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WHY IS FRANCE SO AFRAID OF RELIGION?

France and some other countries were drawn into a controversy when two students were expelled from school for wearing a head scarf. France widened the ban and proposed a law forbidding the wearing of clothing and symbols openly expressive of religious identity. Besides head scarfs, this law also includes Christian crosses and Jewish yarmulkes. This law caused a wave of reaction. Muslim countries, the United Kingdom, the USA and

Germany condemned the law and stressed that its enforcement would cause tension and entrenchment in France. They also asserted that the law was contrary to religious freedom and basic human rights. But, so far, these reactions have not led the French government to retract its decision.

We must not interpret what happened in France only as a ban on religious symbols; the French fear of religion and religious morality goes back a long time. Those who are aware of the development of social culture and church-state relations in France will know that these kinds of initiatives and the resulting controversies are well known in French society. Moreover, this fear is not limited only to Islam and Judaism; the memory of the murder of Catholics during the French Revolution has not yet been erased.

The present shape of church-state relations in France was forged by conflict, hatred, anger and slaughter. This struggle began in the eighteenth century against the Catholic Church with the purpose of diminishing the influence of the Church on society. We can say that during this period, society became distanced from spiritual and religious values and came under the influence of materialist philosophy.

The Age of Enlightenment: How European Societies Distanced from Religious Values

That period in which materialist and evolutionist ideas gained widespread acceptance in European society, and influenced it in distancing itself from religion, is known as the Enlightenment. Surely, those who selected this word (that is those who characterized this change of ideas positively as a move into the light) were the leaders of this deviation. They described the earlier period as the "Dark Age" and blamed religion for it, claiming that Europe became enlightened when it was secularized and held religion at a distance. This biased and false perspective is still today one of the basic propaganda mechanisms of those who oppose religion.

It is true that Medieval Christianity was partially "dark" with superstitions and bigotry and most of these have been cleared in the post-Medieval age. In fact, the Enlightenment did not bring much positive results to the West either. The most important result of the Enlightenment, which occurred in France, was the French Revolution, that turned the country into a sea of blood. For most of the French intellectuals, the Enlightenment meant purging people's minds of every religious and spiritual value. Nearly all the thinkers who lived in eighteenth-century France shared this view. The French Revolution was built on this idea of Enlightenment that held sway in France; it was one of the modern world's most barbarous, merciless and savage revolutions. As soon as the Jacobins came to power after the Revolution, the first thing they did was to bring in the guillotine; thousands of people lost their heads just because they were accused of being rich or religious. One of the leaders of the Revolution by the name of Fouché (his nickname was the Butcher of Lyon) sent a committee headed by three individuals to Lyon to destroy the landed and religious aristocracy there. In a letter he sent to Robespierre, the leader of the Senate, Fouché wrote that the guillotine was operating too slowly and that he was not happy with the slow advance of the revolution. He wanted permission to do a mass cleansing. On the day he received the permission, thousands of people with their hands tied behind their back were mowed down mercilessly by the guns of the revolution.

Today Enlightenment influenced literature praises the French Revolution; however, the Revolution cost France much and contributed to social conflicts that were to last into the twenty-first century. The analysis of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment by the famous British thinker, Edmund Burke, is very telling. In his famous book, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published in 1790, he criticized both the idea of the Enlightenment and its fruit, the French Revolution; in his opinion, that movement destroyed the basic values that held society together, such as religion, morality and family structure, and paved the way towards terror and anarchy. Finally, he regarded the Enlightenment, as one interpreter put it, as a "destructive movement of the human intellect."¹

The leaders of this destructive movement were Masons. Voltaire, Diderot, Montesquieu, and other anti-religious thinkers who prepared the way for the Revolution, were all Masons. The Masons were intimate with the Jacobins who were the leaders of the Revolution. This had led some historians to the opinion that it is difficult to distinguish between Jacobinism and Masonry in France of this period.

During the French Revolution, much hostility was evinced toward religion. Many clergymen were sent to the guillotine, churches were destroyed, and, more-

over, there were those who wanted to eradicate Christianity totally and replace it with a deviant, pagan, symbolic religion called "the Religion of Reason." The leaders of the Revolution also became victims of this frenzy, every one of them finally losing their heads on the guillotine, to which they themselves had condemned so many people. Even today, many Frenchmen continue to question whether or not the revolution was a good thing.

The anti-religious sentiments of the French Revolution spread throughout Europe and, as a result, the nineteenth century became one of the boldest and most aggressive periods of anti-religious propaganda.

The Struggle Against Religion in France

The role played by Masons in the revolution was admitted by an "agent-provateur" by the name of Count Cagliostro. Cagliostro was arrested by the Inquisition in 1789, and made some important admissions while under interrogation. He began by stating that Masons throughout Europe had been planning a chain of revolutions. He said that the main goal of the Masons was to destroy the Papacy or to take it over.

Masonry's mission in France did not stop with the revolution. The chaos that came as a result of the revolution was finally settled when Napoleon came to power. But, this stability did not last long; Napoleon's ambition to rule the whole of Europe only brought an end to his power. Afterwards, the conflict in France continued between the monarchists and the revolutionists. In 1830, 1848 and 1871, three more revolutions occurred. In 1848, the "Second Republic" was founded; in 1871 the "Third Republic" was established. In 1881, Catholicism ceased to be the official religion of France and in 1988 religious education was completely removed from the education system.

Masons were very active throughout this period of agitation. Their primary aim was to weaken the Church and its religious institutions, destroy the values of religion and the influence of its laws on society, and to abolish religious education. Masons regarded "anti-clericalism" as the center of their social and political activities.

The Catholic Encyclopedia provides important information about the anti-religious mission of the Grand Orient, as French Masonry was known:

From the official documents of French Masonry contained principally in the official "Bulletin" and "Compte-rendu" of the Grand Orient it has been proved that all the anti-clerical measures passed in the French Parliament were decreed beforehand in the Masonic lodges and executed under the direction of the Grand Orient, whose avowed aim is to control everything and everybody in France. "I said in the assembly of 1898," states the deputy Massé, the official orator of the Assembly of 1903, "that it is the supreme duty of Freemasonry to interfere each day more and more in political and profane struggles." "Success (in the anti-clerical combat) is in a large measure due to Freemasonry; for it is its spirit, its programme, its methods, that have triumphed." "If the Bloc has been established, this is owing to Freemasonry and to the discipline learned in the lodges"... "We need vigilance and above all mutual confidence, if we are to accomplish our work, as yet unfinished. This work, you know . . . the anti-clerical combat, is going on. The Republic must rid itself of the religious congregations, sweeping them off by a vigorous stroke. The system of half measures is everywhere dangerous; the adversary must be crushed with a single blow."²

The Catholic Encyclopedia continues its account of French Masonry's struggle against religion:

In truth all the "anti-clerical" Masonic reforms carried out in France since 1877, such as the secularization of education, measures against private Christian schools and charitable establishments, the suppression of the religious orders and the spoliation of the Church, professedly culminate in an anti-Christian and irreligious reorganization of human society, not only in France but throughout the world. Thus French Freemasonry, as the standard-bearer of all Freemasonry, pretends to inaugurate the golden era of the Masonic universal republic, comprising in Masonic brotherhood all men and all nations. "The triumph of the Galilean," said the president of the Grand Orient, Senator Delpech, on 20 September, 1902, "has lasted twenty centuries. But now he dies in his turn.... The Romish Church, founded on the Galilean myth, began to decay rapidly from the very day on which the Masonic Association was established"³

By the "Galilean" the Masons mean Jesus, because according to the Gospel, Jesus was born in the Palestinian town of Galilee. Therefore, the Masons' hatred for the Church is an expression of their hatred for Jesus and all monotheistic religions. With the materialist, Darwinist and humanist culture they established in the nineteenth century, they believed that they had destroyed religion and restored Europe to its pre-Christian paganism.

When these words were uttered in 1902, a series of laws passed in France broadened the scope of religious opposition. Three thousand religious schools were closed and it was forbidden to give any religious education in schools. Many of the clergy were arrested, some were exiled and religious persons began to be regarded as second-class citizens. For this reason, in 1904, the Vatican broke all diplomatic relations with France but this did not change the country's attitude. It took the loss

of the lives of hundreds of thousands of French men against the German army in the First World War before the country's arrogance was tamed and it again recognized the importance of spiritual values.

As *The Catholic Encyclopedia* maintains, the war against religion, from the French Revolution to the twentieth century, was carried out by "the anti-clerical measures passed in the French Parliament" which "were decreed beforehand in the Masonic lodges and executed under the direction of the Grand Orient." This fact is clear from Masonic writings. For example, a quotation from a Turkish publication of "A Speech Made by Brother Gambetta on July 8 1875 in the Clémente Amitié Lodge" reads:

While the specter of reaction threatened France, and religious doctrine and backward ideas went on the offensive against modern social principles and laws, in the bosom of industrious, far-sighted organizations like Masonry devoted to the principles of brotherhood, we find the strength and consolation in the struggle against the extravagant claims of the Church, its ridiculous exaggerations and habitual excesses...we must be on guard and continue in the struggle. In order to establish the ideas of human order and progress, let us endure so that our shields cannot be broken through.⁵

It will be noticed that Masonic literature consistently presents its own ideas as "far-sighted" while accusing religious people of being "backward." However, this is merely a play on words. The notion of "the specter of reaction," mentioned in the above quotation, is something that sincere religious people also oppose, but which Masons exploit to take aim at true religion in their attempt to alienate people from it. Moreover, it must again be emphasized that the materialist-humanist philosophy espoused by Masons is really a superstitious, backward system of ideas, a hold-over of the pagan civilizations of Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece.

Therefore, the Masons' use of terms like "far-sightedness" and "backwardness" has no basis in reality. Indeed, it is unfounded because the conflict between Masons and religious people is nothing more than the perpetuation of the conflict between two ideas that have existed since the earliest ages of history. It is religion that proclaims the first of these ideas: that humanity was created by the will of God and that human beings are responsible to worship Him. This is the truth. The opposing idea, that human beings were not created but live vain and purposeless lives, is the one proposed by those who deny the existence of God. When correctly understood, it can be seen that their use of the superficial terms of "backwardness" and "far-sightedness" has no basis.

By making use of the idea of "progress," Masons seek to destroy religion. The "Catholic Encyclopedia" states:

The following are deemed the principal means [of freemasonry]:

(1) To destroy radically by open persecution of the Church or by a hypocritical fraudulent system of separation between State and Church, all social influence of the Church and of religion, insidiously called "clericalism," and, as far as possible, to destroy the Church and all true, i.e., superhuman religion, which is more than a vague cult of fatherland and of humanity;

(2) To secularize, by a likewise hypocritical fraudulent system of "unsectarianism," all public and private life and, above all, popular instruction and education. "Unsectarianism" as understood by the Grand Orient party is anti-Catholic and even anti-Christian, atheistic, positivistic, or agnostic sectarianism in the garb of unsectarianism. Freedom of thought and conscience of the children has to be developed systematically in the child at school and protected, as far as possible, against all disturbing influences, not only of the Church and priests, but also of the children's own parents, if necessary, even by means of moral and physical compulsion. The Grand Orient party considers it indispensable and an infallibly sure way to the final establishment of the universal social republic...⁶

It can be seen that Masonry has put a program into effect, under the name of "the liberation of society," whose purpose is to eradicate religion, a program that is still being implemented. This must not be confused with a model that seeks to provide the opportunity for every citizen of whatever religious faith to practice his faith freely. Rather, the model envisioned by Masonry is one of mass brainwashing, designed to remove religion completely from society and the minds of individuals and, if necessary, to persecute its adherents.

Religious Morality is the Solution to All Difficulties

The Basic Problem is the Absence of Religion

France's policy of eradicating religion began in the eighteenth century and has continued for three centuries; its result has been to turn the country into a nation that fears religion, religious morality and religious people. In the past few years, and as a result of this process, Muslims and various other members of religious organizations have been assaulted. However, this fear is groundless. Actually, it is not religion, but the absence of religion that should be feared. Religious morality brings peace, well-being, justice and tolerance to a society. In a society where the sense of religious morality is strong, there cannot possibly be violence, degeneration or fear. For this reason, France's fear of religion is unnecessary. In societies where war, conflict, violence and injustice hold sway, there is no religious morality.

In a society far removed from religion, it is inevitable that most people will be selfish, unjust and be lacking in moral goodness. Only the values of religion assure moral perfection for societies and individuals. Those having faith in God conduct themselves responsibly, since they only live to attain the approval of God and know that they will give an account of all their deeds. Fearing God, they cautiously avoid

wicked deeds, attitudes and behavior not praised by God. A society dominated by such people becomes one that does not experience social problems.

The existence of the values of religion brings the love felt for God. This love has an overwhelmingly positive and encouraging impact on all people. To earn the approval of God, believers comfort themselves in the most moral way, and love and respect one another. In general, mercy, tolerance and compassion pervade society.

Going in fear of God, people strictly avoid indulging in immoral or evil acts. In this way, every sort of evil which previously could not be prevented comes to an abrupt end. The spirit and warmth of religion fills the air.

In societies where religion does not penetrate, it is an accepted fact that people become rebellious and anarchistic and take up a position against their state. However, for one who lives by the values of religion, the imperatives of the state are paramount. If it is required, one will put his life into jeopardy for these values. For such a person, the interests of his state will always rank above his own interests. They stand up for spiritual values and do their best to defend them.

Under such favorable conditions, governing the state becomes reasonably simple. The country becomes a secure and prosperous place. Administrators of the country treat the citizens fairly and compassionately and thus unjust practices cease. In return, they are respected by the citizens. Such states surely lay their basis on an unshakeable foundation.

In the absence of Islamic morals, the father becomes the enemy of the son, and vice versa, brothers dispute, employers oppress their employees. Factories and firms stop operating due to anarchy and the wealthy exploit the labor of the poor. In business life, people try to cheat one another. Disorder, conflicts and anarchy become a way of life for the members of society. The reason for all this is that people have no fear of God. People having no fear of God feel free to commit injustice, and do not hesitate to resort to extremes of violence and cruelty—even murder. Furthermore, without feeling a pang of conscience, they dare to publicly express their lack of regret. On the contrary, one who is convinced that he could face eternal punishment in Hell would never commit such acts. The morality of the Qur'an renders all such untoward deeds impossible. Everything is handled easily, quietly and in the best manner. No judicial errors occur and, meanwhile, police stations and the law courts hardly find a case to deal with.

The peaceful and comfortable state of mind of people in all walks of life brings prosperity to society as a whole. Scientific research flourishes, hardly a day goes by without a new discovery or a technological breakthrough and the results are used for the good of all. Culture prospers and leaders promote public welfare. This prosperity owes its existence to the human mind being freed of pressure. Once one's mind is at ease, one develops better thinking ability and this state of mind enlarges the scope for reflection. The consequence is clear and unrestrained use of the intellect. Living by good standards of morality brings prosperity to people; they succeed in their business and commercial lives. Agriculture and industry flourish. In all fields of endeavor, there is true progress.

The solution is evident: to turn to God, the Creator of all beings, and to attain true happiness and tranquility by adhering to the religion God favors for us. God has informed us that salvation in this world is to turn to religion and has given the glad tidings that His sincere servants will not feel fear, provided that they are obedient to Him.

God has promised those of you who believe and do good deeds that He will make them masters in the land as He had made their ancestors before them, and will firmly establish for them their religion with which He is pleased and give them, in place of their fear, security. Let them worship Me, not associating anything with Me. Any who are unbelievers after that are deviators." (Qur'an, 24: 55)

Therefore, for all the reasons we have given above, French society must look for a solution not in the absence of religion but in the practice of religious morality. The solution to the growing conflicts, increasing violence and economic inequality does not lie in the banishment of religion; quite the opposite: it must be sought in an effort to disseminate religious morality. When a nation fears God, acts according to its conscience and exhibits compassion, mercy and tolerance, there can be no doubt that it will easily uproot violence and degradation in its society.

1 Pocock, in; Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, pp. 33-38.

2 Compterendu Gr. Or., 1903, Nourisson, "Les Jacobins", 266-271; *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Masonry (Freemasonry)", New Advent, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09771a.htm>

3 *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Masonry (Freemasonry)", New Advent, (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09771a.htm>)

4 *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Masonry (Freemasonry)", New Advent, (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09771a.htm#VIII>)

5 Nur Safa Tekyeliban, "Taassuba Karsi Mucadele" (Struggle Against Bigotry): From the Speech of Brother Gambetta made on July 8, 1875 in Clémente Amitié Lodge," Dogus

Kolu Yilligi: Ankara Dogus Mahfili Çalışmaları (Dogus Branch Yearbook: Ankara Dogus Society Studies), 1962, Kardes Press, Ankara, 1963, p. 19

6 *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Masonry (Freemasonry)", New Advent, (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09771a.htm>)

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