



Internet Lodge 9659
United Grand Lodge of England
Province of East Lancashire
<http://internet.lodge.org.uk>

Short Papers Competition 2009

The opinions reflected by the author are not necessarily those of Internet Lodge, The Province of East Lancashire or the United Grand Lodge of England.

Paper 27/2009

Title
Author

Facing the Challenge
Bro Leon Zeldis – Israel

In his book *God in Search of Man*, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote the following illuminating paragraph:

"It is customary to blame secular science and anti-religious philosophy for the eclipse of religion in modern society. It would be more honest to blame religion for its own defeats. Religion declined not because it was refuted but because it became irrelevant, dull, oppressive and insipid. When faith is completely replaced by creed, worship by discipline, love by habit; when the crisis of today is ignored because of the splendor of the past; when faith becomes an heirloom rather than a living fountain; when religion speaks only in the name of authority rather than with the voice of compassion, its message becomes meaningless."

Let me take the liberty of making a few minor changes and replace the word religion with Freemasonry, and see what we get:

It is customary to blame current norms of conduct and anti-Masonic publicity for the eclipse of Freemasonry in modern society. It would be more honest to blame Freemasonry for its own defeats. Freemasonry declined not because it was refuted but because it became irrelevant, dull, oppressive and insipid. When tradition is completely replaced by passing fancies, living ritual by rote memorizing, love by habit; when the crisis of today is ignored because of the splendor of the past; when tradition becomes an heirloom rather than a living fountain; when Freemasonry speaks only in the name of authority rather than with the voice of fraternal love, its message becomes meaningless... The primary task of the philosophy of Freemasonry is to rediscover the questions to which Freemasonry is an answer. In our quest for forgotten questions, the method and spirit of philosophical inquiry are of greater importance than Grand Lodge dogmatic strictures intended to regulate the life of the lodges down to their minutest detail. .

Is this a cry for revolution? To demolish the present Grand Lodge structure and let each lodge do as its members decide? Certainly not; it is a call for renewed thinking on the role of the lodge and of Grand Lodge and their interaction. It is true that the individual lodge is born and lives under the supervision and at the mercy of Grand Lodge, but on the other hand, Grand Lodge exists only by virtue of its individual constituting lodges. This is a two-way street.

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Some masons try to break this mould, leave the Grand Lodge if they don't agree with its decisions, and create their own Grand Lodge. This is a self-defeating policy. Fragmenting the craft does nothing to solve the serious problems facing Freemasonry. Instead of revolution, we should strive for evolution, seeking to improve, rather than reject. Giving more freedom to individual lodges to choose their own way to attract, maintain and develop their membership, making of our rich traditions the compass to direct their actions, never an anchor to stifle progress.

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