

Book Three

The Principles of Masonry Explained

by

William Preston

1795

Sect 1. - A Letter from the learned Mr. John Locke, to the Right Hon. Thomas Earl of Pembroke, with an old Manuscript on the subject of Free-Masonry

6th May, 1696

My Lord,

I have at length, by the help of Mr. Collins, procured a copy of that MS. in the Bodleian library, which you were so curious to see: and, in obedience to your lordship's commands, I herewith send it to you. Most of the notes annexed to it, are what I made yesterday for the reading of my Lady Masham, who is become so fond of masonry, as to say, that she now more than ever wishes herself a man, that she might be capable of admission into the fraternity.

The MS. of which this is a copy, appears to be about 160 years old; yet (as your lordship will observe by the title) it is itself a copy of one yet more ancient by about 100 years: for the original is said to be the hand-writing of K. Henry VI. Where that prince had it, is at present an uncertainty; but it seems to me to be an examination (taken perhaps before the king) of some one of the brotherhood of masons; among whom he entered himself, as it is said, when he came out of his minority, and thenceforth put a stop to a persecution that had been raised against them: But I must not detain your lordship longer by my preface from the thing itself.

I know not what effect the sight of this old paper may have upon your lordship; but for my own part I cannot deny, that it has so much raised my curiosity, as to induce me to enter myself into the fraternity, which I am determined to do (if I may be admitted) the next time I go to London, and that will be shortly. I am,

My Lord And most humble servant,

John Locke

Certayn Questyons, with Answeres to the same, concerning the Mystery of Maçonrye; writtene by the hande of kynge Henrye, the sixthe of the name, and faithfullye copyed by me Johan Leylande, Antiquarius, by the commande of his Highnesse

Quest. What mote ytt be?

Answ. Ytt beeth the skylle of nature, the understondynge of the myghte that ys hereynne, and its sondrye werckynges; sonderlyche, the skylle of rectenyngs, of waightes and metynges, and the true manere of façonnyng al thynges for nannes use; headlye, dwellinges, and buyldynges of alle kindes, and all odher

thynges that make gudde to manne.

Quest. Where dyd it begynne?

Answ. Ytt dyd begynne with the fyrste menne in the este, whych were before the ffyrste manne of the weste, and comynge westlye, ytt hathe broughte herwyth alle confortes to the wylde and comfortlesse.

Quest. Who dyd brynge ytt westlye?

Answ. The Venetians, whoo beyng grate merchaundes, comed ffyrste ffromme the este ynn Venetia, for the commoditye of marchaundysynge beithe este and weste bey the redde and myddlelonde fees.

Quest. Howe comede ytt yn Engelonde?

Answ. Peter Gower a Grecian, journeyedde ffor kunnyng yn Egypte, and in Syria, and yn everyche londe whereas the Venetians hadde plauntedde maçonrye, and wynnyngge entraunce yn al lodges of maçonnes, he lerned muche, and retournedde, and woned yn Grecia Magna, wacksynge, and becommynge a myghtye wyseacre, and gratelyche renowned, and her he framed a grate lodge at Groton, and maked manye maçonnes, some whereoffe dyde journeye yn Fraunce, and maked manye maçonnes, wherefromme, yn processe of tyme, the arte passed yn Engelonde.

Quest. Dothe maçonnes descouer here artes unto odhers?

Answ. Peter Gower, whenne he journeyede to lernne, was ffyrste made, and anonne techedde; evenne soe shulde all odhers beyn recht. Natheless maçonnes hauethe always, yn everyche tyme, from tyme to tyme, comunicatedde to mankynde soche of her secrettes as generallyche myghte be usefulle; they haueth keped backe soche allein as shulde be harmfulle yff they comed yn euylle haundes, oder soche as ne myghte be holpyngge wythouten the techynges to be joynedde herwythe in the lodge, oder soche as do bynde the freres more stronglyche togeder, bey the proffytte and commoditye commynge to the confrerie herfromme.

Quest. Qhatte artes haueth the maçonnes techedde mankynde?

Answ. The artes agricultura, architectura, astronomia, geometria, numeres, musica, poesie, kymistrye, governmente, and relygyonne.

Quest. Howe commethe maçonnes more teachers than odher monne?

Answ. The hemselve haueth allein in arte of ffyndynge neue artes, whyche arte the ffyrste maçonnes receaued from Godde; by the whyche they fyndethe what artes hem plesethe, and the treu way of techynge the same, whatt odher menne doethe ffynde out, ys onelyche bey chauce, and herfore but lytel I tro.

Quest. What dothe the maçonnes concele and hyde?

Answ. Thay concelethe the arte of ffyndynge neue artes, and thatt ys for here own proffytte, and preise: Thay concelethe the arte of kepyngge secrettes, thatt soe the worlde mayeth nothings concele from them. Thay concelethe the arte of wunderwerckyngge, and of foresayinge thynges to comme, that so thay same artes may not be usedde of the wyckedde to an euuell ende. Thay also concelethe the arte of chaunges, the wey of wynnyngge the facultye of Abrac, the skylle of becommynge gude and parfyghte wythouten the holpynges of fere and hope; and the universelle longage of maçonnes.

Quest. Wylle he teche me thay same artes?

Answ. Ye shalle be techedde yff ye be werthye, and able to lerne.

Quest. Dothe all maçonnes kunne more then odher menne?

Answ. Not so. Thay onelyche haueth recht and occasyonne more then odher menne to kunne, butt manye doeth fale yn capacity, and manye more doth want industrye, that ys pernecessarye for the gaynyngge all kunnyngge.

Quest. Are maçonnes gudder men then odhers?

Answ. Some maçonnes are not so virtuous as some odher menne; but, yn the moste parte, thay be more gude then thay woulde be yf thay war not maçonnes.

Quest. Doth maçonnes love eidher odher myghtylye as beeth fayde?

Answ. Yea verylyche, and yt may not odherwife be: for gude menne and treu, kennynge eidher odher to be soche, doeth always love the more as thay be more gude.

[Here endethe the questyonnes, and awnsweres.]

Key to antiquated words used in the above text:

<i>Albein</i> only	<i>Middlelonde</i> Mediterranean
<i>Always</i> always	<i>Myghte</i> power
<i>Beithe</i> both	<i>Occasyonne</i> opportunity
<i>Commoditye</i> convenience	<i>Odher</i> other
<i>Confrerie</i> fraternity	<i>Onelyche</i> only
<i>Façonnyngge</i> forming	<i>Pernecessarye</i> absolutely necessary
<i>Fore-sayinge</i> prophesying	<i>Preise</i> honor
<i>Freres</i> brethren	<i>Recht</i> right
<i>Headlye</i> chiefly	<i>Reckenyngs</i> numbers
<i>Hem plesethe</i> they please	<i>Sonderlyche</i> particularly
<i>Hemselfe</i> themselves	<i>Skylle</i> knowledge
<i>Her</i> there, their	<i>Wacksynge</i> growing
<i>Hereynne</i> therein	<i>Werck</i> operation
<i>Herwyth</i> with it	<i>Wey way Holpyngge</i> beneficial
<i>Kunne</i> know	<i>Woned</i> dwelt
<i>Kunnyngge</i> knowledge	<i>Wunderwerckyngge</i> working miracles
<i>Make gudde</i> are beneficial	<i>Wylde</i> savage
<i>Metynge</i> measures	<i>Wynnyngge</i> gaining
<i>Mote</i> may	<i>Ynn</i> into

Sect 2. - Remarks on the preceding Manuscript, and on the Annotations of Mr. Locke

This dialogue possesses a double claim to our regard; first, for its antiquity, and next for the notes added to it by Mr. Locke, who, though not at that time enrolled in the order of masons, offers just conjectures on their history and traditions.

Every reader must feel a secret satisfaction in the perusal of this ancient manuscript, especially the true mason, whom it more nearly concerns. The recommendation of a philosopher of as great merit and penetration as this nation ever produced, added to the real value of the piece itself, must give it a sanction, and render it deserving a serious examination.

The conjecture of the learned annotator concerning its being an examination taken before King Henry of one of the fraternity of masons, is just. The severe edict passed at that time against the society, and the discouragement given to the masons by the bishop of Winchester and his party, induced that prince, in his riper years, to make a strict scrutiny into the nature of the Masonic institution; which was attended with the happy circumstance of gaining his favor, and his patronage. Had not the civil commotions in the kingdom during his reign, attracted the notice of government, this act would probably have been repealed, through the intercession of the Duke of Gloucester, whose attachment to the fraternity was conspicuous.

[Book 3 | Section 1] What mote ytt be ?] Mr. Locke observes, in his annotation on this question, that the answer imports, that masonry consists of natural, mathematical, and mechanical knowledge; some part of which, he says, the masons pretend to have taught mankind, and some part they still conceal. - The arts which they have communicated to the world, are particularly specified in an answer to one of the following questions; as are also those which they have restricted to themselves for wise purposes. - Morality, however, ought to have been included in this answer, as it constitutes a principal part of the Masonic system.

[Book 3 | Section 1] Where dyd ytt begynne ?] In the annotation to the answer on this question, Mr. Locke seems to suggest, that masons believed there were men in the east before Adam, which is indeed a mere conjecture. This opinion may be countenanced by many learned authors, but masons comprehend the true meaning of masonry taking rise in the east and spreading to the west, without having recourse to præadamites. East and west are terms peculiar to their society, and when masonically adopted, are very intelligible to the fraternity, as they refer to certain forms and established customs among themselves. From the east, it is well known, learning extended to the western world, and gradually advanced into Europe.

[Book 3 | Section 1] Who dyd brynge ytt westlye ?] The judicious correction of an illiterate clerk, in the answer to this question as well as the next, reflects credit on the ingenious annotator. The explanation is just, and the elucidation accurate.

[Book 3 | Section 1] Howe comed ytt yn Engelonde ?] The records of the fraternity inform us, that Pythagoras was regularly initiated into masonry; and being properly instructed in the mysteries of the Art, propagated the principles of the Order in other countries into which he traveled.

Pythagoras lived at Samos, in the reign of Tarquin, the last king of the Romans, in the year of Rome 220; or, according to Livy, in the reign of Servius Tullius, in the year of the world 3472. He was the son of a sculptor, and was educated under one of the greatest men of his time, Therecydes of Syrus, who first taught

the immortality of the soul. Upon the death of his patron, he determined to trace science to its source, and supply himself with fresh stores in every part of the world where these could be obtained.

Animated by this desire of knowledge, he traveled into Egypt, and submitted to the tedious and discouraging course of preparatory discipline which was necessary to obtain the benefit of Egyptian initiation. When he had made himself a thorough master of all the sciences which were cultivated in the sacerdotal colleges of Thebes and Memphis, he pursued his travels through the east, conversing with the Magi and Indian Brachmans, and mixing their doctrines with those he had learnt in Egypt. He afterwards studied the laws of Minos at Crete, and those of Lycurgus at Sparta.

Having spent the earlier part of his life in this useful manner, he returned to Samos well acquainted with every thing curious either in nature or art in foreign countries, improved with all the advantages proceeding from a regular and laborious course of learned education, and adorned with that knowledge of mankind which was necessary to gain the ascendant over them. Accustomed to freedom, he disliked the arbitrary of Samos, and retired to Crotona in Italy, where he opened a school of philosophy; and by the gravity and sanctity of his manners, the importance of his tenets, and the peculiarity of his institutions, soon spread his fame and influence over Italy and Greece.

Among other projects which he used to create respect and gain credit to his assertion, he concealed himself in a cave, and caused it to be reported that he was dead. After some time he came abroad, and pretended that the intelligence which his friends gave him in his retreat, of the transactions of Crotona, was collected during his stay in the other world among the shades of the departed. He formed his disciples, who came from all parts to put themselves under his direction, into a kind of republic, where none were admitted till a severe probation had sufficiently exercised their patience and docility.

He afterwards divided them into the esoteric and exoteric classes: to the former he entrusted the more sublime and secret doctrines, to the latter the more simple and popular. This great man found himself able to unite the character of the legislator to that of the philosopher, and to rival Lycurgus and Orpheus in the one, Pherecydes and Thales in the other; following, in this particular, the patterns set him by the Egyptian priests, his instructors, who are not less celebrated for settling the civil than the religious economy of their nation. In imitation of them, Pythagoras gave laws to the republic of Crotona, and brought the inhabitants from a state of luxury and dissoluteness, to be eminent for order and sobriety.

While he lived, he was frequently consulted by the neighboring republics, as the composer of their differences, and the reformer of their manners; and since his death (which happened about the fourth year of the 70th Olympiad, in a tumult raised against him by one Cylon) the administration of their affairs has been generally entrusted to some of his disciples, among whom, to produce the authority of their master for any assertion, was sufficient to establish the truth of it without further inquiry.

The most celebrated of the philosophical notions of Pythagoras are those concerning the nature of the Deity, the transmigration of souls into different bodies (which he borrowed from the Brachmans), and the system of the world. He was the first who took the name of philosopher; that is, a lover of wisdom. His system of morality was admirable. He made unity the principle of all things, and believed that between God and man there were various orders of spiritual beings, who administered to the divine will.

He believed in the doctrine of the metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls; and held that God was diffused through all parts of the universe, like a kind of universal soul, pervading every particle of matter, and animating every living creature, from the most contemptible reptile to mankind themselves, who shared a larger portion of the divine spirit. The metempsychosis was founded on this maxim, that as the soul was of celestial origin, it could not be annihilated, and therefore, upon abandoning one body, necessarily removed into another, and frequently did penance for its former vicious inclinations, in the shape of a beast or an insect, before it appeared again in that of a human creature.

He asserted, that he had a particular faculty given him by the gods, of remembering the various bodies his own soul had passed through, and confounded cavilers by referring them to his own experience. In his system of the world, the third doctrine which distinguishes his sect, was a supposition, that the sun was at rest in the centre, and that the earth, the moon, and the other planets moved round it in different orbits.

He pretended to have great skill in the mysterious properties of numbers, and held that some particular ones contained a peculiar force and significance. He was a great geometrician, and admitted only those to the knowledge of his system, who had first undergone a probation of five years silence. To his discovery is attributed the 47th proposition of the first book of Euclid, which, in geometrical solutions and demonstrations of quantities, is of excellent use; and for which as Mr. Locke observes, in the joy of his heart, he is said to have sacrificed a hecatomb.

His extraordinary desire of knowledge, and the pains he took to propagate his system, have justly transmitted his fame to posterity.

The pupils who were initiated by him in the sciences and study of nature at the Crotonian school, brought all their goods into a common stock, contemned the pleasures of sense, abstaining from swearing, and eat nothing that had life. Steady to the tenets and principles which they had imbibed, they dispersed abroad, and taught the doctrines of their preceptor, in all the countries through which they traveled.

[Book 3 | Section 1] Dothe maçonnes descouer here artes unto odhers ?] Masons, in all ages, have studied the general good of mankind. Every art, which is necessary for the support of authority and good government, or which can promote science, they have cheerfully communicated to the world. Points of no public utility, as their peculiar tenets, mystic forms, and solemn rites, they have carefully concealed. Thus masons have been distinguished in various countries, and the privileges of their Order kept sacred and inviolable.

[Book 3 | Section 1] Whatte artes haueth the maçonnes techedde mankynde ?] The arts which the masons have publicly taught, are here specified. It appears to have surprised the learned annotator, that religion should be ranked among the arts taught by the fraternity; but it may be observed, that religion is the only tie which can bind men; and that where there is no religion, there can be no masonry. Among masons, however, it is an art, calculated to unite for a time opposite systems, without perverting or destroying those systems. By the influence of this art, the purposes of the institution are effectually answered, and all religious animosities happily terminated.

Masons have always paid due obedience to the moral law, and inculcated its precepts with powerful energy on their disciples. Hence the doctrine of God, the creator and preserver of the universe, has been their firm belief in every age; and under the influence of that doctrine, their conduct has been regulated through a

succession of year. The progress of knowledge and philosophy, aided by divine revelation, having enlightened the minds of men with the knowledge of the true God, and the sacred tenets of the Christian faith, masons have readily acquiesced in a religion so wisely calculated to make men happy.

But in those countries where the gospel has not reached, nor Christianity displayed her beauties, they have pursued the universal religion, or the religion of nature; that is, to be good men and true, by whatever denomination or persuasion they may be distinguished; and by this universal system, the conduct of the fraternity still continues to be regulated. A cheerful compliance with the established religion of the country in which they live, is earnestly recommended in their assemblies; and this universal conformity, notwithstanding private sentiment and opinion, is the art they practice, and effects the laudable purpose of conciliating true friendship among men of every persuasion, while it proves the cement of general union.

It may not be improper to state, that this universal system teaches men not to deviate from the line of instruction in which they have been educated, or to disregard the principles of religion they have been originally taught. Though they are to suit themselves to circumstances and situation, in the character of masons they are advised never to forget the wise maxims of their parents, or desert the faith in which they have been nurtured, unless from conviction they are justified in making a change; and in effecting that change, masonry has no share.

The tenets of the institution interfere with no particular faith, but are alike reconcilable to all. Hence religious and political disputes never engage the attention of masons in their private seminaries; those points are left to the discussion and determination of other associations for whom the theme is better calculated: and it is a certain truth, that the wisest systems are more frequently injured than benefited by religious cavil.

Notwithstanding the happiest events have arisen in many periods of the history of the world from the efforts of a wife, pious, learned, and moderate clergy, seconded by the influence and authority of religious princes, whose counsels and examples have always had a commanding power, which has enabled them to do good, with a facility peculiar to themselves; it must have been observed with a generous concern, that those efforts have not been sufficient to extinguish the unhappy spirit of fanaticism, of whose deplorable effects almost every age has exhibited a striking picture.

Enthusiastic sects have been perpetually inventing new forms of religion, by working on the passions of ignorant and unwary; deriving their rules of faith and manners from the fallacious suggestions of a warm imagination, rather than from the clear and infallible dictates of the word of God. One set of men has covered religion with a tawdry habit of type and allegory; while another has converted it into an instrument of dissension and discord. The discerning mind may easily trace the unhappy consequences of departing from the divine simplicity of the gospel, and loading its pure and heavenly doctrines with the inventions and commandments of men.

The tendency of true religion is to strengthen the springs of government, by purifying the motives and animating the zeal of those who govern, to promote the virtues which exalt a nation, by rendering its inhabitants good subjects and true patriots, and by confirming all the essential bonds and obligations of civil society. The enemies of religion are the enemies of mankind; and it is the natural tendency of infidelity and licentiousness to dissolve the most sacred obligations, to remove the most powerful motives to virtue, and, by corrupting the principles

of individuals, to poison, the sources of public order and public prosperity.

Such are the mischief's incident from zeal and enthusiasm, however laudably excited, when carried to excess. But if the principles of masonry are understood and practiced, they will be found the best correctors of misguided zeal and unrestrained licentiousness, and prove the ablest support of every well-regulated government.

[Book 3 | Section 1] Howe commeth maçonnes more teachers than odher menne ?] The answer implies, that masons, from the nature and government of their association, have greater opportunities than other men, to improve their talents, and therefore are allowed to be better qualified to instruct others.

Mr. Locke's observation on masons having the art of finding new arts, is judicious, and his explanation just. The fraternity have always made the study of arts, a principal part of their private amusement: in their assemblies, nice and difficult theories have been canvassed and explained; new discoveries produced, and those already known, illustrated. The different classes established, the gradual progression of knowledge communicated, and the regularity observed throughout the whole system of their government, are evident proofs, that those who are initiated into the mysteries of the Masonic Art, may discover new arts; and this knowledge is acquired by instruction from, and familiar intercourse with, men of genius and ability, on almost every important branch of science.

[Book 3 | Section 1] What dothe the maçonnes concele and hyde ?] The answer imports, the art of finding new arts, for their profit and praise; and then particularizes the different arts they carefully conceal. Mr. Locke's remark, 'That this shows too much regard for their own society, and too little for the rest of mankind,' is rather severe, when he has before admitted the propriety of concealing from the world what is of no real public utility, left, by being converted to bad uses, the consequences might be prejudicial to society. By the word praise, is here meant, that honor and respect to which masons are entitled, as the friends of science and learning, and which is absolutely necessary to give a sanction to the wife doctrines they propagat, while their fidelity gives them a claim to esteem, and the rectitude of their manners demand veneration.

Of all the arts which the masons profess, the art of secrecy particularly distinguishes them. Taciturnity is a proof of wisdom, and is allowed to be of the utmost importance in the different transactions of life. The best writers have declared it is agreeable to the Deity himself, may be easily conceived, from the glorious example which he gives, in concealing from mankind the secrets of his providence. The wisest of men cannot pry into the arena of heaven; nor can they divine to-day, what to-morrow may bring forth.

Many instances might be adduced from history, to show the high veneration which was paid to the art of secrecy by the ancients. Pliny informs us, that anaxarchus, being imprisoned with a view to extort from him some secrets with which he had been entrusted, and dreading that exquisite torture would induce him to betray his trust, bit his tongue in the middle, and threw it in the face of Nicocreon, the tyrant of Cyprus. - No torments could make the servants of Plancus betray the secrets of their master; they encountered every pain with fortitude, and strenuously supported their fidelity, amidst the most severe tortures, till death put a period to their sufferings. - The Athenians bowed to a statue of brass, which was represented without a tongue, to denote secrecy.

The Egyptians worshipped Harpocrates, the god of silence, who was always represented holding his finger at his mouth. - The Romans had their goddess of silence, named Angerona, to whom they offered worship. - Lycurgus, the

celebrated law-giver, as well as Pythagoras, the great scholar, particularly recommended this virtue; especially the last, who, as we have before observed, kept his disciples silent during five years, that they might learn the valuable secrets he had to communicate unto them. This evinces that he deemed secrecy the rarest, as well as the noblest art.

Mr. Locke has made several judicious observations on the answer which is given to the question here proposed. His being in the dark concerning the meaning of the faculty of Abrac, I am no ways surprised at, nor can I conceive how he could otherwise be. ABRAC is an abbreviation of the word ABRACADABRA. In the days of ignorance and superstition, that word had a magical signification; but the explanation of it is now lost.

Our celebrated annotator has taken no notice of the masons having the art of working miracles, and foreseeing things to come. But this was certainly not the least important of their doctrines. Hence astrology was admitted as one of the arts which they taught, and the study of it warmly recommended.

The ancient philosophers applied with unwearied diligence to discover the aspects, magnitude, distances, motions, and revolutions of the heavenly bodies; and, according to the discoveries they made, pretended to foretell future events, and to determine concerning the secrets of Providence. This study became, in a course of time, a regular science.

That astrology, however vain and delusive in itself, has proved extremely useful to mankind, by promoting the excellent science of astronomy, cannot be denied. The vain hope of reading the fates of men, and the success of their designs, has been one of the strongest motives to induce them, in all countries, to an attentive observation of the celestial bodies; whence they have been taught to measure time, to mark the duration of seasons, and to regulate the operations of agriculture.

The science of astrology, which is nothing more than the study of nature, and the knowledge of the secret virtues of the heavens, is founded on scripture, and confirmed by reason and experience. Moses tells us, that the sun, moon, and stars, were placed in the firmament, to be for signs, as well as for seasons. We find the Deity thus addressing Job, "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bonds of Orion?" We are instructed in the Book of Judges, that "they fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." The ancient philosophers were unanimous in the same opinion; and among the moderns, we may cite lord Bacon and several others as giving it a sanction. Milton thus expresses himself on the subject:

Of planetary motions and aspects

In Sextile, Square, and trine, and opposite,

Of noxious efficacy, and when to join

In synod unbenign, and taught the fixed

Their influence malignant when to shower, &c.

It is well known that inferior animals, and even birds and reptiles, have a foreknowledge of futurity; and surely Nature never intended to with-hold from man those favors, which she has so liberally bestowed on the raven, the cat, and the sow? No, the aches in our limbs, and the shootings of our corns, before a tempest or a shower, evince the contrary. Man, who is a microcosm, or world in miniature, unites in himself all the powers and qualities which are scattered

throughout nature, and discerns from certain signs the future contingencies of his being; finding his way through the palpable obscure to the visible diurnal and nocturnal sphere, he marks the presages and predictions of his happiness or misery. The mysterious and recondite doctrine of sympathies in Nature, is admirably illustrated from the sympathy between the moon and the sea, by which the waters of the ocean are, in a certain though inconceivable manner, drawn after that luminary.

In these celestial and terrestrial sympathies, there is no doubt that the vegetative soul of the world transfers a specific virtue from the heavens to the elements, to animals, and to man. If the moon alone rule the world of waters, what effects must the combination of solar, stellar, and lunar influences have upon the land? In short, it is universally confessed, that astrology is the mother of astronomy; and though the daughter have rebelled against the mother, it has long been predicted and expected that the venerable authority of the parent would prevail in the end.

[Book 3 | Section 1] Wylle he teche me thay same artes ?] By the answer to this question, we learn the necessary qualifications which are required in a candidate for masonry - a good character, and an able capacity.

[Book 3 | Section 1] Dothe all maçonnes kunne more then odher menne ?] The answer only implies, that masons have a better opportunity than the rest of mankind, to improve in useful knowledge; but a want of capacity in some, and of application in others, obstructs the progress of many.

[Book 3 | Section 1] Are maçonnes gudder menne then odhers ?] Masons are not understood to be collectively more virtuous in their lives and actions, than other men; but it is an undoubted fact, that a strict conformity to the rules of the profession, may make them better than they otherwise would be.

[Book 3 | Section 1] Dothe maçonnes love eidher odher myghtylye as beeth sayde ?] The answer to this question is truly great, and is judiciously remarked upon by the learned annotator.

By the answers to the three last questions, the objections of cavilers against masonry are amply refuted; the excellence of the institution is displayed; and every censure, on account of the transgressions of its professors, entirely removed. A bad man, whose character is known, can never be enrolled in our records; and should we unwarily be led to receive an improper object, then our endeavors are exerted to reform him: so that, by being a mason, it is probable he may become a better subject to his sovereign, and a more valuable member to the state, than he would have done had he not been in the way of those advantages.

To conclude, Mr. Locke's observations on this curious manuscript deserve a serious and careful examination; and though he was not at the time one of the brotherhood, he seems pretty clearly to have comprehended the value and importance of the system it was intended to illustrate. We may therefore fairly conjecture, that the favorable opinion he conceived of the society of masons before his admission, was afterwards sufficiently confirmed.