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THE HISTORY, SIGNIFICANCE AND MEANING OF THE REGIUS MANUSCRIPT

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Introduction

Freemasons possess many old manuscript writings, some dating to about the fourteenth century, which throw much light upon the traditions, usages, and customs of the medieval operative masons. These manuscripts (MSS) are of fundamental importance for the study of the craft in the Middle Ages. But they have an additional importance as the earliest known members of a large group of documents generally called the MS Constitutions of Masonry, or the Old Charges. The various MS Constitution all contain the same two main elements, namely the history of the building industry and the regulations to be obeyed by masters, fellows, and apprentices.

The Regius Manuscript is one of almost fifty ancient manuscripts that relate to operative and speculative masonry. No two of the MSS are exactly alike, though there is a substantial agreement between them all, and evidently they had a common origin. just as they were designed to serve a common purpose. At least one of these manuscripts, and possibly two, date before the introduction of the printing press. Of the remainder, the majority are over 200 years old, and all are copies of older documents.

In this paper, I wish to point out to you the uniqueness of the Regius Manuscript, as well as its historical connection and its significance to Freemasonry.

History and Description of the Regius Manuscript

The Regius MS is also called the Regius Poem because, unlike other MS, it is in written entirely in verse. It is impossible to determine by internal evidence exactly when the Regius MS was written, but examination of the handwriting suggests to the paleographical experts of the British Museum that the manuscript was written about 1390. It is in the beautiful Gothic writing of a priest of the period 1388- 1445.

Handwritten on vellum, thirty-three folios, size 5” by 3 ½”, in gatherings of six leaves (last gathering eight leaves), it was presented by George II in 1757 to the British Museum. The manuscript was bound for George II in 1757 before presentation to the British Museum, and bears his coat-of-arms on the covers. It was rebound in 1838, probably after its discovery by J. O. Halliwell and entitled on the spine: “Poem on the Craft of Masonry, Mus. Brit. Bibl Reg. 1 7A.I. Theyer” The manuscript was formerly in the library of John Theyer (1597- 1673), an antiquarian. We do not know if Theyer was a mason. He was born at Brockworth, Gloucestershire, but later lived at Cooper’s Hill. Upon his death, Theyer left his library to his grandson Charles, who sold the collection to a bookstore where it was subsequently purchased by Charles II. It remained in the Royal Library until 1757, when it was sent to the British Museum by George II. We are told that the back cover is inscribed with Theyer’s name and the words, “Poem on the Craft of Masonry” and that the book was bound with these words printed on the back in 1757.

The poem appears to have been completely overlooked until it was discovered by James Orchard Halliwell (reportedly a non-mason). Its importance as a Masonic document was not publicly noted until Halliwell (afterwards Halliwell-Phillips) read a paper on the “Early Introduction of Freemasonry into England” before the Society of Antiquaries on April 18, 1839. The MS was erroneously entitled A Poem of Moral Duties; and it was not until Halliwell described it in what is termed as “a most suggestive paper on the Introduction of Freemasonry

into England,” which was read before the Society of Antiquaries (and which can be found in the proceedings of that body, session 1838-9) that interest was rekindled in its ancient document. Since then it has been the most prized of Masonic treasures.

For a period of about 50 years the manuscript was known as the Halliwell MS, until on the suggestion of Bro. R. F. Gould it was re-named the Regius Manuscript, as being indicative of its preeminence as a Masonic document, and its previous ownership by the kings of England.

The MS is of prime importance to the Fraternity of Freemasons as being its oldest preserved document which affords evidence of a legendary history and an indication of a speculative origin. Although not by any means the oldest manuscript relating to the building craft, it has received the close attention of numerous students and much has been written and published concerning it. Bro. William James Hughan from time to time published in his numerous writings his ideas concerning the poem. The two greatest commentators on the MS are said to be Bros. William Begemann and Robert Freke Gould, although I would suggest that the work of Knoop, Jones and Harrier is extremely enlightening.

Significance

There are two principal manuscripts that Freemasons have long regarded as an invaluable part of their heritage from medieval masonry. One is called the Cooke manuscript the other is the Regius. As I said earlier, these are by no means the only or the oldest mediaeval documents relating to masons. Numerous others exist in the form of building accounts, fabric rolls, contracts and regulations made by particular authorities and are of great importance for the study of operative masonry in the Middle Ages. But the Regius and Cooke Manuscripts are masonic in a special and complete sense, being documents not simply about masons, but for masons. They differ from building accounts and fabric rolls in relating to masons alone; from contracts in relating to masons as a body; and from regulations (such as the York Minster Ordinances of 1370) both in claiming a far wider applicability and represent the custom of the craft which gives to both MSS their value; they may be taken as an expression of the conscience and pride of the craft and of its claim to antiquity and status, to excellence in workmanship and to independence in government.

The importance of the Regius and Cooke MSS (and of other contemporary or older MSS which are now lost) as a link uniting mediaeval operative masonry and modern speculative masonry cannot easily be exaggerated. These early manuscripts show us that fourteenth and fifteenth century masons in Britain possessed a certain organization, that their trade was subject to recognized customs, embodied in so-called Charges, and that they were sufficiently interested in their occupation to encourage non-operative members of their organization or fraternity to set down the history of the building industry in writing. It is from that operative fraternity with its legends and its customs (which in the 16th and 17th centuries were incorporated in successive versions of the MS Constitutions of Masonry) that present-day Freemasonry claims descent, and it is out of those legends and those customs that our rites and ceremonies have grown.

Who Wrote the Regius MS?

The author of the Regius MS is not identified. We don't know who he was or why he penned his poem. The best guess is that he was a monk. He may have been a master architect or a free stone mason. He may have written the free mason's story at their request. Or possibly he was just an aspiring writer who assembled material from various sources and fashioned them into a manuscript he could call his own.

Whoever he was, and whatever his reason, all we can conclude about him is that he was concerned with preserving a story for the future. We may well conclude that it was the old monkish scribe full of church lore and well acquainted with the building fraternity who gave us the early manuscripts - the Regius, the Cooke, and

others, and that to some extent, large or small, the scribe was writing for the operative mason of the day, who, not actually in himself any more religious than men of later days, had at any rate a greater regard for religious observances. He was unlettered, as were the workers in all the other crafts, and as, indeed, were a proportion of his priests as well. He was superstitious and of vast credulity, and he accepted, probably without question, the highly imaginative craft history written for him by the learned priest and undoubtedly coloured to suit the ideas and purposes of the Church. The priestly historian when facts failed him, drew upon legend and sheer invention, but fortunately, too, he drew upon and preserved many noble traditions, for which, as freemasons, we must always be grateful.

The question may take it, more likely for those with ears than with eyes. On suitable occasion, when masons met together in will be asked as to why the learned priests wrote for men who could not read. The priests wrote, we assemblies or even in small gatherings in their ledges, these manuscripts may have been read to them by a priest or by an educated Master Mason, probably not to entertain them so much as to impress upon them the dignity of their calling and their duty to God, to their Masters, to one another, and to the world about them.

The writer of the poem apparently collected his material from different sources, as an analysis reveals that it is composed of a series of parts without either continuity or connection. Eight separate divisions have been marked out. There is also an indication that the first 592 lines of the poem were written by a different author than the latter part of the MS.

Through an analysis of dialect and writing style, it is thought that the original of the Regius MS came into the hands of a West Midland cleric, who was not as interested in the history of masonry as he was in religious and moral instruction, and gave a religious turn to his version. He inserted a long extract from Mirk's Instruction for Parish Priests, with a change of person from third to second, urging masons to be faithful members of the church, and instructing them on behaviour during service, on prayer, and on the mass. He also inserted the whole of the Urbanitatis poem to teach social manners. So far as the date of the writing is concerned, authorities ascribe it to about 1390, or no later than 1420. We may fairly assume that the writing is of either the reign of Richard II(1377-1399) or Henry IV (1399-1413) and possible during the lifetime of Henry Yevley (1320 - 1400) who was master mason to both of these kings, as well as their predecessor Edward III.

As for the location of the writing, a study of dialects of the country place it at the south of Worcestershire or Herefordshire or even the north of Gloucestershire. Assuming this is correct, we find that great activity of building was proceeding at the time of the poem's writing. The cathedrals of Worcester, Hereford, and Gloucester as well as a number of abbeys and minor buildings were constructed during this time and it is not inconceivable that the poem was written for the benefit of the craftsmen who were thus engaged.

The Old Charges

Although we do not easily recognize in the Old Charges anything of an esoteric nature, we may regard them as a link between operative and speculative masonry. That does not mean that they contain a working basis for today's ritual; they do not, but undoubtedly our present traditions and ritual reflect many of the ideas and perpetuate many of the words and phrases of the old writings.

The charges contained in these manuscripts are not identical to the charges contained in the ritual of speculative lodges today, but it is suggested that these are largely based. Speaking generally, most or all of the Old Charges have descended from earlier writings. Any differences between them is due apparently to the mistakes, to the whims, and to the intentional deviations of the copyists, editors, and compilers through whose hands the writings have come down to us.

Of the Old Charges in general we can say that there must have been some early original or originals yet

unknown to us, parts of which have descended through the series. This can be illustrated most simply by saying that the matter contained in the Regius and Cooke MSS may well have existed for a considerable period before it was incorporated into those writings. Perhaps the original matter was in trade ordinances or in some statement prepared by a learned monk well acquainted with the usages and conditions of the masonic trade. The Regius Poem contains more information on trade usages; but the Cooke MS tells more of the traditional or legendary history.

Brethren who are acquainted with the series of documents known variously as the MS Constitutions, the Gothic Constitutions, or more commonly nowadays as the Old Charges of the British Freemasons, will recognize that after an introductory prayer, they go on to relate how the science of geometry (or masonry) came to be founded. This same legend forms the same part of the poem we are now considering, and abundantly proves that the versifier had access to copies of the Old Charges which, unfortunately, are now lost to us.

The Regius MS in Outline

The Regius MS is a poem giving the Old Short History, and the Articles and Points, together with directions regarding an assembly, an account of the Ars Quatuor Coronatorum (the Art of the Four Crowned Martyrs), references to Noah's flood, a description of the building of the Tower of Babel, King Nebuchadnezzar, and to "the good clerk Euclid" teaching the "craft of geometry full wonder wide," an account of the seven liberal arts, portions of John Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests, and the whole of the Urbanitatis, a metrical treatise on table manners.

The text of the MS may be categorized as follows:

Line Number	Subject
1-18	Ancient Egyptian "lords" wonder how their children will make a living
19-30	They send for clerks of geometry
35-36	Euclid, the founder of geometry
37-42	Euclid orders even the simplest of wit to be taught
43-46	He ordains the rank of master mason
47-52	Those of less skill to be called fellows
53-57	Geometry founded by Euclid in Egypt(I)
58	Geometry taught in many lands thereafter
59-62	Geometry comes to England in the reign of Athelstan (2)
67-86	Athelstan ordains congregation and articles (Articles and Points)
87-260	Fifteen Articles
261-470	Fifteen Points
471-496	An assembly to be held every year or third year
497-534	Ars Quatuor Coronatorum(3)
535-576	The Seven Liberal Arts (4)
577-692	Mainly extracts from Mirk's Instructions for Parish Priests
693-794	Urbanitatis Poem, including 789-94, the Closing Prayer
793-794	Closing Prayer

1. The art of geometry is said to have been invented first by the Egyptians, because through the covering of the land with mud by the inundations of the Nile, they first divided the land by lines and measures and gave it its name.
2. The legend that Athelstan, or an assembly convened by him, laid down charges for the masons does not agree with evidence that shows:
 - (a) that there was comparatively little building in stone in tenth-century England, and
 - (b) that the regulations of industry, when first imposed by external authority, was local and not national in character.
3. The commemoration of the Four Crowned Martyrs was fairly widespread on the continent in the Middle Ages, and they were the patron saints of the German stone masons. It is not clear how and when the Quatuor Coronatorum came to mean anything to medieval operative masons in England.
4. The poem makes Nebuchadnezzar the builder of the Tower of Babel; he lived about sixteen centuries after the event.

The Articles and Points

The Articles and Points of the MS are a body of regulations with regard to masters, craftsmen, apprentices wages, and other matters.

The fifteen articles, mainly addressed to masters, are:

1. that the master shall, in fairness to his employer, not pay higher wages than is warranted by the cost of victuals.
2. that every Master Mason shall punctually attend the General Congregation (assembly), sickness being the only excuse.
3. that no master shall take an apprentice for less than seven years... "his craft to learn."
4. that the master must take no bondsman for apprentices, but only those who are free born, in case his lord should try to recover him.
5. that the apprentice must be 'of lawful blood' - not a thief, and 'whole of limb' - not maimed.
6. that the master must not take craftsmen's wages for his apprentice's work.
7. that a master shall not harbor a mason who is a thief, murderer, or robber.
8. that the master may change a poor craftsman for better to maintain a standard of efficiency
9. that the master not undertake any work unless he is capable of carrying it through to the end, and that the foundations of his buildings are safe.
10. that no master shall supplant another who has already begun his work.
11. that no mason should work by night except by "practicing of wit" - i.e. the pursuit of knowledge.
12. that no mason shall speak evil of his fellows' work. He should praise it worthy; if not, they should both try to improve it.
13. that the master must instruct his apprentices well and justly.
14. that the master shall not take an apprentice unless he can be certain of giving him full instruction or for whom he does not have sufficient labour.
15. that the master shall not claim to maintain more masons than he actually does, nor shall he maintain wrongdoers or false-swearers.

The fifteen points, generally addressed to journeymen (craftsmen), are:

1. that the prospective mason must swear to love God and the Holy Church, the saints, his master for whom he labours, and his fellows.
2. that the mason work as truly as he can to deserve his hire and reward.
3. that the apprentice must not disclose his master's secrets (teachings), or whatever "privities" he may hear or see done in the lodge.
4. that no man be false to his craft, nor do anything to the prejudice of his master and fellows.
5. that the mason shall accept his pay without dispute ("full meekly") and that the master warn the mason "lawfully before noon if he will not occupy him no more."
6. that if a mason quarrels with another mason, the investigation or resolution of the dispute should be postponed to a holiday or "loveday" (a day appointed for amicable settlement of differences), so as not to interfere with the progress of the work.
7. that the mason is enjoined to respect the chastity of his master's wife and daughter, and of his fellows' wife and daughter.
8. that if appointed a warden, the mason must be true to his master and just to his fellows in every way.
9. that the masons take their turn in being stewards amiably and serve each one another "as though they were sister and brother" and do the work honestly.
10. that a mason should live "without care and strife" and not slander his fellows. If a mason brings discredit on his fellows, he shall be ordered to appear before the next Assembly. If he does not appear, he must forswear the craft.
11. that a skilled mason shall assist by instruction to prevent the loss of the work by a less skilled man about to make an error.
12. that any decision of the assembly of Masters, Fellows, and great lords shall be maintained in the craft.
13. that the mason must swear never to be a thief or a thief-maintainer
14. that the mason must swear a "good true oath" to his Masters and Fellows and is to be steadfast and true to this ordinance and his liege lord, the King.
15. that if any mason, after taking his oath, proves false and is unwilling to amend his ways, and the charges against him are proved, he shall forswear the craft forever. If he then be found working, it is the sheriff's duty to imprison the disobedient mason and confiscate his property.

History vs Symbolism

Symbolism had been largely used by the Church in the Middle Ages to assist in inculcating moral lessons; on the other hand, there is little or no trace of it in either the Cooke or the Regius MSS, or in the later MS Constitutions of Masonry.

The cathedral builders of the Regius Poem took Euclid as the founder of their craft. They did not, as they may well have done, claim to be the direct descendants of King Solomon's builders. The ritual, on the other hand, bases its story on the events surrounding the building of King Solomon's Temple and much of the tradition of present day freemasonry recalls those early times. But the Hiram story is a cautionary tale. It is the stuff of fraternities, not of a group of operative craftsmen. Its absence in the Regius Poem suggests that it was not part of the operative craft. At least, it was not part of the face the craft shown to the public. If the story did exist in the fourteenth century, and if the free masons considered it part of their lore, its absence in their manual would indicate that it was part of their inner workings, something for the use of members only.

Another difference between the old manuscript and our ritual is that the history presented in the Regius Poem is not the fanciful sort of tale that was employed by the 18th century freemasons. The older version shows all indications that it was an honest effort to present the actual history of a working craft. This is important. Since the Hiram story is symbolic, there would be little point trying to find it in the pages of history. Conversely,

since the Regius poem appears to be history, it would be wrong to treat it as mere fable and ignore the kernel of truth it must contain.

Some Miscellaneous Yet Noteworthy Points

It is the Halliwell MS which contains the instructions now accepted as groundwork for the title “Worshipful” as applied to Masters (45,46) and it also acknowledges the grade or rank of Master Mason (Mayster Mason).

In the Regius and Cooke MSS, the word “Freemason” does not occur at all, “mason” being used in all cases

Certain numbers of boys and youths, after finishing their schooling, may have qualified as masons. If this were so, it would help explain the references in the Regius and Cooke MSS to the sons of lords and gentlemen becoming masons. It was probable from among these more educated masons that the mason-architects of the Middle Ages ultimately sprang.

The statement in the contemporary Regius MS (225-230) that the master mason was not to work at night, except in study, lends support to the view that the tracing board was utilized for the master mason to draw upon. It was the master masons who drew the plans for their structures, and it is known that early mason’s lodges contained tracing boards.

The word “mote” is the third person singular of the present subjective of the Anglo Saxon word “motan” which means “to be allowed.” Hence the phrase “So Mote It Be,” which is regularly used by Freemasons in their supplications to the deity and in lieu of the word “Amen.”

It is inconceivable that this particular trade was uncontrolled; some organization must have existed to supervise the activities of the masons. The probability is that assemblies of some kind were held. According to the Regius MS, [415) they were to make ordinances for the craft In the Middle ages, “law” and “custom” were closely related, and laws were often declarations or statements of accepted custom. As customs gradually changed, new declarations or statements of custom might be called for. The business of the assembly would thus seem to have been to interpret and enforce the customs of the industry. Uniformity of customs (and thus the articles and points) would tend to be brought about partly by the influence of the King’s Master Masons but principally by mobility amongst masons. The mason’s customs, which served as a basis for the Articles and Points, may have existed and been transmitted orally long before they were first committed to writing.

Conclusion

The poem, as well as the old charges, support a theory that architecture, founded on geometry, was developed in Egypt and that its early practitioners were of gentle birth. They were the actual designers of the structures and must have worked in conjunction with the skilled craftsmen and manual laborers. A guild, composed of different grades of members, would thus be formed, possibly with different secret signs for each class, and from this guild, through different channels of development, would arise the present day speculative form of Freemasonry with its system of degrees. Further, that the legend of the founding of the science of geometry by the children of great lords and ladies, as related in the first part of the poem, is not myth but is founded on fact, for unlettered working masons could never have produced the temples and churches for the worship of the Great Architect of the Universe.

If it be true, as is highly probable, that our present rites and ceremonies were built up gradually in the later 17th and early 18th centuries by a series of elaborations of an early but simple admission ceremony, it is equally true that between the 14th and the 18th centuries numerous additions and modifications were made to the legend and to the Charges. Thus, for example, while there is no reference to King Solomon’s Temple in the Regius

Poem, there is a short reference in the Cooke MS, a longer account in the 16th and 17th century versions of the MS Constitutions of Masonry and a still longer account in certain early 18th century versions. That being so, the 18th century working has the same right to be regarded as the descendent of the 14th and 15th century versions of the MS Constitutions as the MS Constitutions have a right to be regarded as the descendants of the Regius or Cooke MS, or of some contemporary or older version which is now missing.

Space do not permit a more lengthy dissertation on this fascinating topic. Needless to say, there are countless references which deal with the history, significance and meaning of the Regius MS practice it today.

Some appear in the following list of references. There are many others, and brethren who choose to pursue this topic in greater depth will soon discover that there is not agreement among the various authors. Nonetheless, the message that all impart is that the Regius Manuscript does serve as tangible evidence that there is a link between the operative masons of the 14th century and speculative Freemasonry as we know and one cannot help but notice the remarkable number of instances in which phrases from the Regius MS have been introduced - although in different terminology - into our ritual, and in some cases its requirements have been incorporated into Masonic constitutions. Even the last stage of the document, which deals with manners at table and the presence of superiors and appears at first to be quite irrelevant, may be accepted as evidence that our present custom of celebrating special Masonic events by banqueting and fraternizing was a feature of the Craft at the time from which the MS speaks.

The Regius Poem in its entirety is appended to this paper. I have tabulated the original text and the modern translation in adjacent columns to facilitate reading and understanding this fascinating manuscript.

Acknowledgment: I am indebted to Bro. Edward Punt, of Lawton Lodge No.183 in Lawton, Oklahoma. Bro. Punt provided me with both the ancient and modern versions of the Regius Poem via the Internet, thus saving immeasurable hours of transcribing.

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Part II

THE HISTORY SIGNIFICANCE AND MEANING OF THE REGIUS MANUSCRIPT

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THE REGIUS MANUSCRIPT

A Poem of Moral Duties
(Original text)

Hic incipiunt constitutiones artis gemetriac secundum Euclydern.

Whose wol bothe wel rede and loke,
He may fynde wryte yn olde boke
Of grete lordys and eke ladyssse,
That had mony chydryn y-fere, y-wisse,
And hade no rentys to fynde hem wyth,
Nowther yn towne, ny felde, ny fryth:
A counsel togeder they cowthe hem take,
To ordeyne for these chydryn sake,
How they myzth best lede there lyfe
Withoute grete desese, care and stryge;
And most for the multytude that was comynge
Of here chyldryn after here zyndynge.
(They) sende thenne after grete clerkys,
To techyn hem thenne gode werkys;
And pray we hem, for our Lordys take,
To oure chydryn sum werke to make,
That they myzth gete there lyvngre therby,
Bothe wel and onestlyche, ful sycurly.

Yn that tyme, throzh good gemetry,
Thys onest craft of good masonry
Wes ordeynt and made yn thys manere,
Y-cownterfetyd of thys clerkys yfere;
At these lordys prayers they cownter-fetyd gemetry,
And zaf hyt the name of masonry,
For the moste oneste craft of alle.
These lordys chydryn therto dede falle,
To lurne of hym the craft of gemetry,
The wheche he made ful curysly;
Throzgh fadrys prayers and modrys also,
Thys onest craft he putte them to.
He that lerned best, and were of honeste, 31
And passud hys felows yn curyste;
Zef yin that craft he dede hym passe,
He schulde have more worschepe then the lasse.
Thys grete clerkys name was clept Euclyde,
Hys name hyt spradde ful wondur wyde.
Zet thys grate clerke more ordeynt he
To hym that was herre yn thys degre,
That he schulde teche the synplyst of wytte
Yn that onest craft to be parfytee;

THE REGIUS MANUSCRIPT

A Poem of Moral Duties
(Modern Translation)

Here begin the constitutions of the art of Geometry according to Euclid.

1 Whoever will both well read and loolt,
2 He may find written in old book
3 Of great lords and also ladies,
4 That had many children together, certainly;
5 And had no income to keep them with,
6 Neither in town nor field nor enclosed wood;
7 A council together they, could them take,
8 To ordain for these children's sake,
9 How they might best lead their life,
10 Without great disease, care and strife;
11 And most for the multitude that was coming
12 Of their children after their ending.
13 They sent him after great clerks,
14 To teach them then good works;
15 And pray we them, for our Lord's take.
16 To our children some work to make,
17 That they might get their living thereby,
18 Both well and honestly full securely.

Foundation of Masonry by Euclid in Egypt

19 In that time, through good geometry,
20 This honest craft of good masonry
21 Was ordained and made in this manner,
22 Counterfeited of these clerks together;
23 At these lord's prayers they, counterfeited geometry,
24 And gave it the name of masonry,
25 For the most honest craft of all.
26 These lords' children did fall,
27 To learn of him the craft of geometry,
28 The which he made full curiously;
29 Through father's prayers and mother's also
30 This honest craft he put them to.
31 He learned best, and was of honesty,
32 And passed his fellows in curiosity;
33 If in that craft he did him pass,
34 He should have more worship than the less,
35 This great clerk's name was Euclid,
36 His name it spread hill wonder wide.
37 Yet this great clerk ordained he
38 To him that was higher in this degree,
39 That he should teach the simplest of wit
40 In that honest craft to be perfect;

And so uchon schulle techyn othur,
 And love togeder as syster and brothur.
 Furthermore zet that ordeynt he,
 Mayster y-called so schulde he be;
 So that he were most y-worschepede,
 Thenne sculde he be so y-clepede:
 But mason schulde never won other calle,
 Withynne the craft amongus hem alle,
 Ny soget, ny servant, my dere hrother,
 Thazht he be not so perfert as ys another;
 Uchon sculle calle other felows by cuthe,
 For cause they come of ladyes burthe
 On thys maner, throz good wytte of gemetry,
 Bygan furst the craft of masonry:
 The clerk Euclde on thys wyse hyt fonde,
 Thys craft of gemetry yn Egypte londe.
 Yn Egypte he tawzhte hyt full wyde,
 Yn dyvers londe on every syde;
 Mony erys afterwarde, y understonde,
 Zer that the craft com ynto thys londe,

41 And so each one shall teach the other,
 42 And love together as sister and brother.
 43 Furthermore yet that ordained he,
 44 Master called so should he be;
 45 So that he were most worshipped,
 46 Then should he be so called;
 47 But masons should never one another call,
 48 Within the craft amongst them all,
 49 Neither subject nor servant, my dear brother,
 50 Though he be not so perfect as is another;
 51 Each shall call other fellows by friendship,
 52 Because they come of ladies' birth.
 53 On this manner, through good wit of geometry
 54 Began first the craft of masonry
 55 The clerk Euclid on this wise it found
 56 This craft of geometry in Egypt land
 57 In Egypt he taught it full wide
 58 In divers lands on every side;
 59 Many years afterwards, I understand,
 60 Ere that the craft came into this land.

Introduction of Masonry into England under King Athelstane

Thys craft com ynto England, as y zow say,
 Yn tyme of good kyng Athelstonus day;
 He made to bothe halle and eke bowre,
 And hye templus of gret honowre,
 To sportyn hym yn bothe day and nyzts,
 And to worschepe hys God with all hys myzt.
 Hys goode lorde loved thys craft ful wel,
 And purposud to strenthyn hyt every del,
 For dyvers defawtys that yn the craft he fonde;
 He sende about ynto the londe
 After alle the masonus of the crafte,
 To come to hym full evene strazfte,
 For to amende these defawtys alle
 By good consel, zef hyt myttth falle.

61 This craft came into England, as I you say,
 62 In time of good King Athelstane's day;
 63 He rnade then both hall and even bower,
 64 And high temples of great honour,
 65 To disport him in both day and night,
 66 And to worship his God with all his might.
 67 This good lord loved this craft full well,
 68 And purposed to strengthen it every part,
 69 For divers faults that in the craft he found,
 70 He sent about into the land
 71 After all the masons of the craft,
 72 To come to him full even straight,
 73 For to amend these defaults all
 74 By good counsel, if it might fall.

The Moral Duties, fifteen articles

Asemble thenne he cowthe let make
 Of dyvers lordis, yn here state,
 Dukys, erlys, and barnes also,
 Kynzthys, sqwyers, and mony mo,
 And the grete burges of that syte,
 They were ther alle yn there degre;
 These were ther uchon algate,
 To ordeyne for these masonus astate.
 Ther they sowzton by here wytte,

75 An assembly then could let make
 76 Of divers lords, in their state,
 77 Dukes, earls, and barons also,
 78 Knights, squires and many more,
 79 And the great burgesses of that city,
 80 They were there all in their degree;
 81 There were there each one always,
 82 To ordain for these masons, estate,
 83 There they sought by their wit,

How they mysthyn governe hytte:
Fyftene artyculus they ther sowzton
And fyftene poyntys they wrozton.

Hic incipit articulus primus.

The furste artycul of thys gemetry:-
The mayster mason moste be full securly
Bothe stedefast, trusty, and trwe,
Hyt schal hum never thenne arewe:
And pay thy felows after the coste,
As vytaylys goth thenne, wel thou woste;
And pay them trwly, apon thy fay,
What that they deserven may;
And to ther hure take no more,
But what they mowe serve fore;
And spare, nowther for love ny drede,
Of nowther partys to take no mede
Of lord ny fellow, whether he be,
Of hem thou take no manner of fee;
And as a jugge stonde upryzth;
And thenne thou dost to bothe good ryzth,
And trwly do thys whersever thou gost,
Thy worschep, thy profyt, hyt shal be most

Aniculus secundus.

The secunde artycul of good masonry,
As ze mowe hyt here hyr specyaly,
That every mayster, that ys a mason,
Most ben at the generale congregacyon,
So that he hyt resonably z-tolde
Where that the semble schal be holde;
And to that semble he most nede gon,
But he have a resenabul skwsacyon,
Or but he be unbuxom to that craft,
Or with falsshed ys over-raft,
Or ellus sekenes hat hym so stronge,
That he may not com hem arnonge;
That ys a skwsacyon, good and abulle,
To that semble withoute fabulle.

Articulus tercius.

The thrydde artycul forsothe hyt uysse,
That the mayster take to no prentysse,
But he have good seuerans to dwelle
Seven zer with hym, as y zow telle,
Hys craft to lurne, that ys profytable;
Withynne lasse he may not be able

84 How they might govern it;
85 Fifteen articles they there sought,
86 And fifteen points there they wrought,

Here begins the first article.

87 The first article of this geometry:-
88 The master mason must be full securely
89 Both steadfast, trusty and true,
90 It shall him never then rue:
91 And pay thy fellows after thecost,
92 As victuals goeth then, well thou knowest;
93 And pay them truly, upon thy faith,
94 What they may deserve;
95 And to their hire take no more,
96 But what they may serve for;
97 And spare neither for love nor dread,
98 Of neither parties to take no bribe;
99 Of lord nor fellow, whoever he be,
100 Of them thou take no manner of fee;
101 And as a judge stand upright,
102 And then thou dost to both good right;
103 And truly do this wheresoever thou gost,
104 Thy worship, thy profit, it shall be most.

Aniculus secundus.

105 The second article of good masonry,
106 As you must it here hear specially,
107 That every master, that is a mason,
108 Must be at the general congregation,
109 So that he it reasonably be told
110 Where that the assembly shall be held;
111 And to that assembly he must needs go,
112 Unless he have a reasonable excuse,
113 Or unless he be disobedient to that craft
114 Or with falsehood is overtaken,
115 Or else sickness hath him so strong,
116 That he may not come them among;
117 That is an excuse good and able,
118 To that assembly without fable.

Articulus tercius.

119 The third article forsooth it is,
120 That the master takes to no 'Prentice,
121 Unless he have good assurance to dwell
122 Seven years with him, as 1 you tell,
123 His craft to leam, that is profitable;
124 Within less he may no be able

To lordys profyt ny to his owne,
As ze mowe knowe by good resowne.

Articulus quartus.

The fowrthe artycul thys moste be
That the mayster hym wel be see,
That he no bondemon prentys make,
Ny for no covetyse do hym take;
For the lord that he ys bonde to,
May fache the prentes whersever he go
Zef yn the logge he were y-take,
Muche desese hyt myzth ther make,
And suche case hyt myzth befall,
That hyt myzth greve summe or alle.
For alle the rasonus tht ben there
Wol stonde togedur hol y-fere
Zef suche won yn that craft schulde dwelle,
Of dyvers desesys ze myzth telle:
For more zese thenne, and of honeste,
Take a prentes of herre degre.
By old tyme wryton y fynde
That the prentes schulde be of gentyl kynde;
And so symtyme grete lordys blod
Took this geometry that is full good.

Articulus quintus.

The fyfthe artycul ys swythe good,
So that the prentes be of lawlul blod;
The mayster schal not for no vantage,
Make no prentes that ys outrage;
Hyt ys to mene, as ze mowe here,
That he have hys lymes hole alle y-fere;
To the craft hyt were gret scharne,
To make an halt mon and a lame,
For an unperfyte mon of suche blod
Schulde do the craft but lytul good.
Thus ze mowe knowe everychon,
The craft wolde have a myzthty mon;
A maymed mon he hath no myzht,
Ze mowe hyt knowe long zer nyzht

Articulus sextus.

The syzthe artycul zet mowe not mysse,
That the mayster do the lord no pregedysse,
To take of the lord, for hyse prentyse,
Also muche as hys fellows don, yn alle vyse.
For yn that craft they ben ful perfyte,

125 To lords' profit, nor to his own
126 As you may know by good reason.

Articulus quartus.

127 The fourth article this must he,
128 That the master him well be see,
129 That he no bondsman 'prentice make,
130 Nor for no covetousness do him take;
131 For the lord that he is bound to,
132 May fetch the 'prentice wheresoever he go.
133 If in the lodge he were taken,
134 Much disease it might there make,
135 And such case it might befall,
136 That it might grieve some or all.
137 For all the masons that be there
138 Will stand together all together.
139 If such one in that craft should dwell,
140 Of divers diseases you might tell;
141 For more ease then, and of honesty
142 Takes 'prentice of higher degree.
143 By old time written I find
144 That the 'prentice should be of gentle kind;
145 And so sometime, great lords' blood
146 Took this geometry that is full good.

Fifth article.

147 The fifth article is very good,
148 So that the 'prentice be of lawful blood;
149 The master shall not for no advantage,
150 Make no 'prentice that is deformed;
151 It is mean, as you may hear
152 That he have all his limbs whole all together;
153 To the craft it were great shame,
154 To make a halt man and a lame,
155 For an imperfect man of such blood
156 Should do the craft but little good.
157 Thus you may know every one,
158 The craft would have a mighty man;
159 A maimed man he hath no might,
160 You must it know long ere night.

Sixth article.

161 The sixth article you must not miss
162 That the master do the lord no prejudice,
163 To take the lord for his 'prentice,
164 As much as his fellows do, in all wise.
165 For in that craft they be full perfect

So ys not he, ze mowe sen hyt.
Also hyt were azeynus good reson,
To take hys, hure as hys felows don.
To take hys hure as hys felows don
Juggythe the prentes to take lasse
Thenne hys felows, that ben fu! perfyt.
Yn dyvers maters, conne qwyte hyt,
The mayster may his prentes so enforme,
That hys hure may cese ful zurne,
And zer hys terme come to an ende,
Hys hure may ful wel arnende.

Articulus septimus.

The seventh artycul that ys now here,
Ful wel wol telle zow, alle y-fere,
That no mayster, for favour ny drede,
Schal no thef nowther clothe ny fede.
Theves he schal herberon never won,
Ny hym that hath y-quellude a mon,
Ny thylike that hath a febul name,
Lest hyt wolde turne the craft to schame.

Articulus octavus.

The eghte artycul schewt zow so,
That the mayster may hyt wel do,
Zef that he have any mon of crafte,
And he not also perfyt as he auzte,
Re may hym change sone anon,
And take for hym a perfytur mon.
Suche a mon, throze rechelaschepe,
Myzth do the craft schort worschepe.

Articulus nonus.

The nynthe artycul schewet ful welle,
That the mayster he both wyse and felle;
That no werke he undurtake,
But he conne bothe hyt ende and make;
And that hyt be to the lordes profyt also,
And to hys craft, whersever he go;
And that the grond he wel y-take,
That hyt nowther fle ny grake.

Articulus decimus.

The tenth artycul ys for to knowe,
Amonge the craft, to hye and lowe,
There schal no mayster supplante other,

166 So is not he, you must see it
167 Also it were against good reason,
168 To take his hire as his fellows do.
169 This same article in this case,
170 Judgeth his prentice to take less
171 Than his fellows, that be full perfect.
172 In divers matters, know requite it,
173 The master may his 'prentice so inform,
174 That his hire may increase full soon,
175 And ere his term come to an end,
176 His hire may full well amend.

Seventh article.

177 The seventh article that is now here,
178 Full well will tell you all together,
179 That no master for favour nor dread,
180 Shall no thief neither clothe nor feed.
181 Thieves he shall harbour never one,
182 Nor him that hath killed a man,
183 Nor the same that hath a feeble name,
184 Lest it would turn the craft to shame.

Eighth article.

185 The eighth article sheweth you so,
186 That the master may it well do.
187 If that he have any man of craft,
188 And he be not so perfect as he ought,
189 He may him change soon anon,
190 And take for him a more perfect man.
191 Such a man through recklessness,
192 Might do the craft scant worship.

Ninth article.

193 The ninth article sheweth full well,
194 That the master be both wise and strong;
195 That he no work undertake,
196 Unless he can both it end and make;
197 And that it be to the lords' profit also,
198 And to his craft, wheresoever he go;
199 And that the ground be well taken,
200 That it neither flaw nor crack.

Tenth article.

201 The tenth article is for to know,
202 Among the craft, to high and low,
203 There shall no master supplant another,

But he togeder as systur and brother,
Yn thys curyus craft, alle and som,
That longuth to a maystur mason.
Ny he schal not supplante non other mon,
That hath y-take awerke hym uppon,
Yn peyne therof that ys so stronge,
That peyseth no lasse thenne ten ponge,
But zef that he be guilty y-fonde,
That toke furst the werke on honde;
For no mon yn masonry
Schal no supplante othur securly,
But zef that hyt be so y-wrozth,
That hyt turne the werke to nozth;
Thenne may a mason that werk crave,
To the lordes profit hyt for to save;
Yn suche a case but hyt do falle,
Ther schal no mason medul withalle.
Forsothe he that begynnth the gronde,
And he be a mason goode and sonde,
For hath hyt sycurly yn hys mynde
To brynge the werke to ful good ende.

Articulus undecimus.

The eleventhe artycul y telle the,
That he ys bothe fayr and fre;
For he techyt, by hys myzth,
That no mason schulde worche by nyzth,
But zef hyt be yn practesyng of wytte,
Zef that y cowthe amende hytte.

Articulus duodecimus.

The twelfththe artycul ys of hye honeste
To zevery mason, whersever he be:
He schal not hys felows werk deprave,
Zef that he wol hys honeste save;
With honest wordes he hyt comende,
By the wytte that God the dede sende;
Buy hyt amende by al that thou may,
Bytwynne zow bothe withoute nay.

Articulus xiiius.

The threttene artycul, so God me save,
Ys, zef that the mayster a prentes have,
Enterlyche thenne that he hym teche,
And meserable poyntes that he hym reche,
That he the craft abelyche may conne,
Whersever he go undur the sonne.

204 But he together as sister and brother,
205 In this curious craft, all and some,
206 That belongeth to a master mason.
207 Nor shall he supplant no other man,
208 That hath taken a work him upon,
209 In pain thereof that is so strong,
210 That weigheth no less than ten pounds,
211 But if that he be guilty found,
212 That took first the work on hand;
213 For no man in masonry
214 Shall not supplant other securely,
215 But if that it be so wrought,
216 That in turn the work to nought;
217 Then may a mason that work crave,
218 To the lords' profit for it to save
219 In such a case if it do fall,
220 There shall no mason meddle withal.
221 Forsooth he that beginneth the ground,
222 If he be a mason good and sound,
223 He hath it securely in his mind
224 To bring the work to full good end.

Eleventh article.

225 The eleventh article I tell thee,
226 That he is both fair and free;
227 For he teacheth, by his might,
228 That no mason should work by night,
229 But if he in practising of wit,
230 If that I could amend it.

Twelfth article.

231 The twelfth article is of high honesty
232 To every mason wheresoever he be,
233 He shall not his fellows' work deprave,
234 If that he will his honesty save;
235 With honest words he it commend,
236 By the wit God did thee send;
237 But it amend by all that thou may,
238 Between you both without doubt.

Thirteenth article.

239 The thirteenth article, so God me save,
240 Is if that the master a 'prentice have,
241 Entirely then that he him teach,
242 And measurable points that he him tell,
243 That he the craft ably may know,
244 Wheresoever he go under the sun.

Articulus xiiiius.

The fowrtene artycul, by goode reson,
Schewete the mayster how he schal don;
He schal no prentes to hym take,
Byt dyvers crys he have to make,
That he may, withynne hys terme,
Of hym dyvers poyntes may lurne.

Articulus quindecimus.

The fyftene artcul maketh an ende,
For to the mayster he ys a frende;
To lurne hym so, that for no mon,
No fals mantenans he take hym apon,
Ny maynteine hys felows yn here synne,
For no good that he myzth wynne;
Ny no fals sware sofre hem to make,
For drede of there sowles sake;
Lest hyt wolde turne the craft to schame,
And hymself to mechul blame.

Plures Constituciones

At thys semble were poyntes y-ordeynt mo,
Of grete lordys and maystrys also,
That whose wol conne thys craft and com to astate,
He most love wel God, and holy churche algate,
And hys mayster also, that he ys wythe,
Whersever he go, yn fylde or frythe;
And thy felows thou love also,
For that they craft wol that thou do.

Secundus punctus.

The secunde poynt, as y zow say,
That the mason worche apon the werk day,
Also trwly, as he con or may,
To deserve hys huyre for the halyday,
And trwly to labrun on hys dede,
Wel deserve to have hys mede.

Tercius punctus.

The thrydde poynt most be severele,
With the prentes knowe hyt wele,
Hys mayster conwsel he kepe and close,
And hys felows by hys goode purpose;
The prevetyse of the chamber telle he no man,
Ny yn the logge whatsoever they done;

Fourteenth article.

245 The fourteenth article by good reason,
246 Sheweth the master how he shall do;
247 He shall no 'prentice to him take,
248 Unless diver cares he have to make,
249 That he may within his term,
250 Of him divers points may learn.

Fifteenth article.

251 The fifteenth article maketh an end,
252 For to the master he is a friend;
253 To teach him so, that for no man,
254 No false maintenance he take him upon,
255 Nor maintain his fellows in their sin,
256 For no good that he might win;
257 Nor no false oath suffer him to make,
258 For dread of their souls' sake,
259 Lest it would turn the craft to shame,
260 And himself to very much blame.

Plural constitutions.

261 At this assembly were points ordained more,
262 Of great lords and masters also.
263 That who will know this craft and come to estate,
264 He must love well God and holy church always,
265 And his master also that he is with,
266 Whersoever he go in field or enclosed wood,
267 And thy fellows thou love also,
268 For that thy craft will that thou do.

Second point.

269 The second point as I you say,
270 That the mason work upon the work day,
271 As truly as he can or may,
272 To deserve his hire for the holy-day,
273 And truly to labour on his deed,
274 Well deserve to have his reward.

Third point.

275 The third point must be severely,
276 With the 'prentice know it well,
277 His master's counsel he keep and close,
278 And his fellows by his good purpose;
279 The privities of the chamber tell he no man,
280 Nor in the lodge whatsoever they do;

Whatever thou heryst, or syste hem do,
Tells hyt no mon, whersever thou go;
The counsel of halls, and zeke of bowre,
Kepe hyt wel to gret honowre,
Lest hyt wolde torne thyself to blame,
And brynge the craft ynto gret schame.

Quartus punctus.

The fowrthe poynt techyth us also,
That no mon to hys craft be false;
Errour he schal maynteine none
Azeynus the craft, but let hyt gone;
Ny no pregedysse he schal not do
To hys mayster, ny hys felows also;
And thatzth the prentes be under awe,
Zet he wolde have the same lawe.

Quintus punctus.

The fyfthe poynte ys, withoute nay,
That whenne the mason taketh hys pay
Of the mayster, y-ordent to hym,
Ful mekely y-take so most hyt byn;
Zet most the mayster, by good resone,
Wame hem lawfully byfore none,
Zef he nulle okepye hem no more,
As he hath y-done ther by fore;
Azeynus thys ordyr he may not stryve,
Zef he thenke wel for to thryve.

Sextus punctus.

The syxte poynt ys ful zef to knowe,
Bothe to hye and eke to lowe,
For such case hyt myzth befalle,
Amonge the masonus, summe or alle,
Throwghe envye, or dedly hate,
Ofte aryseth ful gret debate.
Thenne owyth the mason, zef that he may,
Putte hem bothe under a day;
But loveday zet schul they make none;
Tyl that the werke day be clene a-gone;
Apon the holyday ze mowe wel take
Leyser y-nowzgtth loveday to make,
Lest that hyt wolde the werke day
Latte here werke for suche afray;
To suche ende thenne that hem drawe,
That they stonde wel yn Goddes lawe.

281 Whatsoever thou hearest or seest them do,
282 Tell it no man wheresoever you go;
283 The counsel of hall, and even of bower,
284 Keep it well to great honour,
285 Lest it would turn thyself to blame,
286 And bring the craft into great shame.

Fourth point.

287 The fourth point teacheth us also,
288 That no man to his craft be false;
289 Error he shall maintain none
290 Against the craft, but let it go;
291 Nor no prejudice he shall no do
292 To his master, nor his fellow also;
293 And though the prentice be under awe,
294 Yet he would have the same law.

Fifth point.

295 The fifth point is without doubt,
296 That when the mason taketh his pay
297 Of the master, ordained to him,
298 Full meekly taken so must it be;
299 Yet must the master by good reason,
300 Warn him lawfully before noon,
301 If he will not occupy him no more,
302 As he hath done there before;
303 Against this order he may no strive,
304 If he think well for to thrive.

Sixth point.

305 The sixth point is full given to know,
306 Both to high and even low,
307 For such case it might befall;
308 Among the masons some or all,
309 Through envy or deadly hate,
310 Oft ariseth full great debate.
311 Then ought the mason if that he may,
312 Put them both under a day;
313 But loveday yet shall they make none,
314 Till that the work-day be clean gone;
315 Upon the holy-day you must well take
316 Leisure enough loveday to make,
317 Lest that it would the work-day
318 Hinder their work for such a fray;
319 To such end then that you them draw.
320 That they stand well in God's law.

Septimus punctus.

The seventh poynt he may wel mene,
Of wel longe lyf that God us lene,
As hyt dyscryeth wel openly,
Thou schal not by thy maysters wyf ly,
Ny by the felows, yn no maner wyse,
Lest the craft wolde the despise;
Ny by the felows concubyne,
No more thou woldest he dede by thyne.
The peyne thereof let hyt be ser,
That he prentes lul seven zer,
Zef he forfete yn eny of hem,
So y-chasted thenne most he ben;
Ful mekele care myzth ther begynne,
For suche a fowle dedely synne.

Octavus punctus.

The eghte poynt, he may be sure,
Zef thou hast y-taken any cure,
Under thy mayster thou be trwe,
For that pynt thou schalt never arewe;
A trwe medyater thou most nede be
To thy mayster, and thy felows fre;
Do trwly alle that thou myzth,
To both partyes, and that ys good ryzth.

Nonus punctus.

The nynthe poynt we schul hym calle,
That he be stwarde of oure halle,
Zef that ze ben yn chambur y-fere,
Uchon serve other, with mylde chere;
Jentul felows, ze moste hyt knowe,
For to be stwardus alle O rowe,
Weke after weke withoute dowte,
Stwardus to ben so alle abowte,
Lovelyche to serven uchon othur,
As thawgh they were syster and brother;
Ther schal never won on other costage
Fre hymself to no vantage,
But every mon schal be lyche fre
Yn that costage, so moste hyt be;
Loke that thou pay wele every mon algate,
That thou hast y-bowzht any vytayles ate,
That no cravyng be y-mad to the,
Ny to thy felows, yn no degre,
To mon or to wommon, whether he be,
Pay hem wel and trwly, for that wol we;

Seventh point.

321 The seventh point he may well mean,
322 Of well long life that God us lend,
323 As it descrieth well openly,
324 Thou shalt not by thy master's wife lie,
325 Nor by thy fellows', in no manner wise,
326 Lest the craft would thee despise;
327 Nor by thy fellows' concubine,
328 No more thou wouldst he did by thine.
329 The pain thereof let it be sure,
330 That he be 'prentice full seven year,
331 If he forfeit in any of them
332 So chastised then must he be;
333 Full much care might there begin,
334 For such a foul deadly sin.

Eighth point.

335 The eighth point, he may be sure,
336 If thou hast taken any cure,
337 Under thy master thou be true,
338 For that point thou shalt never rue;
339 A true mediator thou must needs be
340 To thy master, and thy fellows free;
341 Do truly all that thou might,
342 To both parties, and that is good right.

Ninth point.

343 The ninth point we shall him call,
344 That he be steward of our hall,
345 If that you be in chamber together,
346 Each one serve other with mild cheer;
347 Gentle fellows, you must it know,
348 For to be stewards all in turn
349 Week after week without doubt,
350 Stewards to be so all in turn about,
351 Amiably to serve each one other,
352 As though they were sister and brother;
353 There shall never one another cost
354 Free himself to no advantage,
355 But every man shall he equally free
356 In that cost, so must it be;
357 Look that thou pay well every man always,
358 That thou hast bought any victuals eaten,
359 That no craving be made to thee,
360 Nor to thy fellows in no degree,
361 To man or to woman, whoever he be,
362 Pay them well and truly, for that will we;

Therof on thy felow trwe record thou take, 363
For that good pay as thou dost make, 364
Lest hyt wolde thy felowe schame, 365
Any brynge thyself ynto gret blame. 366
Zet good acowntes he most make 367
Of suche godes as he hath y-take, 368
Of thy felows goodes that thou hast spende, 369
Wher, and how, and to what ende; 370
Suche acowntes thou most come to, 371
Whenne thy felows wollen that thou do. 372

Decimus punctus.

The tenthe poynt presentyeth wel god lyf,
To lyven withoute care and stryf;
For yf the mason lyve amysse,
And yn hys werk be false, y-wysse,
And thorwz suche a false skewysasyon
May sclawndren hys felows oute reson,
Throwz false sclawnder of suche fame
May make the craft kachone blame.
Zef he do the craft suche vylany,
Do hym no favour thenne securly.
Ny maynteine not hym yn wyked lyf,
Lest hyt wolde turne to care and stryf;
But zet hym ze schul not delayme,
But that ze schullen hym constrayne,
For to apere whersevor ze wylle,
Whar that ze wolen, lowde, or stylle;
To the nexte semble ze schul hym calle,
To apere byfore hys felows alle,
And but zef he wyl by fore hem pere,
The crafte he moste nede forswere;
He schal thenne be chasted after the lawe
That was y-founded by olde dawe.

Punctus undecimus

The eleventhe poynt ys of good dyscrecyoun,
As ze mowe knowe by good resoun;
A mason, and he thys craft wel con,
That syzth hys felow hewen on a ston,
And ys yn poynt to spylle that ston,
Amende hyt sone, zef that thou con,
And teche hym thenne hyt to amende,
That the lordys werke be not y-schende,
And teche hym esely hyt to amende,
With fayre wordes, that God the hath lende;
For hys sake that sytte above,
With swete wordes noresche hym love.

363 363 Therof on thy fellow true record thou take,
364 364 For that good pay as thou dost make,
365 365 Lest it would thy fellow shame,
366 366 And bring thyself into great blame.
367 367 Yet good accounts he must make
368 368 Of such goods as he hath taken,
369 369 Of thy fellows' goods that thou hast spent,
370 370 Where and how and to what end;
371 371 Such accounts thou must come to,
372 372 When thy fellows wish that thou do.

Tenth point.

373 The tenth point presenteth well good life,
374 To live without care and strife;
375 For if the mason live amiss,
376 And in his work be false I know,
377 And through such a false excuse
378 May slander his fellows without reason,
379 Through false slander of such fame.
380 May make the craft acquire blame.
381 If he do the craft such villainy,
382 Do him no favour then securely,
383 Nor maintain not him in wicked life,
384 Lest it would turn to care and strife;
385 But yet him you shall not delay,
386 Unless that you shall him constrain,
387 For to appear wheresoever you will,
388 Where that you will, loud, or still;
389 To the next assembly you him call,
390 To appear before his fellows all,
391 And unless he will before them appear,
392 The craft he must need forswear;
393 He shall then be punished after the law
394 That was founded by old day.

Eleventh point.

395 The eleventh point is of good discretion,
396 As you must know by good reason;
397 A mason, if he this craft well know,
398 That seeth his fellow hew on a stone,
399 And is in point to spoil that stone,
400 Amend it soon if that thou can,
401 And teach him then it to amend,
402 That the lords work be not spoiled,
403 And teach him easily it to amend,
404 With fair words, that God thee hath lent;
405 For his sake that sit above,
406 With sweet words nourish his love.

Punctus duodecimus.

The twelthe poynt of gret ryolte,
Ther as the semble y-hole schal be,
Ther schul be maystrys and felows also,
And other grete lordes mony mo;
There schal be the scheref of that contre,
And also the meyr of that syte,
Knyztes and ther schul be,
And other aldermen, as ze schul se;
Suche ordynance as they maken there,
They schul maynte hyt hol y-fere
Azeynus that mon, whatsoever he be,
That longuth to the craft bothe fayr and free.
Zef he any stryf azeynus hem make,
Ynto here warde he schal be take.

Xiiiis punctus.

The thretenth poynt ys to us ful luf.
He schal swere never to be no thef,
Ny soker hym yn hys fals craft,
For no good that he hath byraft,
And thou mowe hyt knowe or syn,
Nowther for hys good, ny for hys kyn.

Xiiiiis punctus.

The fowrtethe poynt ys fill good lawe
To hym that wold ben under awe;
A good trwe othe he most ther swere
To hys mayster and hys felows that ben there;
He most be stedefast and trwe also
To alle thys ordynance, whersever he go,
And to hys lyge lord the kynge,
To be trwe to hym, over alle thyng
And alle these poyntes hyr before
To hem thou most nede by y-swore,
And alle schul swere the same othe
Of the masonus, be they luf, ben they loght,
To alle these poyntes hyr byfore,
That hath ben ordeynt by ful good lore.
And they schul enquere every mon
On his party, as wyl as he con,
Zef any mon mowe be y-fownde gulty
Yn any of these poyntes spesyaly;
And whad he be, let hym be sowzht,
And to the semble let hym be browzht.

Twelfth point.

407 The twelfth point is of great royalty,
408 There as the assembly held shall be,
409 There shall be masters and fellows also,
410 And other great lords many more;
411 There shall be the sheriff of that country,
412 And also the mayor of that city,
413 Knights and squires there shall be,
414 And also aldermen, as you shall see;
415 Such ordinance as thy make there,
416 They shall maintain it all together
417 Against that man, whatsoever he be,
418 That belongeth to the craft both fair and free.
419 If he any strife against them make,
420 Into their custody he shall be taken.

Thirteenth point.

421 The thirteenth point is to us full lief,
422 He shall swear never to be no thief,
423 Nor succour him in his false craft,
424 For no good that he hath bereft,
425 And thou must it know or sin,
426 Neither for his good, nor for his kin.

Fourteenth point.

427 The fourteenth point is full good law
428 To him that would be under awe;
429 A good true oath he must there swear
430 To his master and his fellows that be there;
431 He must be steadfast and true also
432 To all this ordinance, wheresoever he go,
433 And to his liege lord the king,
434 To be true to him over all thing.
435 And all these points here before
436 To them thou must need be sworn,
437 And all shall swear the same oath
438 Of the masons, be they lief be they loath,
439 To all these points here before,
440 That hath been ordained by full good lore.
441 And they shall enquire every man
442 Of his party, as well as he can,
443 If any man may be found guilty
444 In any of these points specially;
445 And who he be, let him be sought,
446 And to the assembly let him be brought.

Quindecimus punctus.

The fifethe poynt ys of ful good lore,
For hem that schul ben ther y-swore,
Suche ordyance at the semble wes layd
Of grete lordes and maystres byforesayd;
For the ilke that be unbuxom, y-wysse,
Azeynus the ordynance that ther ysse
Of these artyculus, that were y-moved there,
Of grete lordes and masonus al y-fere.
And zef they ben y-proved opunly
Byfore that semble, by an by,
And for here gultes no mendys wol make,
Thenne most they nede the craft forsake;
And so masonus craft they schul refuse,
And swere hyt never more for to use.
But zef that they wol mendys make,
Azayn to the craft they schul never take;
And zef that they nul not do so,
The scheref schal come hem sone to.
And putte there bodyes yn deppe prison,
For the trespasse that they hav y-don,
And take there goodes and there cattelle
Ynto the kynges bond, everyt delle,
And lete hem dwelle ther full styлле,
Tyl hyt be oure lege kynges wylie.

Alta ordinacio artis gematriae.

They ordent ther a semble to be y-holde
Every zer, whersever they wolde,
To amende the defautes, zef any where fonde
Amonge the craft withynne the londe;
Uche zer or thrydde zer hyt schuld be holde,
Yn every place whersever they wolde;
Tyme and place most he ordeynt also,
Yn what place they schul semble to.
Alle the men of craft thr they most ben,
And other grete lordes, as ze mowe sen,
To mende the fautes that be ther y-spoke,
Zef that eny of hem be thenne y-broke,
Ther they schullen ben alle y-swore,
That longuth to thys craftes lore,
To kepe these statutes everychon,
That ben y-ordeynt by kyng Athelston;
These statutes that y have hyr y-fonde
Y chulle they ben holde throzh my londe,
For the worsche of my rygolte,
That y have by my dygnyte.
Also at every semble that ze holde,

Fifteenth point.

447 The fifteenth point is full good lore,
448 For them that shall be there sworn,
449 Such ordinance at the assembly was laid
450 Of great lords and masters before said;
451 For the same that be disobedient, I know,
452 Against the ordinance that there is,
453 Of these articles that were moved there,
454 Of great lords and masons all together,
455 And if they be proved openly
456 Before that assembly, by and by,
457 And for their guilt's no amends will make,
458 Then must they need the craft forsake;
459 And no masons craft they shall refuse,
460 And swear it never more to use.
461 But if that they will amends make,
462 Again to the craft they shall never take;
463 And if that they will no do so,
464 The sheriff shall come them soon to,
465 And put their bodies in deep prison,
466 For the trespass that they have done,
467 And take their goods and their cattle
468 Into the kings hand, every part,
469 And let them dwell there full still,
470 Till it he our liege king's will.

Another ordinance of the art of geometry

471 They ordained there an assembly to be hold,
472 Every year, wheresoever they would,
473 To amend the defaults, if any were found
474 Among the craft within the land;
475 Each year or third year it should he held,
476 In every place weresoever they would;
477 Time and place must be ordained also,
478 In what place they should assemble to,
479 All the men of craft there they must be,
480 And other great lords, as you must see,
481 To mend the faults the he there spoken,
482 If that any of them be then broken.
483 There they shall be all sworn,
484 That belongeth to this crafts lore,
485 To keep their statutes every one
486 That were ordained by King Althelstane;
487 These statutes that I have here found
488 I ordain they be held through my land,
489 For the worship of my royalty,
490 That I have by my dignity.
491 Also at every assembly that you hold,

That ze come to zowre lyge kyng bolde,
Bysechyng hym of hys bye grace,
To stond with zow yn every place,
To conferme the statutes of kynge Athelston,
That he ordeydn't to thys craft by good reson.

Ars quatuor coronatorum.

Pray we now to God almyzbt,
And to hys moder Mary bryzht,
That we mowe keepe these artyculus here,
And these poynts wel al y-fere,
As dede these holy martyres fowre,
That yn thys craft were of gret honoure;
They were as gode masonus as on erthe schul go,
Gravers and ymage-makers they were also.
For they were werkmen of the beste,
The emperour hade to them gret luste;
He wyled of them a ymage to make,
That mowzh be worscheped for his sake;
Susch mawmetys he hade yn hys dawe,
To turne the pepul from Crystus lawe.
But they were stedefast yn Crystes lay,
And to ther craft, withouten nay;
They loved wel God and alle hys lore,
And weren yn hys serves ever more.
Trwe men they were yn that dawe,
And lyved wel yn Goddus lawe;
They thozght no mawmetys for to make,
For no good that they myzth take,
To levyn on that mawmetys for there God,
They wolde do so, thawz he were wod;
For they wolde not forsake ther trw fay,
An beyleve on hys falsse lay.
The emperour let take them sone anone,
And putte them ynto a dep presone;
The sarre he penest them yn that plase,
The more joye wes to them of Cristus grace.
Thenne when he sye no nother won,
To dethe he lette them thenne gon;
Whose wol of here lyf zet mor knowe
By the bok he may kyt schowe,
In the legent of scanctorum,
The names of quatour coronatorum.
Here fest wol be, withoute nay,
After Alle Halwen the eyght day.

492 That you come to your liege king bold,
493 Beseeching him of his high grace,
494 To stand with you in every place,
495 To confirm the statutes of King Atbelstane,
496 That he ordained to this craft by good reason.

The art of the four crowned ones.

497 Pray we now to God almighty,
498 And to his mother Mary bright,
499 That we may keep these articles here,
500 And these points well all together,
501 As did these holy martyrs four,
502 That in this craft were of great honour;
503 They were as good masons as on earth shall go,
504 Gravers and image-makers they were also.
505 For they were workmen of the best,
506 The emperor had to them great liking;
507 He willed of them an image to make
508 That might be worshipped for his sake;
509 Such monuments he had in his day,
510 To turn the people from Christ's law.
511 But they were steadfast in Christ's law,
512 And to their craft without doubt;
513 They loved well God and all his lore,
514 And were in his service ever more.
515 True men they were in that day,
516 And lived well in God's law;
517 They thought no monuments for to make,
518 For no good that they might take,
519 To believe on that monument for their God,
520 They would not do so, though he was furious;
521 For they would not forsake their true faith,
522 And believe on his false law,
523 The emperor let take them soon anon,
524 And put them in a deep prison;
525 The more sorely he punished them in that place,
526 The more joy was to them of Christ's grace,
527 Then when he saw no other one,
528 To death he let them then go;
529 Whose will of their life yet more know
530 By the book he might it show
531 In legend of holy ones,
532 The names of the four-crowned ones.
533 Their feast will be without doubt,
534 After Hall ow-e 'en eighth day.

The Tower of Babylon

Ze mow here as y do rede,
That mony zeres after, for gret drede
That Noees flod wes alle y-ronne,
The tower of Babyloyne was begonne,
Also playne werke of lyme and ston,
As any mon schulde loke uppon;
So long and brod hyt was begonne,
Seven myle the hezghte schadweth the sonne.
King Nabogodonosor let hyt make,
To gret strenthe for monus sake,
Thazgh suche a flod azayne schulde come,
Over the werke hyt schulde not nome;
For they hadde so hy pride, with stronge bost,
Alle that werke therfore was y-lost;
An angele smot them so with dyveres speche,
That never won wyste what other schuld reche.

535 You may hear as I do read,
536 That many years after, for great dread
537 That Noah's flood was all run,
538 The tower of Babylon was begun,
539 As plain work of lime and stone,
540 As any man should look upon;
541 So long and broad it was begun,
542 Seven miles the height shadoweth the sun.
543 King Nebuchadnezzar let it make
544 To great strength for man's sake,
545 Though such a flood again should come,
546 Over the work it should not take;
547 For they had so high pride, with strong boast
548 All that work therefore was lost;
549 An angel smote them so with divers speech,
550 That never one knew what the other should tell.

Euclid and the Seven Sciences.

Mony eres after, the goode clerk Euclide
Tazghte the craft of gemetre wonder wyde,
So he ded that tyme other also,
Of dyvers craftes mony mo.
Throzgh hye grace of Crist yn heven,
He commensed yn the syens seven;
Gramatica ys the furste syens y-wysse,
Dialetica the secunde, so have y blysse,
Rethorica the thrydde, withoute nay,
Musica ys the fowrth, as y zow say,
Astromia ys the V, by my snowte,
Arsmetica the VI, withoute dowte
Gemetria the seventh maketh an ende,
For he ys bothe make and hende,
Gramer forsothe ys the rote,
Whose wyl lurne on the hoke;
But art passeth yn hys degre,
As the fryte doth the rote of the tre;
Rethoryk metryth with orne speche amonge,
And musyke hyt ys a swete song;
Astronomy nombreth, my dere brother,
Arsmetyk scheweth won thyng that ys another,
Gemetre the seventh syens hyt ysse,
That con deperte falshed from trewth the y-wys.
These bene the syens seven,
Whose useth hem wel, he may han heven.

551 Many years after, the good clerk Euclid
552 Taught the craft of geometry full wonder wide,
553 So he did that other time also,
554 Of divers crafts many more.
555 Through high grace of Christ in heaven,
556 He commenced in the sciences seven;
557 So Grammar is the first science I know,
558 Dialect the second, so I have I bliss,
559 Rhetoric the third without doubt,
560 Music is the fourth, as I you say,
561 Astronomy is the fifth, by my snout,
562 Arithmetic the sixth, without doubt,
563 Geometry the seventh maketh an end,
564 For he is both meek and courteous,
565 Grammar forsooth is the root,
566 Whoever will learn on the book;
567 But art passeth in his degree,
568 As the fruit doth the root of the tree;
569 Rhetoric measureth with ornate speech among,
570 And music it is a sweet song;
571 Astronomy numbereth, my dear brother,
572 Arithmetic sheweth one thing that is another,
573 Geometry the seventh science it is,
574 That can separate falsehood from truth I know
575 These be the sciences seven,
576 Who useth them well he may have heaven.

**An admonishment about Mass
and how to behave in Church**

Now dere chyidren, by zowre wytte,
Pride and covetyse that ze leven, hytte,
And taketh hede to goode dyscrecyon,
And to good norter, whersever ze com.
Now y pray zow take good hede,
For thys ze most kenne nede,
But much more ze moste wyten,
Thenne ze fynden hyr y-wryten.
Zef the fayle therto wytte,
Pray to God to send the hytte;
For Crist hymself, he techet ous
That holy churche ys Goddes hous,
That ys y-mad for nothyng ellus
But for to pray yn, as the bok tellus;
Ther the pepul schal gedur ynne, 591
To pray and wepe for there synne.
Loke thou come not to church late,
For to speke harlotrey by the gate;
Thenne to church when thou dost fare,
Have yn thy mynde ever mare
To worschepe thy lord God bothe day and nyzth,
With all thy wyttes, and eke thy myzth.
To the church dore when thou dost come,
Of that holy water ther sum thow nome,
For every drope thou felust ther
Qwenchet a venyal synne, be thou ser.
But furst thou most do down thy bode,
For hyse love that dyed on the rode.
Into the church when thou dost gon,
Pulle uppe thy herte to Crist, anon;
Uppon the rode thou loke uppe then,
And knele down fayre on bothe thy knen;
Then pray to hym so hyr to worche,
After the lawe of holy church,
For to kepe the comandementes ten,
That God gaf to alle men;
And pray to hym with mylde steven
To kepe the from the synnes seven,
That thou hyr mowe, yn thy lyve,
Kepe the wel from care and stryve,
Forthermore he grante the grace,
In heven blysse to hav a place.
In holy church lef nyse wordes
Of lewed speche, and fowle bordes,
And putte away alle vanyte,
And say thy pater noster and thyn ave;
Loke also thou make no here,

577 Now dear children by your wit,
578 Pride and covetousness that you leave it,
579 And taketh heed to good discretion,
580 And to good nurture wheresoever you come.
581 Now I pray you take good heed
582 For this you must know needs,
583 But much more you must know
584 Than you find here written.
585 If thee fail therto wit,
586 Pray to God to send thee it;
587 For Christ himself, he teacheth us
588 That holy church is God's house,
589 That is made for nothing else
590 But for to pray in, as the book tells us;
591 There the people shall gather in,
592 To pray and weep for their sin.
593 Look thou come not to church late,
594 For to speak harlotry by the gate;
595 Then to church when thou dost fare,
596 Have in thy mind ever more
597 To worship thy lord God both day and night,
598 With all thy wits and even thy might.
599 To the church door when thou dost come
600 Of that holy water there some thou take,
601 For every drop thou feelest there
602 Quencheth a venial sin, be thou sure.
603 But first thou must do down thy hood,
604 For his love that died on the rood.
605 Into the church when thou dost go,
606 Pull up thy heart to Christ, anon;
607 Upon the rood thou look up then,
608 And kneel down fair upon thy knees,
609 Then pray to him so here to work,
610 After the law of holy church,
611 For to keep the commandments ten,
612 That God gave to all men;
613 And pray to him with mild voice
614 To keep thee from the sins seven,
615 That thou here may, in this life,
616 Keep thee well from care and strife;
617 Furthermore he grant thee grace,
618 In heaven's bliss to have a place.
619 In holy church leave trifling words
620 Of lewd speech and foul jests,
621 And put away all vanity,
622 And say thy pater noster and thine ave;
623 Look also that thou make no noise,

But ay to be yn thy prayere;
Zef thou wolt not thyself pray,
Latte non other mon by no way.
In that place nowther sytte ny stonde,
But knele fayre down on the gronde,
And, when the Gospel me rede schal,
Fayre thou stonde up fro the wal,
And blesse the fayre, zef that thou conne,
When gloria tibi is begonne;
And when the gospel ys y-done,
Azayn thou myzth knele adown;
On bothe thy knen down thou falle,
For hyse love that bowzht us alle;
And when thou herest the belle ryng
To that holy sakerynge,
Knele ze most, bothe zyng and olde,
And bothe zor hondes fayr upholde,
And say thenne yn thys manere,
Fayr and softe, with oute here;
“Jhesu Lord, welcom thou be,
Yn forme of bred, as y the se.
Now Jhesu, for thyn holy name,
Schulde me from synne and schame,
Schryff and hosel thou grant me bo,
Zer that y schal hennus go,
And vey contrycyon of my synne,
That y never, Lord, dye thereynne;
And, as thou were of a mayde y-bore,
Sofre me never to be y-lore;
But when y schal hennus wende,
Grante me the blysse withoute ende;
Amen! amen! so mot hyt be!
Now, swete lady, pray for me.”
Thus thou myzht say, or sum other thyng,
When thou knelust at the sakerynge.
For covetyse after good, spare thou nought
To worschepe hym that alle hath wrought;
For glad may a mon that day ben,
That onus yn the day may hym sen;
Hyt ys so muche worthe, withoute nay,
The vertu therof no mon telle may;
But so meche good doth that syht,
As seynt Austyn telluth ful ryht,
That day thou syst Goddus body,
Thou schalt have these ful securly;-
Mete and drynke at thy nede,
Non that day schal the gned;e;
Ydul othes, an wordens bo,
God forzeveth the also;
Soden deth that ylke day,

624 But always to be in thy prayer;
625 If thou wilt not thyself pray,
626 Hinder no other man by no way.
627 In that place neither sit nor stand,
628 But kneel fair down on the ground,
629 And when the Gospel me read shall,
630 Fairly thou stand up from the wall,
631 And bless the fare if that thou can,
632 When gloria tibi is begun;
633 And when the gospel is done,
634 Again thou might kneel down,
635 On both knees down thou fall,
636 For his love that bought us all;
637 And when thou hearest the bell ring
638 To that holy sacrament,
639 Kneel you must both young and old,
640 And both your hands fair uphold,
641 And say then in this manner,
642 Fair and soft without noise;
643 “Jesu Lord welcome thou be,
644 In form of bread as I thee see,
645 Now Jesu for thine holy name,
646 Shield me from sin and shame;
647 Shrift and Eucharist thou grand me both,
648 Ere that I shall hence go,
649 And very contrition for my sin,
650 That I never, Lord, die therein;
651 And as thou were of maid born,
652 Suffer me never to be lost;
653 But when I shall hence wend,
654 Grant me the bliss without end;
655 Amen! Amen! so mote it be!
656 Now sweet lady pray for me.”
657 Thus thou might say, or some other thing,
658 When thou kneelest at the sacrament.
659 For covetousness after good, spare thou not
660 To worship him that all hath wrought;
661 For glad may a man that day be,
662 That once in the day may him see;
663 It is so much worth, without doubt,
664 The virtue thereof no man tell may;
665 But so much good doth that sight,
666 That Saint Austin telleth full right,
667 That day thou seest God’s body,
668 Thou shalt have these full securely:-
669 Meet and drink at thy need,
670 None that day shalt thou lack;
671 Idle oaths and words both,
672 God forgiveth thee also;
673 Sudden death that same day

The dar not drede by no way;
Also that day, y the plyht,
Thou schalt not lese thy eye syht;
And eche fote that thou gost then,
That holy syht for to sen,
They schul be told to stonde yn stede,
When thou hast therto gret nede;
That messongere, the angele Gabryelle,
Wol kepe hem to the ful welle.
From thys mater now y may passe,
To telle mo medys of the masse:
To churche come zet, zef thou may,
And here thy masse uche day;
Zef thou mowe not come to churche,
Wher that ever thou doste worche,
When thou herest to masse knylle,
Pray to God with herte stylle,
To zeve the part of that servyse,
That yn churche ther don yse.

Forthermore zet, y wol zow preche
To zowre felows, hyt for to teche,
When thou comest byfore a lorde,
Yn halle, yn bowre, or at the borde,
Hod or cappe that thou of do,
Zer thou come hym auynge to;
Twyes or thryes, without dowte,
To that lord thou moste lowte;
With thy ryzth kne let hyt be do,
Thyn owne worschepe thou save so.
Holde of thy cappe, and hod also,
Tyl thou have leve hyt on to do.
Al the whyle thou spekest with hym,
Fayre and lovelyche bere up thy chyn;
So, after the norter of the boke,
Yn hys face lovely thou loke.
Fot and hond, thou kepe ful stylle
From clawynge and tryppyng, ys sckylle;
Frm spyttng and snyftyng kepe the also
By privy avoydans let hyt go.
And zef that thou be wyse and felle,
Thou hast gret nede to governe the welle.
Ynto the halle when thou dost wende,
Amonges the genteles, good and hende,
Presume not to hye for nothyng,
For thyn hye blod, ny thy connyng,
Nowther to sytte, ny to lene,
That ys norther good and clene.

674 Thee dare not dread by no way;
675 Also that day, I thee plight,
676 Thou shalt not lose thy eye sight;
677 And each foot that thou goest then,
678 That holy sight for to see,
679 They shall be told to stand instead,
680 When thou hast thereto great need;
681 That messenger the angel Gabriel,
682 Will keep them to thee full well.
683 From this matter now I may pass,
684 To tell more benefits of the mass:
685 To church come yet, if thou may,
686 And hear the mass each day;
687 If thou may not come to church,
688 Where that ever thou dost work,
689 When thou hearest the mass toll,
690 Pray to God with heart still,
691 To give thee part of that service,
692 That in church there done is.

An instruction on Good Manners

693 Furthermore yet, I will you preach
694 To your fellows, it for to teach,
695 When thou comest before a lord,
696 In hall, in bower, or at the board,
697 Hood or cap that thou off do,
698 Ere thou come him entirely to;
699 6Twice or thrice, without doubt,
700 To that lord thou must bow;
701 With thy right knee let it be done,
702 Thine own worship thou save so.
703 Hold off thy cap and hood also,
704 Till thou have leave it on to put.
705 All the time thou speakest with him,
706 Fair and amiably hold up thy chin;
707 So after the nurture of the book,
708 In his face kindly thou look.
709 Foot and hand thou keep full still,
710 For clawing and tripping, is skill;
711 From spittind and sniffing keep the also
712 By private expulsion let it go,
713 And if that thou be wise and discrete,
714 Thou has great .ieed to govern thee well.
715 Into the hall when thou dost wend,
716 Amongst the gentles, good and courteous,
717 Presume not too high for nothing,
718 For thine high blood, nor thy cunning,
719 Neither to sit nor to lean,
720 That is nurture good and clean.

Let not thy cowntenans therfore abate,
Forsothe, good norter wol save thy state.
Fader and moder, whatsoever they be,
Wel ys the chyld that wel may the,
Yn halle, yn chamber, wher thou dost gon;
Gode maners maken a mon.
To the nexte degre loke wysly,
To do hem reverans by and by;
Do hem zet no reverans al o-rowe,
But zef that thou do hem know.
To the mete when thou art y-sette,
Fayre and onestelyche thou ete hytte;
Fyrst loke that thyn honden be clene,
And that thy knyf be scharpe and kene;
And kette thy bred al at thy mete,
Ryzth as hyt may be ther y-ete.
Zef thou sytte by a worththyur mon.
Then thy selven thou art won,
Sofre hym fyrst to toyche the mete,
Zer thyself to hyt reche.
To the fayrest mossel thou myzht not strike,
Thaght that thou do hyt wel lyke;
Kepe thyn hondes, fayr and wel,
From fowle smogyng of thy towel;
Theron thou schalt not thy nese snyte,
Ny at the mete thy tothe thou pyke;
To depe yn the coppe thou myzght not synke,
Thazgh thou have good wyl to drynke,
Lest thyn enyn wolde wattryn therby-
therebyThen were hyt no curtesy
Loke yn thy mowth ther be no mete,
When thou begynnyst to drynke or speke.
When thou syst any mon drynkiynge,
That taketh hed to thy carpyngge,
Sone anonn thou sese thy tale,
Whether he drynke wyn other ale.
Loke also thou scorne no mon,
Yn what degre thou syst hym gon;
Ny thou schalt no mon deprave,
Zef thou wolt thy worschepe save;
For suche worde myzht ther outberste,
That myzht make the sytte yn evel reste,
Close thy honde yn thy fyste,
And kepe the wel from "had-y-wyste."
Yn chamber amonge the ladyes bryght,
Holde thy tonge and spende thy syght;
Lawze thou not with no gret cry,
Ny make no ragynge with rybody.
Play thou not buyt with thy peres,
Ny tel thou not al that thou heres;

721 Let not thy countenance therefor abate,
722 Forsooth good nurture will save thy state.
723 Father and mother, whatsoever they be,
724 Well is the child that well may thee,
725 In hall, in chamber, where thou dost go;
726 Good manners make a man.
727 To the next degree look wisely,
728 To do them reverence by and by;
729 Do them yet no reverence all in turn,
730 Unless that thou do them know.
731 To the meat when thou art set,
732 Fair and honestly thou eat it;
733 First look that thine hands be clean,
734 And that thy knife be sharp and keen,
735 And cut thy bread all at thy meat,
736 Right as it may be there eaten,
737 If thou sit by a worthier man,
738 Then thy self thou art one,
739 Suffer him first to touch the meat,
740 Ere thyself to it reach.
741 To the fairest morsel thou might not strike,
742 Though that thou do it well like;
743 Keep thine hands fair and well,
744 From foul smudging of thy towel;
745 Thereon thou shalt not thy nose blow,
746 Nor at the meat thy tooth thou pick;
747 Too deep in cup thou might not sink,
748 Though thou have good will to drink,
749 Lest thine eyes would water thereby
750 Then were it no courtesy.
751 Look in thy mouth there be no meat,
752 When thou begins to drink or speak.
753 When thou seest any man drinking,
754 That taketh heed to thy speech,
755 Soon anaon thou cease thy tale,
756 Whether he drink wine or ale,
757 Look also thou scorn no man,
758 In what degree thou seest him gone;
759 Nor thou shalt no man deprave,
760 If thou wilt thy worship save;
761 For such word might there outburst.
762 That might make thee sit in evil rest.
763 Close thy hand in thy fist,
764 And keep thee well from "had I known."
765 In chamber, among the ladies bright,
766 Hold thy tongue and spend thy sight;
767 Laugh thou not with no great cry,
768 Nor make no lewd sport and ribaldry.
769 Play thou not but with thy peers,
770 Nor tell thou not all that thou hears;

Dyskever thou not thyn owne dede,
For no merthe, ny for no mede;
With fayr speche thou myght have the wylie,
With hyt thou myght thy selven spyle,
When thou metyst a worthy mon,
Cappe and hod thou holle no on;
Yn church, yn chepyns, or yn the gate,
Do hym reverans after hys state.
Zef thou gost with a worthy or mon
Then thyselven thou art won,
Let thy forther schulder sewe hys backe,
For that ys norter withoute lacke;
When he doth speke, holte the styлле,
When he hath don, sey for thy wylie,
Yn thy speche that thou be felle,
And what thou sayst avyse the welle;
But byref thou not hym hys tale,
Nowther at the wyn, ny at the ale.
Cryst them of hys hye grace,
Zeve sow both wytte and space,
We thys boke to conne and rede,
Heven to have for zowre mede,
Amen! amen! so mot hyt be!
Say we so alle per charyte.

771 Discover thou not thine own deed,
772 For no mirth, nor for no reward;
773 With fair speech thou might have thy will,
774 With it thou might thy self spoil.
775 When thou meetest a worthy man,
776 Cap and hood thou hold not on;
777 In church, in market, or in the gate,
778 Do him reverence after his state.
779 If thou goest with a worthier man
780 Then thyself thou art one,
781 Let thy foremost shoulder follow his back,
782 For that is nurture without lack;
783 When he doth speak, hold thee still,
784 When he hath done, say for thy will,
785 In thy speech that thou be discreet,
786 And what thou sayest consider thee well;
787 But deprive thou not him his tale,
788 Neither at the wine nor at the ale.
789 Christ then of his high grace,
790 Save you both wit and space,
791 Well this book to know and read,
792 Heaven to have for your reward.
793 Amen! Amen! so mote it be!
794 So say we all for charity.