

Hindrance to Light - A Freemason Obstacle

by **Sir Knight Darryl Chapman**

In the article "Masonry, Aid or Hindrance to Light" in the September and October issues of the 2010 Knight Templar magazine, the question of Freemasonry being a facilitation or an obstacle to light was addressed. Further, it was questioned if Masonic light was more than simple knowledge, and the lack of a clear definition was frustrating.^{1,i} When I first learned of the hypothesis, I assumed it was going to be another attempt to justify separation from Symbolic Masonry by the "Higher Degree" Masons, especially because of where I discovered it. The answer to the question can only be reached by first defining light and determining the specific direction being traveled to achieve it. A simple answer can be given and a complex one is equally correct depending on the light seeker himself.

Freemasonry is a medium in which a Master Mason navigates the natural laws of perceptible and veiled obstacles on a path to Light. The amount of light that is achieved directly correlates to the distance traveled, the manner and vehicle in which he arrived, and what he wanted to discover, coupled together with additional unforeseeable unveiling and unraveling along the way. As the traveler becomes more enlightened, his definition of light can and will change. Therefore, we must seek more enlightenment, and failure to do so is a hindrance to Light.

A simple response can be that Masonic light can be defined as knowledge, experience, or comprehension. This light can be defined as common ritualistic functions of the Fraternity. Further light on this path can be viewed as merely the facts of the preceding, current, or next degree, whether it is one in the Craft, York and Scottish Rites, or Allied Degrees.

As the newest Entered Apprentice Mason, one should remember where he was placed and why. It is also the beginning of illumination, one stone at a time. The inculcations within the Blue Lodge are instruments for building an internal spiritual temple. Its completion is a vast and sublime accomplishment. However, there begins the next degree of light.

Masonry does not give a concise road map to the ultimate light as this is not its design. It does clearly put one on the correct path that leads to it, because in order to end, you must start with the aid of the Great Architect of the Universe. The correct direction is the Holy Bible, and God is the ultimate light. This is a higher meaning of light.

The higher meaning reveals that God is ultimate light. However, Freemasonry is full of symbolism that has dual meaning. Masonic light can have multiple specific meanings. Sometimes we Masons cannot see the forest because of the trees.², Rosicrucianism, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, and Alchemy are philosophies that are distinguished by degrees with hidden mysteries and higher meanings. Rosicrucianism suggests that the basis for design is "built on esoteric truths of the ancient past," which "concealed from the average man, provide insight into nature, the physical universe, and the spiritual

realm." Western Christianity is no different. The Holy Bible tells us of God's divine light He gave to Moses when Moses requested God's name, "...Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you."³ We as Knights Templar should understand what God said His name was. He didn't give a proper name at a drop of the hat. We as Royal Arch Masons discovered it as we searched for further light. Freemasonry is no different; if it was so easy, everyone would possess all the knowledge whether or not they were worthy. Moreover, there would be no reason for our Fraternity to exist. Questioning whether or not the Fraternity teaches more than basic knowledge is simply skimming the surface of the ultimate light. We should not be so presumptuous as to believe that all of the "Hidden Mysteries of Freemasonry" are so easily obtainable. One should remember the second sentence told to him when the door opened the second time as an Entered Apprentice candidate.

A higher meaning can be quite simple. An example is that the sun simply rises in the East every day. It is one of the simple functions of our lives that are taken for granted. The sun rules and maintains all life forms on earth. It governs our solar system; therefore, it is not so simple. The sun is both simple and complex depending on what we are seeking to understand. It is relevant to one's perception within time and space. Therefore I must believe that Masonic light is as simple as wisdom and intelligence, knowledge and understanding of our Fraternity, and moral science. I also must believe that Masonic light is God and His word contained in the Volume of Sacred Law bound together with spiritual embodiment to live in harmony within our temple built in the three degrees. Then comes additional light for a Mason to seek.

Freemasonry offers numerous functions that are available nearly seven days week, and the claim that it takes time away from church and worship of God are unjustifiable. It is of our own free will that we choose to go. We are the hindrance, not Masonry. Freemasonry gives light and is readily available on different days and at different times as everyone cannot go at the same time. It is available, not required. We are taught that "knowledge is obtained by degrees." I believe that one seeks Masonic light from actively participating in the different functions and that after all the knowledgeable light is obtained from them, one should move on to the next degree. You shouldn't have to attend every meeting AFTER you obtained and retained all the light therein. It becomes a social experience at that point. Therefore more time is available for you to worship God at your church. The amount of knowledge one has received may be all he wants. If so, he does not have to seek more light as he could work in the level of his knowledge.

Ultimate light can be viewed differently from more than one specific time and space. Once we learn the knowledge (light) of all the degrees leading to God or ultimate light, the end is not near. We plan in steps to achieve a goal, and it can take decades to achieve. When we finally accomplish the goal, another problem occurs. What we are going to do with it once we get it becomes a problem. There lies further light. For example, the followers of Western Christianity spend vast amounts of time praying for a lost soul to be saved. Let us say that the prayers are answered after twenty-five years by the lost receiving light. This would be a major blessing and prayers well answered. Now after twenty-five years of praying, what is next for the saved soul? Does it end? No, it is the beginning for the new Christian as he reaches spiritual salvation. Now the new Christian

begins praying for other lost souls. The achievement of obtaining ultimate light is the starting point and another stepping degree for more light for each Christian. The great receiving gift of becoming saved ends one travel and begins another. It doesn't mean that the whole process ends. One cannot say, "Well I'm saved and saw the light so I don't need God anymore."

The medium of Freemasonry is a mode of traveling to ultimate light and beyond. It gets you there symbolically by different vehicles and can only be hindered by the navigating Freemason. This medium is ruled and guided by the Volume of Sacred Law.

Freemasonry is not a hindrance to light but we can be a hindrance to Freemasonry and therefore light. I just simply believe that Masonic light can be defined as two separate entities, one plain fare and one complex of God. Masonic light illuminates differently from wherever one stands gazing upon it at a specific time and space with a certain degree of understanding. The everlasting search for more light and the reception of it places one closer and closer to God. I believe that light's highest meaning of all is closeness to God.

End Notes

1 Knight Templar magazine, October/November 2010, "Masonry: A Hindrance to Light?" By Lindgren, Carl Edwin, "The way of the Rose Cross; A Historical Perception," 1614-1620. Journal of Religion and Psychical Research, Volume 18, Number 3:141-48. 1995.

2 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosicrucianism>

3 The Holy Bible, King James Version, Exodus 3-14 .

i "Surely a concept so central to the ideals of the Masonic Fraternity and its members must mean more than this, and the lack of a clearly recognized definition with a higher meaning is somewhat frustrating."

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