

Fragments concerning Freemasonry

Mikhail Bakunin

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A.

In order to become once again a living and useful body, Freemasonry must once again seriously take up the service of humanity. But what does these words mean today: to serve humanity? – Would it be to protect the innocents and the weak, to care for the sick, to feed and clothe the destitute, to give education to poor children? All of these works are extremely commendable and as practical applications of the principle of human fraternity, they are more or less part, according to the capacity of each, of the duties not only of a true freemason, but also of every man who is not a stranger to the sentiment of charity. However, if Freemasonry had no other aim but to practice them, there would be no difference between it and countless religious associations that also have no aim but the exercise of charity. – The immense difference that separates them [freemasons] from all those religious institutions is expressed uniquely by the different spirits in which Freemasonry on one hand, and the Christian associations on the other, distribute their education and their assistance. The latter have for their absolute and final aim the glory of God much more than the alleviation of human suffering, the triumph of the religious spirit, the submission of man to the divine yoke, and consequently to that of the Church and all the temporal authorities sanctioned by the Church—and as a necessary consequence the degradation and abdication of human reason, of human will, the negation of all liberty, slavery. – Freemasonry, on the contrary, if it wants to remain faithful to its primary purpose, must desire the complete emancipation of man, the constitution of humanity through liberty on the ruins of all authority.

Religion says:

1. “There is one God, eternal, absolute, all-powerful, otherworldly, individual. He encompasses the world, and he is outside and above this Universe that he has created. He is all light, Wisdom, Love, Beauty, Truth, Goodness and Justice. Apart from him, in the world and in man, as long as they have not been visited by his special grace, everything is only lies, iniquity and darkness. – It is the kingdom of death. Never, by his own efforts, can man rise up to God. Left to himself, he never would have even felt the longing, the desire; – for by itself the lie would never have any intuition of the truth, nor the darkness of perdition, the instinct of the divine light. So this desire is never kindled in the heart of man except as an effect of the divine grace that calls upon it in that manner and invites it to purify itself in order to receive the spirit of God. For if man cannot rise by himself up to heaven, God, in his supreme goodness, can descend to the world and to man in order to enlighten him, to make him race up through his grace, in order to be saved. –
2. The World could not see God by itself and God not visibly inhabiting this world, he can only reveal himself through his elect. – These are his missionary Saints, his prophets, – this is finally how Christianity claims the very son of God, God like his Father, eternally one with him, although different from him. It is Jesus Christ who descends to the earth, makes himself a man, and suffers the martyrdom and humiliations of the cross, dies, is resurrected and rises up again into heaven, bearing with him the divine curse that weighed on all of humanity, and leaving to that humanity the possibility, the open path of salvation.
3. What we call Truth and Justice thus exist only through a divine revelation. Human reason, left to itself, could only give rise to lies—and the heart, the conscience could produce only disorder and iniquity. Nothing is as fatal for man as having faith in his own reason, in his

own heart, in his own conscience. – His reason is madness before God, and his natural justice, the instinct of his heart is an impiety. – To believe in it is to commit the satanic crime of pride, the crime against the Holy Spirit for which there is no pardon either on earth or in heaven. – The first step of salvation, the first effect of grace on the spirit and on the heart of man, must be this: the man must renounce all philosophy independent of revealed theology, he must sacrifice, mistrust his thought and all the voice of his natural conscience, of his heart, – he must annul himself in order to make himself capable of receiving the truth and justice of God, which has been revealed him and which always continues to be explained to him by the prophets and which he must accept with that much more faith since he feels himself incapable of understanding them and since they disgust his natural instincts. –

4. The succession the elect, the prophets and the priests established by them, form the Church. – The church is holy, because established by God himself, founded originally by the Elect of his grace. It has the Holy mission of preserving and perpetuating, in all its purity, then of explaining and developing for the use of generations to come, the divine tradition of revealed Truth and Justice. The Church could not accomplish that mission if it was not perpetually enlightened and guided by the spirit of God. – Thus, the holy spirit resides in it; it is its continuing, unique and infallible expression. Thus, no Truth and no Justice apart from the Church.
5. Once the Church is the exclusive possessor of Justice and Truth, it is also called to govern, without sharing, human society, and it can direct it in the path of salvation. – Once man has sacrificed his reason and his own conscience for the greater glory of God, he must also place his will at the feet of the holy Church. – The sacrifice of human reason and conscience necessarily leads to divine slavery, the absolute government of man by the Church – and every serious and sincere divine religion must lead to theocracy. – The Nations that are happiest, most privileged and especially blessed by God are those that are immediately and directly governed by the Priests, by God's Elect, as in Paraguay and Rome. – The less privileged Peoples are governed by secular Princes: emperors, kings, dukes, who through the intermediary, but only through the intermediary of the Church, are the anointed, the emissaries of the Lord, who, strong with this right, establish in their turn military and civil authorities, right up to the jailer and the executioner, to govern, administer and judge, to reward and punish the kingdoms, the provinces, the cities, the towns, and all the individuals, save for the priests. – It is in this sense only that all authority comes from God, and every revolt against any temporal authority is a crime against God. – The Princes, and the authorities established by them, are legitimate and sacred only because they are established and sanctioned by the Church, because they are themselves subject to the Church.
6. But the Princes, inspired by a fatal jealousy and by a criminal ambition, have wanted to shake off the divine yoke of the Church, and in rebellion after rebellion, have ended up declaring themselves the anointed of the Lord and ruling by their own will and grace, independent of and apart from the Church: “The absolute Monarchy of Louis XIV,” said Quinet, “had as a condition the absolute monarchy of Roman Catholicism: the two things are inseparable. The wish to be freed from Rome was in reality, for Louis XIV and his suc-

cessors, to strip themselves of their principle and destroy their own foundation. I sincerely wish, if I am a believer, to submit to the absolute power, on the condition that I am shown that this power follows from my belief, that I cannot dispute the first without shaking the second. That royalty, enveloped in the mysteries of Catholicism, becomes itself an object of faith; I am besieged on all sides; I bend the knee before an authority that covers the king with the priest, the priest with the king. – But, if that monarchy, remaining absolute, does not wish itself to be limited by its principle, if it uses its genius to separate itself from the sanctuary, to descend into the public square supported only by itself, then its pride is its doom; for I surprise in its isolation and nakedness. All its draperies will not prevent me from measuring the void that it has dug in its own path. In order to have the most absolute mastery, it has rejected the authority that sustains it; all that remains to it is to fall.” – Quinet was right, and what is true for France is also true for all the other countries. The kings, by revolting against the Church—the sanctity of which, however, they continue to recognize—have prepared and in some ways legitimated the rebellions of the peoples against them: They have produced the revolution, – the uprising of the nations against the law of the Church and of God.

7. The Peoples, more logical than the kings, in revolting against monarchical power, have at the same time overthrown the divine government of the Church. This is the insurrection of the natural man, bent for centuries under a salutary yoke, against the law of God, – the outburst of all the human passions against the truth and justice of God. – It is the revolt of the spirit that claims to oppose a human, ungodly philosophy to the mysteries of divine revelation. It is the revolt of the human conscience, which opposes its own justice to the grace of the Lord. Finally, it is the revolt of the human will, which under the impious pretext of liberty and a so-called natural right, dares put a destructive hand on institutions established and consecrated by a divine authority. – God has permitted and still endures that infamous folly and crime in order to finally convince human society, that, left to its own devices, only taking counsel of its reason and liberty *liberté*, it can only give rise to misfortune and disorder, and that, incapable of attaining a happiness impossible on this earth of expiations and trials, it courts its eternal perdition.
8. But at the same time, God, in his supreme goodness, not wishing death, but salvation for sinners, warned them, urged them through the voice of the holy Church, which more recently, through the voice of the Supreme Pontiff, has cast a holy anathema:
 - Against those who claim that human reason is capable of embracing, reaching and understanding truth, and that it must not prostrate itself with an absolute and blind faith before the incomprehensible mysteries of revelation.
 - Anathema against those who claim that human conscience can give rise to justice, and that the natural moral law produced by the heart and conscience of man must not be scorned, renounced and broken before the mysterious commandments of heaven.
 - Anathema against those who dare encourage the so-called noble passions of man, and who do not want to accept that which is beautiful, noble, and generous according to the flesh, according to the natural instinct and inspiration of man, is necessarily vile, impious and abject according to God, – and that on the contrary that which is holy,

just and beautiful according to Divine reason must necessarily appear disgusting, odious and unjust to the man not enlightened by grace. Anathema against those who claim that man should not sacrifice the natural affections of the flesh—human honor, that so-called person dignity that is only a frightful indignity before God, friendship, the love of the father, of the brother, of the husband and son, love of the homeland and even love of humanity—to the supreme love of God.

- Anathema against those who claim that the education of children should consist of the development of their natural dispositions: of the strength, health and beauty of their bodies through hygiene and exercise; of their minds through thought, and of their will, their individual dignity through teaching, through the example of mutual human respect and through a progressive liberty. Anathema against those who teach children that labor, far from being a punishment, a degradation, a sign of slavery and a sign of the divine curse, as the Holy Scriptures reveal to us, is a sacred duty for every man, the sign of his strength and dignity, the very basis of his rights and his liberty. Anathema against those who give education to children with a view to forming strong men, full of honor and individual dignity, full of respect for the rights and dignity of others, proud of their liberty, loving justice and equality, and professing, in all matters and all circumstances of life, the impious cult of humanity, – and who renounce and reject for that same end a religious education: Sanctity. – Anathema against those who dazzle themselves with a satanic pride and who seeking truth, justice, the goal of humanity in the development of its natural forces and faculties, remain ignorant or reject that holy truth: that the sole aim of the education of children is not to develop, but on the contrary to kill the human strength, beauty, reason, will, justice, honor, dignity, respect, and love in them, – in order to make room in their hearts for the inspirations of heaven; – not to make them free men, but slaves of God. And as the Church, sole possessor of divine truth, can alone give that religious education, anathema above all against those who have wrested the schools away from its absolute government.
- Anathema against those who encourage the pernicious tendencies of the present society towards well-being and happiness on this earth, as if this earth was not, according to the will of God himself, a place of punishment, expiation, purification, trials and unhappiness. – “Happy are those who suffer. Happy those who hunger and thirst.”
- Anathema who wish that there be no more poor, for then there would be no more place for charity. – Anathema against those who seek liberty, equality, justice and fraternity—in short, paradise on earth—for by this search they renounce the heavenly kingdom, and contenting themselves with their fate, revolt against God.
- Anathema against all the liberals, democrats, socialists, revolutionaries, humanitarian philosophers, blasphemers of divine right and the temporal authority of the Princes. Anathema against all those who preach rebellion, even among the cruelest and most odious tyranny, forgetting that all authority comes from God, that God and his Church are, consequently, the sole judges of the tyrants, – and that the only protest permitted to the subjects against the established tyrannical powers is an

appeal to the holy and supreme jurisdiction of the Church, sole representative of the will of God on Earth.

- Thus, a last anathema against all those, Princes, ministers or simple subjects, who dare claim that the temporal power of the kings can and should be independent of the Church, – and that the Church, sole path to salvation for all of humanity, does not have the right and the mission to control and direct human affairs—not only religious, but also political and social—and to exercise a supreme power over the Princes as well as all their subjects.
- In the end, religion tells us that the encyclical flung out into the world by the sovereign Pontiff, inspired by God himself and received with a holy enthusiasm by all the catholic and even protestant believers, has as its double aim to warn, to exhort, to stop the impious at the edge of the precipice, and at the same time to reassure and comfort the faithful. – That it is a sign of the times, – and that the hour is not far off – the hour of Divine justice – when god himself, with his all-powerful hand, will break the revolt and bring straying human society back under the supreme authority of the apostolic and roman church, the only logical, only substantial, and consequently the only truly divine church; so that man, ceasing to be thinking, dignified, free, and human, will become once again a slave or sheep, – so that, in accordance with the Holy Scripture, there will only be one shepherd in the world and only one single flock.

Such is the pure Catholic teaching. Such is the rigorous consequence of all religious doctrine, whether Catholic, Protestant, Mohammedan, Jewish, or even pagan. Christianity is precisely the absolute religion, in that it expounds and manifest the fundamental principle, the very nature and essence of all religion, which is the systematic impoverishment, destruction and enslavement of humanity for the profit of the Divinity, – the supreme principle not only of every religion, but also of every metaphysics which assumes an otherworldly, personal God, a real God, for its object – the impersonal God of Pantheism being nothing but an imaginary phantom of thought. – I say that Theism as well as Trinitarianism, the one god of so-called rational Theology once accepted, the degeneration of humanity must necessarily be proclaimed: God being all, man is nothing. – God being Truth, Justice and eternal life – man is lies, iniquity and death. – Truth and Justice not being immanent in him, he must receive them as a revelation from on high through the intermediary of God’s Elect, who, being his instructors, his doctors and his Masters for eternal life, inevitably receive from that the mission of governing and commanding him on this earth. – So he owes them his faith and absolute obedience. – So the existence of God necessarily implies the abdication of human reason, conscience and will, the negation of liberty, Slavery. That is what, of all the religions existing on the Earth, Christianity alone has understood, and that among the Christian sects Roman Catholicism has alone proclaimed and realized with rigorous consequence. – It is once more the reason why Christianity is the absolute religion, and why the Apostolic and Roman Church is the only one that is serious, legitimate and divine.

So apologies to all our demi-philosophers, to all our thinkers by half, apologies to our freemason brothers who invoke the Great Architect or the Universe and, wanting to form a church and

new form of worship, believe they can reconcile the idea of God with human liberty. In this fatally rigorous and logical alphabet whoever says this [A] must absolutely arrive at Z, – and whoever worships God must sacrifice the dignity and liberty of man. “God is, so man is a slave.” – “Man is free, so there is no God.” – I challenge anyone to escape from that circle. – And now let us choose. –

[translation of items in illustration:]

Masonic Symbol:

Reason

Liberty Equality Solidarity

Justice

Reason – Labor – Justice – Liberty – Equality – Solidarity

Theological Symbol:

Revelation

Privilege Selfishness

Slavery

Grace

Revelation – Charity – Grace – Authority – Privilege – Selfishness

Reason – Revelation

Labor – Charity

Justice – Grace

Liberty – Slavery

Equality – Privilege

Solidarity – Despotism

Catechism of Modern Freemasonry

Abolition of all Theology.

Freemasonry considering:

1. That the existence of a personal and otherworldly God, Creator and Supreme Master of all things, is incompatible with human reason and liberty; –
2. That the idea of a pantheistic, impersonal God, inseparable from the creature, which for that reason appeared eternal, of a God more or less dispersed through the world, – is a metaphysical fiction, without real practical significance, and as contradictory and confused in its form as in its spirit, half-wrought result of a philosophy that has only half delivered itself from the swaddling clothes of theology, – and that by affirming this impersonal God one affirms absolutely nothing that is clear, precise and definite, nothing that enlightens the conscience and that could serve as a basis for human society. That this God who,

possessing the whole world, does not even possess himself and who consequently is not God, this Creator who is not a creator at all, is a blind and inexorable power, who, not being directed by an individual will, is nothing but Necessity: which is to say the complex and totality of life and of the laws of the universe—which is to say Nature itself and nothing but Nature. That while bending us before the conditions and the immutable, invincible laws of nature, which our instinct can sometimes foresee, but which our reason alone can recognize and that, despite the fact that they never cease to surround, penetrate and govern all our existence in an absolute manner, exist for us as laws only insofar as our reason recognizes them; – while submitting to them through reason and will, we can neither deify them, nor idolize them, because by deifying them we denature them and deprive them of their rational character, the only thing that establishes their reality and power;

3. Considering that every Being, being determined and absolutely limited by its own nature or by its essence, and not being able to escape without ceasing to exist or to be itself, consequently can comprehend and grasp, or even note the simple existence of something, only if that thing was in part integral to itself, or it is inherent, immanent to it; – that consequently in order for one of my faculties to be able to reveal to me the existence of God, it would be necessary for God to be ideally part of myself; – that if an otherworldly and extra-human God existed, it still could only manifest itself to me in the conditions of my being, only insofar as it would be absolutely identical and in conformity with my human nature—so that all these revelations would be nothing but natural and rational manifestations of humanity itself in man—
4. Concluding, consequently, that all the cults, all the religions, all the ancient and modern Gods, from the brutal fancies of fetishism to Christian Trinitarianism were nothing but human creations, marking so many great historical moments in the development of humanity:

Since man in his generous humility has been happy, through the succession of centuries, from the beginning of history to our own times, unfeather his nest and despoil the earth in order to create and enrich the heavens, to the detriment of his happiness, his dignity and his liberty:

Taking back from heaven what belongs to the earth, and making God, which is to say the human ideal, return into man himself, modern Freemasonry replaces the cult of the Great Architect of the Universe with that of Humanity.

2) Principle and Cult of Humanity

[End of fragment]

B. Catechism of Freemasonry

I. Theology

Leaving aside the transcendent question, probably insoluble for man, of the Absolute and the existence or non-existence of an otherworldly and extra-human God; –

Considering at the same time that as soon as man posits the truth and justice, the principle regulator of his acts, outside of his being, outside of his reason and conscience, he declares himself at that moment incapable of justice and truth, and posits the necessity of a revelation, and consequently the necessity of an absolute authority, which, in the form of the Church and the State, subjects him to a yoke, contrary to his reasons, his conscience and his liberty; – that the Church and State, necessarily represented by men, who, either through the effects of a fanatical illusion, or through guile, arrogate to themselves the mission and the impious right to speak, to act and to command their fellows in the name of this God, unknown to all the world; – that this exorbitant, impious privilege, which by the very force of things becomes hereditary, must necessarily and, as all history proves to us, has never failed to produce in human society the hierarchy of castes and classes, divinely privileged and exclusively governing by the grace of God; that all exclusivism and all privilege being, through the effect of a fundamental law inherent in humanity, an infallible source of intellectual and moral impoverishment, stupefaction, exhaustion and corruption, – these classes and these castes, in degrading through the very effects of their privilege, have never failed to substitute their individual interests for the interests of all, the arbitrariness of their selfishness and greed for the eternal laws of justice, to exploit, in a word, the goods of their earth for their own profit, condemning the peoples to a life of misery and slavery on the earth, and leaving them for their only consolation the fallacious promises of a happiness beyond the grave;

Considering that every Being, being determined and consequently limited by its own nature, cannot escape it without ceasing to exist or, what amounts to the same things, without ceasing to be itself; that, consequently, by even supposing the existence of a supernatural, superhuman, otherworldly supreme being, man would only recognize it humanly, not as it is in itself, but only as it can be reflected and manifested in the human being, without destroying it, – that is to say in the conditions and in the very forms of humanity – that consequently all theology is necessarily anthropomorphism, – and that all the historical revelations of God and of Gods, from the brutal divinities of fetishism to Christian Trinitarianism and even to the one God of the rationalist metaphysics, – have been nothing but successive manifestations of humanity itself, of the truth and justice immanent in man, but that by a historically necessary illusion he had first transported outside himself into a fictive heaven, in order to worship them like foreign to himself, like his masters, thus making himself the slave of his human essence and of the very sources of his liberty; –

Considering that all historical progress consist first of all in that successive creation of Gods by man, in the development and in the explanation of the essence and eternal foundations of humanity in the heavens, so that man can contemplate there, as if in a mirror, his own truth, his own justice and his whole destiny; – then in the act—no less solemn, religious and above all necessary—of taking back from heaven what belongs to the earth, of rendering to man what he had created himself, and making God, truth and justice return into him, in order to finally make

him master of his destiny, and to proclaim him adult, free and capable finally of fulfilling his mission on earth;

Considering finally that in this way justice, truth, everything that in the historical religions has been called God, are immanent in man – that it is the proper essence of humanity – that consequently in order to recognize it, we have no need of revelation, as in order to accomplish them we have not need of external, supernatural assistance; that by drawing only on ourselves we will inevitably find both their explanation and the strength to realize them –

Considering, on the contrary, that as long as we have sought them outside ourselves, on high, by a fatal law of intellectual and moral optics, we have obtained for the Earth only the inversion of everything we adore in Heaven: – that by transporting truth, Justice, liberty and God to that heaven, – we have necessarily and constantly delivered the earth to lies, to iniquity, to slavery and to the Devil – we send those back to heaven, to the world of the privileged, – and we take back as our own, on this earth, God, truth, justice and our dear and holy liberty. –

So without entering into the philosophical debate on the existence or nonexistence of a supernatural and otherworldly God—which we consider practically useless, to say the least—abandoning that question to the individual conscience of each, we affirm:

1. That every that on the earth, in human society, in the world of history, we have called God and divine revelations, has been nothing but the creation, the development and a series of successive manifestations of the universal genius of humanity –

2. That if an otherworldly God exists, no man has ever seen him, nor could he hear his voice, nor consequently express his thought, nor manifest his will. – That the great men of history, the legislators, the prophets, the thinkers, the poets, have only been able to draw their inspirations from the depths of the human being;

3. That no man has had, has, or will ever have the possibility or the right of speaking and commanding his fellows in the name of God –

4. That the whole mission of man as a collective and individual being is to understand and to realize, not thoughts, wills and laws that would be external to him and would come to him through superhuman and supernatural revelations from on high, but the laws fundamental to and inherent in his own human nature –

5. – That consequently the active intervention of the idea of God in human affairs, far from being a necessary condition of morals and of the organization of order in society, would be, on the contrary, as both logic and history demonstrate to us, an impediment and an absolute ruin for both, – and would become, as in the past, an infallible source in lies, iniquity and anarchy slavery on earth –

Rejecting every revelation and all authority, divine and human, we affirm: Human reason, collective and individual, as the sole criterion of truth: the human conscience as the basis of justice and individual and collective liberty as source and unique foundation of order in humanity.

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[Section crossed-out in original]

II. Humanity

1. By abandoning the cult and service of the Divinity to religion, Freemasonry devotes itself exclusively to the service and cult of Humanity.

2. Freemasonry, while revering them, does not deify nature or humanity.

A. What we call Nature is the Totality of all existing, living beings, – a totality in which nothing is found isolated, and of which solidarity is the fundamental and supreme law. All that lives, everything that exists, large and small things, the simplest and the most compound, the farthest away like the nearest, all the forces, the least atoms, exercise and suffer, either directly or by transmission, and most often in an imperceptible manner, an incessant mutual influence and dependence; and that eternal action and reaction of the Whole on each Point and of each Point on the Whole, constitutes the life, the harmony, the common and supreme law of that Totality of Worlds which is at once always producer and product. Always creative and active, that universal solidarity has formed our terrestrial planet and given to each of its part, in geological and climatological relations, their conditions of being and their different physiognomies. It is that solidarity that has given and gives birth to the vegetable and animal life....

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