



On December 10th 1948, the UNO proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, inspired by the philosophy of Enlightenment. Among its writers were two long-time friends, René Cassin who, in addition to other high-level functions, was President of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (AIU) – 1943-1976, and Henri Laugier who was also, among other high-level functions, a member of the Grand Orient of France and a bearer of the 33rd degree in our Jurisdiction (1911-1973).

If supporters of conspiracy theories were aware of this conjunction between a Jew and Freemason, they would see in it a blatant confirmation of their fantasies and an intangible evidence of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy. It should also be noted that those same supporters, who are hyperactive users of social networks and broadcasters of “fake news”, help to swell the ranks of the militants of a virulent anti masonic propaganda which led to closing vulnerable masonic premises in Paris and in the provinces on December 8th.

And yet, Freemasonry in general and Scottish Rite Masonry in particular, proceed directly from the neoplatonician metaphysics of the Light which illuminates the cathedrals built by masons of operative Lodges, and from the symbolic labours of masons of speculative Lodges.

Both equally proceed from the philosophy of Enlightenment which inspired the abovementioned Declaration and which also illuminates the labours of Freemasons in speculative Lodges.

The names of the values and concepts which stem from that philosophy are: universalism, humanism, progress, reason, secularism. Our Lodges, which thus make real the utopia of the convergence of Light and Enlightenment, are the meeting ground for tradition and modernity, reason and imagination. We, Scottish Rite Masons, are aware of their individual and collective effects.

However, it turns out that since the 18th century, those values and concepts have been under attacks from a mixed anti-philosophical and ill-defined party which, in Isaiah Berlin's (1909-1997) formulation is currently named Counter-Enlightenment,

The frontrunners of that current of thought are numerous and sometimes widely publicised. Let me just mention two highly fashionable French authors: one is Michel Houellebecq who declared, after his novel *Submission* (2015) was published: “The Enlightenment is dead, may it rest in peace”. The second one is Jean-François Colosimo, the very catholic director of the *Editions du Cerf*, whose book *Aveuglements: religions, guerres, civilisations* (2018) (*Self-deception, Religions, Wars, Civilisations*) more modestly diagnoses the coming demise of the ideals of Newton, Montesquieu or Voltaire, and who declares “We have been blinded by the religion of Enlightenment which only survives by its dark side after it has collapsed”.

Such leading authors, feeding on an anti-rational philosophy, cast a dark light on some political parties and on the religions with which they are linked, in spite of their obvious diversity. In Western democracies, there is a constant progression of movements which are extremist, rabble-raising, populist, anti-élite, nationalistic, sovereigntist, and communitarianist. They are the sign of an anti-universalist identitarian closure. Religious fundamentalists impose their domination in the name of their own kind of universalism and they put divine laws above human laws in every country where they are in power. Whether they are political or religious, the members of such anti-humanist movements also condemn scientific progress, medically assisted reproduction, genetic research, vaccination and so on in the name of an apocalyptic fear.

They all are anti-universalists, anti-progressive, anti-rationalists; they necessarily oppose secularism because they share a world view which is based on providence and which rejects the autonomy and the free will of individuals as well, finally, as the universal values of Human Rights, thus paving the way to new forms of totalitarianisms.

It behoves us to see to it that by our Scottish Rite labours those lights of Counter-Enlightenment only shine in their own shadows, so that the Light which illuminates the Temple may also illuminate the whole universe.

III. Bro. Jacques OREFICE

33rd

Sovereign Grand Commander