

1583 GRAND LODGE No.1

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GRAND LODGE No.1 MANUSCRIPT 1583

On its face, the MS states that it was – Scriptum Anno Domini 1583 Die Decembris 25.

The opening paragraph is an invocation which reads:

“The mighte of the Father of Heaven and ye wysdome of ye glorious Soone through ye grace & ye goodness of ye holly ghoste yt bee three psons & one God, be wh vs at or beginning and give vs grace so to govne us here in or lyving that we maye come to his blisse that nevr shall have ending. Amen.”

Like most MSS, the Grand Lodge No.1 contains its version of the history of the Craft. Also like the Regius and Cooke MSS, it contains rules of conduct of Masons.

While the Regius has 15 Articles for Masters and 15 Points for Craftsmen, and the Cooke has 9 Articles for Masters and 9 Points for Fellows, the Grand Lodge No 1 MS has 9 Charges that apply to all Masons and 18 that apply specifically to Masters and Fellows. They are (in abbreviated form)

Charges for All Masons

First, that you shall be true men of God and holy Church and that you use no error nor heresy but be discreet and wise men;

Also that you should be true liege men to the king of England without treason or falsehood and that you know no treason unless you amend it or warn the king or his counsel;

Also that you be true to one another, that is to say to every Mason of the Craft you shall do unto them as they should do unto you;

Also that you keep the counsel of your fellows truly, in lodge and in chamber or in other councils that ought to be kept by way of Masonhood;

Also that no Mason shall be a thief in Company so far as he may know and that he shall be true each to the other and to the lord or master and truly see to his profits and advantages;

Also you shall call Masons fellows or brethren and no foul names;

Also you shall not take your fellow's wife in villany nor desire ungodly his daughter or his servant or put him to disworship;

Also you shall truly pay for his meat and drink where you go to board;

Also you shall do no villany where you go to board whereby the Craft might be slandered.

Charges specifically for Masters and Fellows

First, that no Master or Fellow take upon himself any lord's work nor any other man's work unless he knows himself able and sufficient of cunning to perform the same;

That no Master take no work but that he take it reasonably so that the lord may be well served and that the Master live honestly and pay his Fellows truly;

Also that no Master or Fellow supplant any other of their work. He shall put him out, except he be unable of cunning to end the work;

Also that no Master or Fellow take a prentice but for the term of seven years and the prentice be of able birth, that is, free born, and whole of limbs, as a man ought to be:

Also that no Master or Fellows take allowance to be made Mason without counsel of his Fellows and that he take him for no less than six or seven years and that he who would be a Mason be able in all degrees, that is, free born, come of good kindred, true and no bondsman

Also that he have his right limbs as a man ought to have;

Also that no man take a prentice unless he have sufficient work for him or to set three of his Fellows or two at least to work;

Also that no Master or Fellow take a man's work to task that was wont to go on journey:

Also that every Master shall pay his Fellows as they deserve so that he be not deceived with false workmen

Also that no Mason slander any other behind his back;

Also that no Fellow within the Lodge or without may answer another ungodly nor reproachfully without reasonable cause;

Also that every Mason shall reverence his elder and put him to worship;

Also that no Mason shall be a common player at hazzard or at dice or at other unlawful plays whereby the Craft might be slandered

Also that no Mason shall use leachery or be a baude whereby the Craft might be slandered;

Also that no Fellow go into the town at night time unless there is a lodge of Fellows, without he have a Fellow with him to bear witness that he was in an honest place;

Also that every Master and Fellow shall come to the Assembly if it be within fifty miles if he have warning, and if he has trespassed against the Craft then he shall abide the award of his Masters and Fellows, and shall stand to the award of the Masters and Fellows to make them accord if they can, and if they may not accord then to go to the common law;

Also that no Master or Fellow make a mould stone or square or rule to a layer or set a layer within the lodge or without to hew mould stones;

Also that every Mason receive and cherish strange Fellows when they come over the country and set them at work if they will as the manner is, that is to say, if they have mould stones in his place, or else refresh him with money to the next lodging;

Also that every Mason truly serve the lord for his pay and every Master truly make an end of his work be it task or journey.

The MS concludes with:

“These charges that we have now rehearsed unto yu all and all others that belong to Masons, ye shall keepe, so healde you God, and your hallydome, and by this booke in yor hande unto yr power. Amen, so be it.”

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