispiece]

Many of the articles and points still find their counterparts in our present usages, but these are so obvious that I may be excused from pointing them out. It may be, however, convenient to summarize for easy reference the conclusions I have attempted to enforce. They are

1. The Add. MS. 23,198 is a copy of a pre-existing document, a transcript.
2. The compiler was himself a follow-mason.
3. The compilation consists of two distinct documents,
   a. The compiler's commentary;
   b. A pre-existing document, tacked on in its integrity to the former, by the compiler himself.
4. The second part is the oldest and purest version yet come to light of the Book of Charges, or manuscript "Constitutions of Masonry."
5. This Book of Charges had already been enlarged and commented on by previous writers, and our author, to a certain defined extent, copied these.
6. He added further illustrations of his own.
7. His version has not served as the original of any other manuscript known to us.
8. Naymus Greens, some of the particulars connected with St. Albin, Edwin's authorship of the Book, and the York legend, are of more recent origin.
9. The *preservation* of the word "speculative," in its present Masonic use, is to be ascribed to the Masons themselves alone.
10. At the date of this Manuscript there were several copies of the Book of Charges, identical with this one, in circulation.
11. The articles are legal enactments and had force as such.
12. The points are mere internal arrangements, of no strict legal value, yet enforced on all masons by the ordinary laws of guild life.
13. There was no one general assembly for the whole kingdom, but "congregations" were held when and where required.
14. That a Grand Master existed in fact, though not known by that name, and for the duration of each assembly only.
15. That the freedom of the Craft was conferred at these meetings only; and
16. That many of our present usages may be traced in their original form in this Manuscript.