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## FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

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### Mysticism and Politics

A REVIEW OF Mr. ALDOUS HUXLEY'S BOOK "GREY EMINENCE" (LONDON: CHATTO AND WINDUS, 1941) ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THESE PAGES IN FEBRUARY, 1942.

*L'Eminence Grise* was the name given to François Leclerc du Tremblay to distinguish him from his scarlet-robed master, *L'Eminence Rouge*, Cardinal Richelieu.

François became that Father Joseph upon whose gravestone, in the Church of the Capuchins, a few days after it was laid, an unknown hand had chalked the distich:

*Passant, n'est-ce pas chose étrange  
Qu'un démon soit près d'un ange?*

In the next grave, near the altar steps, already lay the body of Ange de Joyeuse, the gentleman friar, who had admitted François into the order. Mr. Huxley remarks (they are the last words of his book) that it is always easier to make an epigram about a man than to understand him. The statement itself savours of the epigrammatic, and since it embodies a condonation, which is final, astonishing, inversion of the terrible lesson which all but the close of Mr. Huxley's scholarly work drives home, it is well to bear this in mind. *Demon est Deus inversus*. At the close of his book, Mr. Huxley is face to face with the arresting of the inversion process, and, like all others who retreat from Social Credit, the only means he can suggest for ridding ourselves of it is to saddle ourselves with more of it. "Though the attempt to substitute goodness politics for power politics may never be completely successful, it still remains true that the methods of goodness politics combined with individual training in theocentric theory and contemplative practice alone provide the means whereby human societies can become a little less unsatisfactory than they have been up to the present." The only flaw, apparently, which Mr. Huxley can see in the policy of Father Joseph (a man who came to be regarded as "capable of every crime and treachery") was that he made the mistake of receiving direct authority from heaven for brewing the poisons of society instead of receiving, from the same source, power and authority for such an "intransigent theocentrism" as Fox's, which produced an "antidote" working quietly throughout the two hundred and seventy-five years' existence of the Society of Friends.

Poison and antidote are merely figures of speech which vary in use with the circumstances. Let Fox get the upper hand, with his quiet ways, and Father Joseph's immense industry might provide 'the antidote.' The suggestion may tempt Mr. Huxley into a penetrating study of the political sequelae of Quakerism. If it does, it may become apparent to him that *all* efforts to *lead* communities "along a

political short-cut into the kingdom of heaven on earth" are illusory, "so long as the human instruments and material of political action remain untransformed." "The potentiality of knowledge of, and union with, God is present in all men and women." Very well; then why should the "first aim of the theocentrics" be "to make it possible for any who desire it to share *their own* experience of ultimate reality"? By definition, possibly, ultimate reality must be the same for all; but it doesn't follow that one individual's experience of it must match another's. Provide as much opportunity as you like for increasing the individual's access to 'ultimate' reality (isn't all reality ultimate?); what is required to remove the 'poison' of society is to make it possible for anyone who desires it to *realise his own* intuition of reality. That is to say; to experience reality and not to receive reality as hearsay from someone else, whose only legitimate business is finding the Kingdom of Heaven for himself, and a stiff job it seems to be, mystic or no mystic! Every mystic is not necessarily a power politician; but every power politician is a mystic or sorts. The inversion of the Deity which he invariably accomplishes is not necessarily an essential part of mysticism; but is rather a property of that power which, while human society has lasted, has hitherto perverted all things to its will. The simple practicability of the miracles recounted in the New Testament with their direct reference to immediate, human needs, as well as the emphasis upon a carefree and joyous mind, is in sharp contrast with the masochistic settings of the 'seers' who see in Christianity everything but its freedom, who prolong their days and make restless their nights to take more heed for the morrow, and who strain through cruel disciplines to touch the hem of ecstasies which perhaps the lilies know without strife. *Conabor* (I shall strive) is the motto of schools; but the New Testament tells us not to strive, but to be perfect, which, perhaps, means to be perfectly one's self. It rather seems as though Christianity were, in its essentials, a protest against all this holiness which is so hard to reach and unprofitable to endow with power.

And so to Father Joseph.

He was born on November 4, 1577, eldest son of Jean Leclerc, Chancellor of the Duc d'Alençon and of Marie de La Fayette, whose family belonged to the landed nobility. As he emerged from boyhood, he lived in "nobody could discover what private world of his own." He loved his father and mother passionately and was deeply attached to

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### Politics

“As soon as government ceases to personify the elevation of a particular function as dominating the pattern of Society, it falls into its proper perspective. Government itself is merely one function among all the others, and by no means the most important. Its true nature is that of the Board of Directors of a company on the one hand, and the general committee of a club on the other.

“As a Board of Directors it is the business of the Government to see that the industrial component of Society produces the greatest possible dividend to the shareholders, the citizens. This does not mean that the Government should “run” industry. An industry is always (unless interfered with by the Government) “run” by the technicians. It does not mean that the Government should have any control over the internal policy of the particular industry. The Board simply represents the shareholders whose interest is confined to the receipt of dividends and the business of the Board is simply to impress the will of the shareholders on the technicians. Most emphatically it does not mean that the Government should dictate the programme of production. That is the concern of the consumers, and is properly controlled by the money-vote.

“The main function of government in this aspect is really the authorisation of new enterprises which may enhance the collective dividend. This is a point to which we will return subsequently.

“The more important aspect of government is that of a general committee. It is concerned with the general framework within which the multitudinous functional activities of Society are conducted.

“The first consequence of this position is that the emphasis immediately passes from law-making. No club-committee is forever adding to the number of rules. Now Society in the course of some thousands of years has evolved a quite sufficient number of laws to provide for the general conduct of Society. It is only when some new development such as the introduction of some major invention, disturbs the general equilibrium, that new laws may be necessary. The appearance of the motor-car and the aircraft, for example, clearly need integrating into the existing possessions of mankind in such a way as to enhance rather than diminish the real credit. Apart from this, it is the proper concern of the Government to revise the laws with a view to removing unnecessary restraints on the freedom of the individual. As the physical conditions which limit the individual are overcome, so artificial restrictions should be eased and, so far as possible, abolished.

“And here the social equivalent of ‘sportsmanship’ comes in. That is an ethical system having its roots in religion, and accepted by, and as binding on, the Government just as much as individuals.

“The second consequence of the proper position of Government is that it should derive its finance by *agreed* contributions from individuals. Just as with the club committee, it should suggest a programme, and this programme should be sanctioned by the public.

“What is undertaken by the Government is at the immediate physical expense of the individuals composing the community, and what is required is that this physical necessity should be correctly reflected in the relations between Government and people. Government itself is an expense; a certain amount of it, which should be reduced to the practical minimum, is an unavoidable expense.”

—Bryan W. Monahan in *An Introduction to Social Credit*.

### British Migration

The president of the British Australian Association, Mr. L. A. Clapperton, yesterday challenged the Federal Government to prove its claims on British migration.

“I challenge the Department of Immigration” he said, “to prove its claim to have brought in 47 per cent. British migrants since the war.

“I believe that not more than seven per cent. of the total would have been born in the British Isles.”

Mr. Clapperton was commenting on a statement by the N.S.W. Agent in London, Mr. F. P. Buckley, who said in Sydney on Friday that the “Bring out a Briton” scheme had been a success.

Mr. Clapperton said the scheme was being used to hide the flooding of Australia with migrants from other countries.

The Government was showing an apparent preference for Southern Europeans although Britain from its annual population increase of 200,000 could supply all Australia’s migrant needs.

He said that to suggest that people should share their housing with migrant families was “sheer impertinence” in view of the closing of migrant hostels and the filling of others with migrants from countries other than Britain.

“The much vaunted new scheme resulted only in 500 unfortunate migrants arriving here in 1957, not knowing who they were being accommodated or employed by, until they were ‘picked from the ring’ at their port of arrival,” he said.

—*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Jan. 6, 1958.

**“Whose Service is Perfect Freedom”**

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## MYSTICISM AND POLITICS—(continued from page 1.)

home, servants, dogs, horses, pigeons, ducks, falcons. An iron wall of reserve hid from view consuming passions of the opposite kind. He is brought down to the dinner table, told to stand, obeys; the guests ask him simple questions. One, however, has a double meaning unnoticed by the child, and the childlike answer raises a laugh. With tears in his eyes he sits down forgotten. Suddenly, may he tell them something? "Smilingly, the guests prepare to heckle and to applaud. After the first few words their faces become serious. . . . The little boy is telling them a story he has just heard from one of the servants of the house, the story of the Passion. He tells of the scourging, the crown of thorns. As he describes the Crucifixion, his voice trembles and, all at once, he breaks down into irrepressible sobbing. . . . For this unhappiness there seems no consolation." At eight he left home at his own wish, because his mother was spoiling him, *qui en voulut faire délicat*. A spartan. At the age when Juliet loved and died, he was left for a time in the gay household of a neighbour and saw there a girl of his own age. Eight years later, when a Capuchin novice, he wrote of her: 'Her whole face shone, her looks darted lightning.' He 'had no eyes but for her—his ears were deaf to every utterance but hers; he had given her all his heart, and except in her could he find no rest.' But she "stood in the way of his prayers, filling the whole field of inward vision, eclipsing God." And suddenly he saw himself:

. . . . a party in a parlour,  
Crammed just as they on earth were crammed,  
Some sipping punch, some sipping tea,  
And all as silent as could be,  
All silent and all damned.

His sudden pallor attracted attention, and he was taken to the open air. He suggested they should all go into the church. "Kneeling there, before the altar, he felt within him the pull of two conflicting loves, profane and sacred. Beside him knelt the girl whose pretty little face his own passion had transfigured till it shone for him, like the face of one who had seen God." He saw "Christ's feet nailed to the cross."

This "painful state of things lasted four months." Then, in a paroxysm of intense thankfulness at the preservation of his mother's life (he had come near to killing her accidentally with an arquebus) he broke the spell, and at the same time, "conceived a real horror of women in general and of the love of the sexes." "They should only be visited like wild beasts, whom one is content to see without approaching."

The child who had begged to be sent to a boarding school for fear his mother might turn him into a mollycoddle grew into a young man hungry for a life of confinement and enforced inactivity—hungry for it precisely because he knew it would be most difficult for him to bear. Total retirement from the world of men must have seemed the final and absolute sacrifice of self." After tasting successively of learning, travel, courts, war and diplomacy, François became the pupil of two significant persons, Father Benet of Canfield, a Capuchin, and Mme. Acarie, a woman "who possessed that profound insight into character which comes to men and

women of advanced spirituality, and which is technically known as the discernment of spirits." In all that concerned his personal religion, Father Joseph "remained to the end of his life the faithful disciple of Benet of Canfield." He was a mystic. "Couched in whatever language and formulated at whatever period, mystical theories are based upon the empirical facts of mystical experience." What are the 'empirical facts of mystical experience'? Objectively, the claim of mystics is the claim to have known God, as distinct from knowing something about God. Concerning Father Joseph, Father Benet had "taught him the theory and practice of his own kind of modified Dionysian mysticism; and the young Capuchin had brought to his devotions that obsessive, hallucinatory preoccupation with the sufferings of Calvary which had haunted his mind from earliest childhood." The road he followed was the road of mortification, mystical orison and intensive, hallucinatory practice of the passion of Christ." He burned with the holy ambition to become a saint. . . . That Spartan taste of his for the uncomfortable and the strenuous continually manifested itself, sometimes in the oddest ways. For example, it was his custom, during certain prescribed periods of prayer, to worship standing bare-footed on the flagstones. When sleepiness overtook him (which it sometimes did, as he was in the habit of shortening his nights with contemplation) he would combat it by standing on one leg. The practice was not generally approved of in the seminary; but when warned of the dangers of excess, the need of discretion even in matters of piety, Father Joseph would answer that the Kingdom of Heaven is taken by violence, and continue his prayers to the accompaniment of excruciating muscular strain." It may be interposed here parenthetically that the idea of taking "the kingdom of heaven by violence" (Blavatsky: *Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II p. 244.) is alleged by Theosophists to be Promethian, and the ground of the curse pronounced by Zeus, and by Jehovah-Il-da-Baoth against Satan. It is curious that the exact words should have been used, even in French, by the Christian mystic.

Whether it is the will of God or the will of Satan that the kingdom of heaven should be taken by violence, it was certainly Father Joseph's will that the unification of Christendom should be effected by force. The old crusading motto, *Gesta Dei per Francos* (God's deeds by means of the French) was transformable, in practice, into *Gesta Francorum, gesta Dei* (The deeds of the French are the deeds of God); and returning home from the fruitless negotiations with the Spaniards, designed to promote a great international expedition against the Turks. Father Joseph composed a long lyrical rhapsody on the liberation of the Greeks from Turkish bondage. It contains the stanza:

*Si pour te soulager, l'univers je tournoie,  
C'est trop peu pour mes vœux;  
Dans une mer de sang il faut que je me noie  
Pour éteindre mes feux.*

(If in order to succour thee, I overturn the whole world, it is all too little for my wishes; to quench the fire of my ardour, I must drown me in a sea of blood.)

Mr. Huxley remarks that few political idealists have spoken so frankly about the consequences of their idealism.

"The reason, it may be, is that few political idealists have spent half a lifetime brooding over the death of a man-god by comparison with whose sufferings those of ordinary human beings are so infinitesimal as to be practically negligible." The cry for the destruction of the Turk soon changed into one for the humiliation of the Hapsburgs. In the meantime a remarkable epic in four thousand six hundred and thirty-seven lines had been composed by Father Joseph, who took two printed copies (the only known to have existed) to Rome in 1625, one for Urban VIII and the other for Cardinal Barberini, his nephew and papal secretary of state. This amazing work is the *Turciad*. The numerous defects of grammar, syntax and scansion said to have been detected by the Abbé Dedouvres have no bearing upon either the politics or the mysticism of Father Joseph. But Mr. Huxley is at some pains to explain how it is that one who unquestionably "had had direct unmediated experience of reality" and "had described the soul's union with God" came, a few years later, with no sense of incongruity, and in the conviction that in doing so he was "serving, and in some way telling the truth about, the God whom he had dimly apprehended in the act of contemplation," to pen a description "almost uniquely preposterous." At the end of the work Christ calls for the Duke of Nevers. "The Archangel Michael picks up the last of the Palaeologi from where he is sitting on the platform of angels' wings, swoops into the arena and deposits him, more dead than alive with terror, at the foot of the thrones. After the Virgin has comforted him with a few reassuring words, Christ proceeds to harangue the duke at some length, reminding him of his imperial origins and the duties they impose upon him, reminding him also of his faults and that a crusader must be a man of exemplary conduct. Much moved, Nevers vows to devote the rest of his life to a crusade against the Turks. Whereupon the Virgin invests him with the insignia of the Christian Militia."

"The fact is, of course," remarks Mr. Huxley, "that human beings find no difficulty at all in entertaining, successively or even at the same moment, convictions which are totally incompatible with one another. . . . Complete consistency comes only with complete one-pointedness, complete absorption in ultimate reality."

This is hardly the point. 'Complete absorption' in God must surely mean knowing God, knowing nothing else but God all the time—a condition to which no mystic has ever pretended. Whatever may be the state of other mystics, Father Joseph seems only to have known the will of God while he was knowing the will of God (and nothing else); but at other times, he was engaged (or absorbed) in diplomacy, but not wholly, for he could then try to know the will of God at the same time. "When he angled for Father Joseph's soul, Satan baited the hook with the noblest temptations: patriotic duty and self-sacrifice. But a man cannot serve two masters. . . . Because he still persisted in identifying the French monarchy with the ultimate reality apprehended in contemplation, Father Joseph failed to connect the plight of the Pomeranian cannibals with his own and other European statesmen's infringement of the first two Commandments. . . . Father Joseph was able to justify his diplomatic activities in two ways: in the

first place, it was his patriotic duty to do these things; and in the second, he always *tried his hardest* to practise 'active annihilation' in God, while he was doing them." Mr. Huxley knows that Father Joseph was 'lured away.' "Father Joseph's intention was to combine the life of political activity with that of contemplation, to do what power politics demanded and to annihilate it in God's will even while it was being done. In practice, the things which had to be done proved unannihilatable, and with one part of his being Father Joseph came to be bitterly sorry that he had ever entered politics." But it must not be forgotten that it was Richelieu's conviction that the friar was "a living conduit through which there flowed . . . a power from somewhere beyond the world of time and contingency." There are two meanings of the statement, that Richelieu knew how important it was for a politician to cover his actions with the prestige of religion and morality. There is the pragmatic meaning. A deeper meaning is rarely perceived, namely that all political action is inseparable from whatever intuition of reality is present in those who undertake it. The mystic alone supplies political motive raised, as it were, to white heat, and *in the absence of any other motive as intense, the mystical motive must inevitably be the ruling motive*. Not only 'total war,' but all war employs the total force available, and, quite naturally, does not ignore the strongest force. Mysticism is inseparable from politics. "Sacriligious are the arms wielded by a sacred hand. When the mitre commands the soldier, it is the soldier who commands the mitre." Mr. Huxley says the whole political history of the Church is summed up in those phrases. But it is the whole of political history that is summed up in them. The power of the saint is the power to see God. The power to "take heaven by violence" is not the power of the saint, nor is the power to impose God's will on non-saints. The power to impose is the power of imposition. The life of Father Joseph shows, if it shows anything, that the same man may be a saint and a sinner (some might add that he usually is); so that making more saints need not really mean making fewer sinners. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. . . ." And it is amongst publicans and sinners that correct modes of association must be devised. They are only prevented from being by imposition. But imposition cannot throw out imposition, nor Satan Satan.

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