

Phoenicia Lodge No. 58 F&AM  
[www.phoenicia58.org](http://www.phoenicia58.org)  
P.O. Box 30412, Phoenix AZ 85046  
The Trestleboard  
Special Edition – The Masonic Fraternity  
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Brethren of Phoenicia Lodge,

In your hands you hold a special edition of our Trestleboard. In operative masonry, the Trestleboard is used by the master architect to draw his designs and plans, which are then used by the laborers to construct the building, agreeable to the designs laid down for them.

The Masonic fraternity is the oldest, largest, and most widely known fraternal organization in the world. Members of the Masonic fraternity come from virtually every occupation and profession, - from all stations in life. All masons meet on an equal basis as friends, regardless of income, political ideology, or religious belief. All are patriotic citizens, and all have a belief in a Supreme Being.

Respectfully presented to the members of Phoenicia Lodge No. 58 F&AM,  
Bryon P Howe, PM

## Clarity in Freemasonry

by Stephen F. Oakley

The author is currently serving as Grand Master of Illinois. This Short Talk Bulletin is taken from his message to his brethren in the Illinois Freemasonry Magazine, Winter 2020 issue, which had a theme of “Clarity”

We ought to strive for “Clarity” when it comes to every decision we make.

One of these is the incredibly impactful decision we make to become Masons, starting with the attitude we uphold as we go through our initiation. Clarity allows us to see things as they are and to choose to be the best, we can be to desire knowledge and truth, to be devoted to living altruistically, to contribute to our communities.

I recall very fondly the process of petitioning, how I came to experience greater clarity after becoming a Mason, but it’s interesting how the first thing about Freemasonry that made a deep impression on me was unexpected.

I have never been someone who likes to arrive late to anything (in hopes that I do not offend any of my Bears Fans, I believe in Lombardi time or even earlier than that), so I frequently arrive at places with plenty of time to spare.

On the night I was to receive my First Degree, I arrive at the lodge about 45 minutes early. I was greeted by the lodge secretary with whom I had a short conversation. Though he was busy getting everything ready for the night, his kindness struck me, and I was left very impressed by him. He treated everyone as a friend and brother.

As we travel through our lives, we are told that we only get one chance to make a good impression. In the short time we talked that lodge secretary had made an impression on me that still resonates today. He treated everyone as a friend and brother.

The work he did was impeccable; he was respected throughout the fraternity, but he did not seek out praise. The way he presented himself and the way he conducted himself became something for me to try to emulate.

I realize today that his character was probably rooted in an inner sense of Clarity. Masonry provides us with the opportunity to see that our lives are best lived when we are kind, hard-working, eager to learn, and respectful. I believe I have not reached the level of that brother, but he inspired me greatly to be more like him. To look toward him as a goal, to be the best man I can be.

Am I that man? Are you? If we cannot answer this question with yes, then why not? When a candidate enters the lodge for the first time, he is truly placing his trust in us. Even if someone has already told him everything about the events to follow, he is still uncomfortable. When he meets you, do you give him reassurance? When he looks at you, does he come away with a feeling that this is a special place and that here he will have something to aspire to? That should be the goal for all of us.

I am fortunate to have known one man who inspired me, who did lead and not with supreme effort, but with ease and grace... He was an inspiration 33 years ago and he is still an inspiration today.

I ask you to think about this story because you are that man. You are the man who that new member judges our fraternity on, whether good or bad. That first impression will be burned into his memory forever.

My hope is that we can always strive to see things clearly, that we have the mindset to be the best men we can be — to new members and to everyone we may encounter. If we all collectively seek out Clarity, I have no doubt our fraternity can only grow stronger and that our impact can only go further.

### THE GAVEL OF AUTHORITY

SHORT TALK BULLETIN - Vol.IX July, 1931 No.7

by: Unknown

“The common gavel is an instrument used by operative Masons to break off the corners of rough stones, the better to fit them for the builder’s use; but we as Free and Accepted Masons are taught to use for the more noble and glorious purpose of divesting our hearts and consciences of all the vices and superfluities of life, thereby fitting our minds as living stones for that spiritual building, that House Not Made With Hands, eternal in the Heavens.” Mackey, distinguished authority, states that the name comes from “Gabel” because the form of the common gavel resembles that of the gable of a house.

But the student will look in the ritual in vain for any allusion to the gavel as an instrument of authority, although in some form it is primarily the badge of power and authority of the Master, and, often in another form and always in a lesser degree, of the Wardens. In various Jurisdictions throughout the United States the interested visitor will find in use in the East common gavels, stone Mason’s hammers made of both wood and metal, the ordinary mallet gavel of the legislative halls, the auctioneer’s hammer, and a setting maul in all shapes and sizes. All these various implements, in diverse forms and materials, are used as the symbol of the authority of the Master. Apparently it is not so important that he have a particular symbol; that is, that he carry a “common gavel” or a “setting maul,” but that he have always in open Lodge, in his possession, some instrument with which blows may be struck, as a symbol of his power, his authority, his right to preside and to rule.

Many studious Freemasons contend with some show of reason that inasmuch as the common gavel - the mason’s hammer with one sharp edge - is one of the working tools of a speculative Entered Apprentice while the setting maul is not classified as a working tool, the gavel, and not the maul, is more logically the Master’s symbol of authority. Certainly, unless Grand Lodge has ruled otherwise there is no argument to be used against a Master presiding with common gavel, whether real, of metal, or imitation, of rose or other valuable wood. But those who find their only argument for the use of the common gavel as the symbol of a Master’s authority in the undoubted fact that it is one of the striking tools of the stone mason, as well as a working tool of the Speculative Craft, hardly go far enough into antiquity.

As a symbol of authority, the hammer is as old as mythology. Thor, the Scandinavian son of Odin and Freya, possessed a miraculous and all-powerful hammer which he threw to do his will. When this was accomplished - usually it was a slaying of enemies or a destruction of something which the God did not like - his accommodating hammer straightway returned to his hands!

Thor, like Jove, also controlled thunderbolts, and from this early myth we associate lightning and thunder with the hammer. We also invert the thought to develop the idea of the authority in a hammer or gavel from its age long association with the power of lightening. The connection is worldwide, and by no means confined either to Freemasonry or to Norse mythology. Thor and his hammer are at the bottom of the old "hammer rite of possession." Thor, God of lightening, by virtue of his control of fire was also the God of the domestic hearth. In ancient days a bride, on taking possession of her new home, received a hammer thrown in her lap as a symbol of possession. When her husband purchased land, he took possession by throwing a hammer over it.

The Indian God Parasu Rama, or Rama of the Battleax, obtained land from the God of the sea by throwing his battleax over the earth, and became possessed of all that it spanned. The South Sea Islanders use a "celt" or hammer, often of huge size, before the chief's dwelling as a symbol of authority. Mrs. H.G.M. Murray Aynsley (English Authority on mythology), says "The Hammer has its uses in Freemasonry as a symbol of authority - the auctioneer, too, used a hammer - here we see possession implied by the falling or throwing down of a hammer.

Thus, when the Master of a lodge first brings down the gavel to convene the Lodge, he by that blow says in effect, "by this act I take possession of this Lodge."

G.W. Speth, famous writer on Freemasonry, draws attention to the curious articles drawn up by the stone masons of Torgau, in Saxony, in 1462.

And every Mason shall keep his lodge free of all strife; yea, his lodge shall be kept pure as the seat of justice. And no Mason shall bear false witness in his lodge, neither shall he defile it in any manner.

Therefore, shall no Mason allow a harlot to enter his lodge, but if anyone have ought to commune with her he shall depart from the place of labor so far as one may cast a gavel.

Grand Lodges are sovereign within their Jurisdictions. Whatever their ukase, it immediately becomes right within that Jurisdiction. We find anomalies in American Freemasonry as a result. Thus, most Jurisdictions demand that a Master elect "pass the chairs" or receive the Degree of Past Master in a Chapter of the Royal Arch before he may be installed. But that is not true in all Jurisdictions. Where it obtains the practice is both right and ancient. Its absence is "right" when Grand Lodge has so ruled. Since the formation of the Mother Grand Lodge in 1717, Masonic jurists have conceded the right of a Grand Lodge to make Masons "at sight" as inherent; that is the right to convene an occasional or emergent lodge, under dispensation, set it to work and disband it when its work is done. Some American Grand Lodges have ruled to the contrary. It is "right" in those Jurisdictions that a Grand Master cannot make a Mason "at sight." In forty-three of our forty-nine Grand Jurisdictions, two of the three Great Lights are the Square and Compasses. In the remaining six, Compasses is incorrect, and "compass" is right - aye, with every

lexicographer, dictionary, encyclopedia, and Masonic authority to the contrary, “compass” is right in these Jurisdictions.

Under the doctrine that whatever a Grand Lodge declares to be right, whether by actual words or by tacit agreement, is the law and the practice for that particular Jurisdiction, any form of striking instrument which is customary is the correct form in that Jurisdiction. The Grand Jurisdiction which sanctions setting mauls in all three stations, uses the tool which is correct in that Jurisdiction. If the Grand Lodge sets forth that the Master shall use a “common gavel” and the Wardens setting mauls, that practice is there correct. If nothing is said to imply that the Master must use the “common gavel” as a symbol of authority, then the familiar form of mallet or hammer - by far the commonest form of a presiding officer’s instrument - may be considered as correct as any other. We are not very liberal minded in our Masonic symbolism. The Square and the Compasses on our Altars are hardly large or strong enough to play Operative parts in stone cutting and setting. The “working tools” we present to initiates are but miniatures of the real tools they symbolize. The trowel which we tell a candidate is more especially the essential tool of the Master Mason, is usually far too small to spread real cement between real stones. Certainly, no gavel of wood, be its form what it may, can “break off the corners of rough stones.” So, while the beauty of the symbolism of the “common gavel” as the presiding officer’s instrument of authority is obvious, usage and custom and expedience in many lodges have metamorphosed it into a little mallet of wood, just as the tiny square upon the Altar is an expedient metamorphosis of the great metal tool of the Operative Mason. Perhaps it is not so important that the wood of the gavel be carved to imitate some particular striking tool of the Operative Masons, as that the brethren understand the power and authority inherent in it.

Whatever form of gavel is used, the Master should always retain possession of the instrument and never have it beyond his reach. He should carry it with him when he moves about the Lodge, whether in process of conferring a degree, or when the Lodge in charge of the Junior Warden at refreshment. This, be it noted, is not only because it is his symbol of authority, but to remind him that, although his position is the highest within the gift of the brethren, he is yet but a brother among brethren. Holding the highest power in the Lodge, he exercises it by virtue of the commonest of the working tools.

All powerful, within certain limits, in the Lodge, the Master has authority to temporarily transfer his power. He may honor a visitor by presenting him with the gavel (and should always remove his hat when the gavel passes). He may place another in the Oriental Chair to confer a degree (in most Jurisdictions) at which time he hands over the gavel of authority. Because he has the right to transfer the authority, he should always be in position to exercise it; another reason for always retaining possession of his gavel! The authority by which the Master rules is not, of course, the mere physical possession of a piece of wood or iron. The Master may be a physical weakling. Some powerful two hundred-pounder may easily wrest from him the emblem of authority, but such forcible possession would not transfer the authority. The authority to use the gavel comes first from election and installation, the powers of both of which ceremonies rest on the authority of the Grand Lodge. Once installed, a Master cannot be deprived of his gavel of authority except by the Grand Lodge, or the Grand Master “ad interim” (or his deputy acting in

his stead). The brethren elect to the East but cannot “unelect” or take away the power they have once given. The gavel of authority is not transferable save by the will of its lawful possessor, except at the order of the Grand Lodge, or the Grand Master (or his deputy acting for him). In most Jurisdictions such an action by a Grand Master or Deputy, “ad interim” Grand Lodge. is reviewable by the Grand Lodge at its next succeeding regular communication.

The Master enforces the authority of which the gavel is the symbol - first and usually last and all the time - by the good will and the Masonic practices of his brethren. Few Lodges would tolerate disobedience to the gavel by any brother. Occasionally a hot-headed brother has attempted to defy its power. In such cases the Master may ask the offender to leave the room. His failure to respond lays him open to charges of un-Masonic conduct and a Masonic trial. The Master may request the Marshall or Master of ceremonies to remove the offender. Or the Master may - as sometimes has been done - us the gavel to call from labor to refreshment, during which period there will be plenty to admonish the offender of the enormity of his offense against Masonic law. good manners and good taste! The charges given a Mason at the close of all three Degrees are generally held to have the binding force of all other Masonic teachings and obligations. The brother who signs the by-laws as a Master Mason agrees by so doing to abide not only by them but by all the unwritten usages and customs of the Fraternity and all the admonishments of the charges. Those who know their ritual will recall that in the charge of the third degree it is said: “The ancient Landmarks of the Order you are carefully to preserve and never suffer them to be infringed, countenance a departure from the ancient usages and customs of the Fraternity.” Obedience to the gavel is indeed an “ancient usage and custom” of the Fraternity. Rarely is it defied - never with impunity. But to reach its fullest respect, the gavel must be wisely used. “It is fine to have a giant’s strength— It is despicable to use it like a giant!” applies here. The Master “may” do what he will in his Lodge. He may cut off discussion, rap a brother down, cause a brother to leave the room, refuse to put a motion, declare the Lodge at recess, close at his pleasure, control debate, arrange the work, refuse a bother permission to speak - all with the gavel. But the wise Master uses his great power sparingly and never arbitrarily. While the peace and harmony of the Craft are maintained, he need not use it except as the ritual or custom of presiding in the Lodge requires. If he so uses it, it will be respected, its possessor will be venerated, and its transfer to another hand will be considered by the brethren what it actually is, a great and signal honor.

No Master may pay a higher tribute to any brother than to intrust him with the gavel. He offers it to the Grand Master (or his Deputy representing him), because it is the right of those dignitaries to preside in all private Lodges. He offers it to another to preside during the conferring of a degree, or to a distinguished visitor, as a mark of the greatest respect and confidence. A gavel is not a necessity. A Master and two brethren can open and close a Lodge if they have the Great Lights and a Charter. Lesser Lights, a gavel, Warden’s columns, Aprons, and Altar are not essential. Without the Great Lights and a Charter (or dispensation) a Lodge cannot be opened, though it has every other accessory. The gavel, then, is the symbol of the authority, not the authority itself. Like all great symbols, it takes upon itself in the minds of the brethren something of the quality of the thing symbolized. As we revere the cotton in stripes and stars which became

the Flag of our Country; as we revere the paper and ink which became the Great Light in Masonry, so, also, do Freemasons revere the little hammer, mallet, setting maul or common gavel which typifies and symbolizes the height of Masonic power and authority - the majesty of power, the wisdom of Light which rest in and shine forth from the Oriental Chair.

## SOME THOUGHTS ON THE NATURE AND PURPOSES OF FREEMASONRY

by Ill. Albert Pike, 33°

Albert Pike in 33° Regalia

Excerpted from an "Address by the R.W. Master" Delivered April 3, 1861, in New Orleans, Louisiana *Transactions of the Supreme Council (1866)*, Appendix A. pp. 36-47

It is very desirable that Freemasons should understand what Freemasonry is. If it were everything at once that even its Initiates imagine it to be, it would be difficult to conceive of anything more intrinsically incongruous. It is not a merely benevolent association, for the mutual relief and assistance, and the dispensing of small charities to the needy. It is not a society for mutual admiration, got up in order to gratify the ambition or the vanity of those who are fond of office, insignia and jewels, of the glories of resonant epithets, and the gauds of high-sounding titles.

It is not a system of political clubs or organizations, conservative, radical, or revolutionary.

It is neither a religious or irreligious Order or Church, propagating any faith or unfaith whatever. Its altars are neither Hebraic, Mohammedan nor Christian, but simply Masonic.

It is not the apostle of any particular form of government, not the advocate of any peculiar political faith.

It is the Apostle, the Preacher, the Advocate of Truth alone, and not as the creed of any man, or party, or multitude of men. It will not descend from the high places on which it sits enthroned, to engage in controversies and polemics, to become the organ of a party, an agent to effect political changes, or a schoolmaster to teach rudimentary lessons or a particular class of political, governmental, or economical ideas.

If wisely conceived and carefully expressed, all these may be applications of Masonry; but they are not Masonry itself...

**Freemasonry is advancement towards the Light, on all the lines of progress, moral intellectual and spiritual...**

If Masonry were merely an association of persons, united for mutual assistance and protection, its aims would no doubt be laudable; it would perhaps be strong in numbers; and it might thrive for many years. But if that had been its whole purpose, it would never have been enabled to measure the term of its existence by centuries, and when it had grown so old as to have forgotten its own origin and the names of its founders, to continue as hale and vigorous as ever. Nor would the possession of its antique secrets, stirring the curiosity of men, and drawing them with a force irresistible towards its Temples, have given it that perpetuity and perennial youth.



Albert Pike in 33° regalia.

It outlasts the ages, because its aims are higher and nobler than the mere communication of mysterious secrets, or the affording of mutual and reciprocal assistance.

It requires of its initiates that they shall be useful to society. It desires to be itself a benefactor of even the unborn generations; that its influences, the consequences of its teachings, of its toils and its charities, may flow, ever broadening and deepening, far down into the remote Future.

It teaches those who frequent its Temples, that the nobility of human nature is displayed in WORK; that it is the destiny of every one to LABOUR; and that out of WORK alone, earnest and faithful, comes the blessing of man's days; that Life is a battle, in which we are bravely to fight, and in which no craven spirit can succeed; that rest is a blessing that can only be purchased with victory over temptation, difficulty, and our passion; after which conquest alone we can repose our shields...

The performance of duty is the law of Masonry. The performance of duty is Masonry.

That law was enacted for it, and that nature assigned it, when it first appeared, vigorous in its youth, at a period unknown to us, to shine with a steady and peaceful light upon the darkness of ancient ages.

The noblest, if not indeed the only noble use, to which we can devote our strength, our energies, our faculties, our intellect, is to labour for the benefit of others, to instruct, to guide, to enrich with physical comforts, and moral healthfulness and intellectual wealth, the less favoured of our race; not alone our children, friends, neighbors, but those remote from us and even unknown to us; separated from us even by wide spaces of time yet unelapsed; to be born hereafter; to people this earth when we have left it; to build their habitations and their cities, and the monuments of their ancestors, upon our unknown graves....

There are reforms that Masonry can help to initiate. Every Mason can hold the man dishonoured whose soul is tainted with a lie. He can refuse his vote and voice to every man, and his subscription to every journal that does not, strictly, and in the most minute particulars and details, adhere to the simple truth. For falsehood is a fouler disease than the leprosy; and when it becomes common, turns the very lifeblood of the nation putrid in its arteries.

Every Mason can practice temperance, economy, and frugality; and avoid in himself and his family that ostentatious luxury by which so many nations have fallen.

And everyone can find some way in which to do something for his country, or at least for the community in which he lives, without the hope of fee or reward....

We invite you and all the Brethren to aid us in thus enlarging the borders and augmenting the splendors and increasing the usefulness of the Ancient and Accepted Rite. Let its Temples of Perfection, in all their modest and harmonious proportions, be reared everywhere in the Jurisdiction, and a numerous and ever-increasing Brotherhood gather around the Cubical Stone in each, and there devote themselves to the service of God, their Country and their Brethren! Let these real Masters' Lodges be open to call good and true Masons; but let their gates be sternly closed against the narrow-minded and the sordid.

Let the Chapters of Rose Croix teach incessantly their holy doctrines, of LIBERTY, with order and subordination, EQUALITY in the presence of the law, and BROTHERHOOD, that demands of the children of a common father, love for each other, mutual assistance, forbearance and protection.



Let the Councils of Kadosh teach hatred of tyranny and resistance to tyrants, free Thought, free Conscience, and free Speech.

And let us gather into these Bodies and into our Consistories the learned, the intellectual, the zealous and the unselfish of the Order; and thus array around our altars and under our banners, a gallant soldiery, ever ready to devote their lives to the service of their country, to maintain public order, to carry forward needed reforms, and in every emergency to maintain the honour and increase the glories of their Fatherland!

And may we all, in whatever great troubles may come upon the Country, amid whatever adversities may oppress her, so shape our course, so bear ourselves in every emergency, so decide among conflicting claims to duty, as becomes good men and Masons! Amen! So mote it be!