

SERGE RAYNAUD DE LA FERRIÈRE'S DOCTRINE READJUSTMENT: THE UGB AND THEOCRACY

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Abstract: Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière (1916-1962) left his native France to the Americas. He knew the predominance of America for the New Age of Aquarius that was about to begin. In 1948 he founded the Great Universal Brotherhood (UGB) in Caracas, Venezuela, a worldwide and cultural institution to re-educate humanity. After traveling the five continents, he returned to Europe in 1953. Right after he re-established communication with his disciples in America, he noted that his work and literature was being deformed. He even said that he couldn't recognize his own foundation! Consequently, he began readjusting his work and wrote most part of his extensive literature. In this period, Ferriz, his fourth and last emblematic disciple appeared. He translated under his supervision some of his most important texts, and among other tasks he asked him to write his books' prologue, exegesis and be his Literature's Coordinator. In the context of the New Age, R. de la Ferrière discusses theocracy and mentioned some precursor signs for its advent. These are briefly discussed in this essay. They were misinterpreted by his other emblematic disciples – contrary to his idea of a government of wise people. They believed in absolute authority and autocratic government that in various instances they applied it in the UGB. Ferriz asserts that this was probably the seed that caused their failure to follow R. de la Ferrière's Readjustment and created an ideological and doctrinaire difference between their beliefs and R. de la Ferrière's thought. In 1990, to safeguard the original UGB and R. de la Ferrière's thought, Ferriz left in Exodus the deformed UGB and created a new one.

Keywords: R. de la Ferrière, theocracy, UGB, New Age.

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Introduction

Dr Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière was born in France in 1916. He was a pilgrim of five continents, a Sanyasi (a person who renounces all material possession), a scientist, an artist, a Yoghi, a Master in the path of men's self-realization who expressed the archetype "I feel responsible for the lack of understanding among men."

In Caracas in 1948 he founded the Universal Great Brotherhood: Foundation of Dr Serge R. de la Ferrière as a worldwide cultural institution to re-educate humanity for the New precessional Age of Aquarius. He also established Ashram No. 1, where he lived with his three first emblematic disciples for 18 months. Then he journeyed to other continents. He returned to Europe in 1953, retired from public view and mainly dedicated himself to his literature. During this period, his last emblematic disciple, Ferriz, who would safeguard his work, appeared on the scene. When R. de la Ferrière began to notice how deformed his UGB was becoming, he began his doctrinal adjustment.

He died in 1962, and regardless of the hundreds of pages clarifying his work, the UGB was beset by ever greater doctrinal challenges. At bottom, these reflected a growing theocracy within the movement, a problem in itself and the source of further challenges.

How did R. de la Ferrière view theocracy in the context of a New Age? What is the UGB? Why his doctrinal readjustment? What does he mean when he refers to the precursors of theocracy? These are complex topics, and my aim is to provide a general overview to highlight the suitability of his thinking to current times and to prompt further research.

New Age

Based on astronomy, Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière sets out one of his most important studies. That is the precession of equinox and the sociological and geochronological projections thereof. He confirms the average value of the vernal point shift of 72 years per ecliptic degree by verifying the sociological, psychological, and religious changes associated with the precessional ages.

The precession of equinox is the Earth's third motion. The first is the rotation of the Earth on its own axis causing the day and night. The second refers to the annual revolution of the Earth around the Sun. Precession is like that of the spinning top: although it is possible to get the top spinning absolutely vertically, most of the time the top precesses so that the axis of the top describes a circle. The same thing applies to the Earth, due to the gravitational forces of the Sun and the Moon. In simple terms, the revolution of the Earth around the Sun is completed in about a year, and the same motion but backward -- due to its precession -- takes 25,920 years. There are thus two simultaneous parallel motions, the one much faster than the other. Precession is an inexorable natural phenomenon.

A precessional Age refers to an average period of 2160 years, due to the 12 energy zones that surround our solar system (just as there are 12 months each year). The Earth passes through these energy zones as it rotates around the Sun.

The main point is that the history of humanity during each precessional Age or big Cycle of about 2,000 years, the "truth" manifests itself under different teachings and rites. Religious and social forms undergo profound transformations in their external form placing us under different evolutionary influences.

If we briefly survey previous precessional Ages, we find that the Age of Taurus, dating approximately from 4320 to 2160 before our time, was characterized by the worship of a bull as the emblem of divinity (i.e., the God Apis, the Golden Calf) either as a totem or in sacrifice. In the next cycle, the emblem of divinity would be Aries (herd leader). During the Exodus, Moses receives word from the Eternal that prohibits Hebrews from continuing to worship the Golden Calf. Then 2,000 years later,

during the Age of Pisces, religion would be transformed again through Jesus of Nazareth. The fish was the symbol of early Christianity. Since March 21, 1948 we have been in the Age of Aquarius.

Precessional Ages mark the history of people. However, the transition from one Age to the next is not absolutely precise. And evidently, the history of humanity is not cut into equal fragments, but experiences transition periods. Passing into to another Cycle does not imply an abrupt renewal even though all Great Civilizations are characterized by this precessional motion.

Raynaud de la Ferrière refers to this New Age of Aquarius as the Age of Knowledge, of true research, of collective search, of vertiginous (great speed and intensity) activity, but also as the Age of Peace, the expected Golden Age.

Prophecies and Theocracy

R. de la Ferrière (1973) also acknowledges prophecies as the second working hypothesis that complements the astronomical thesis, though with less scientific data. These lead to theocracy.

As to the messianic prophecy in Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, he sees the coming of a Messiah, Christ the King or the Son of Man. This would happen under the sign of Aquarius, the Watercarrier and the dispenser of celestial water.

Aquarius is represented in astronomy by two parallel wavy lines. These lines are hieroglyphs that represent water in Egypt as well in Mexico. On celestial maps, Aquarius is represented as a young man, the Watercarrier who holds a pitcher pouring out a wave that spreads across the sky. His name is Ganymede and he is part of Greek mythology. This legend contains a hidden meaning that is found in other several narratives. For instance, in Dante's Divine Comedy, Ganymede is abducted by an eagle. Dante says that Lucia herself came (in his dream) to abduct him. Lucia equals light, lucius in Latin. Lucia is the hypostasized mystic light on the eagle, and an eagle is the symbol of St John (he is symbolized by the Scorpio-Eagle constellation).

There are various biblical studies and new interpretations, especially in America, noting that the elements announcing the return of Christ will coincide with the entrance of the sun into the Constellation of Aquarius.

As to the return of Christ or Second Coming, we find in Matthew 24:30: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." The only male figure in the Zodiac corresponds to the Watercarrier. The Twins are represented by two children and Virgo by a woman.

In the same chapter: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places" (24:6-7). This prophecy has long been debated.

Also, "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near [Son of man], even at the doors" (24:33).

In Luke 21: "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (35-36).

R. de la Ferrière lists other biblical references and also some pointers to the advent of theocracy. These include: the Reformation in the 16th century; French Revolution; the spread of the gospel throughout the world; development of atheism; foundation of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the League of Nations, and the United Nations; social laws; hydroelectric power; feminism; return of the Israelites to Palestine. [GM 71-72]

I'll return to these phenomena.

The UGB

The Universal Great Brotherhood (UGB), founded in 1948, is an umbrella body comprising more than 150 organizations, including the Mission of the Order of Aquarius. The Mission was intended to provide spiritual leadership for the new Age of Aquarius and to form an Order that was to serve as the organizing body of humanity.

The UGB is a civil and cultural organization, whose main focus is on intellectual and spiritual improvement, re-education, and self-realization for a wiser world. Its norms are mainly set out in its 22 statutes, his circulars, and in general throughout his literature. Its foundational principles are Tolerance, Truth, and Peace.

The UGB thought rests on four pillars: Philosophy, Science, Art, and Didactics. These are drawn from both the East and the West: for instance, Traditional Yoga from the East and epistemology from the West.

He was to serve as the UGB's highest authority, its Supreme Regent, the Venerable Superior of the Order of Aquarius. He would be assisted by four emblematic disciples, "no one more than another."

He met his first three disciples in 1948 in Venezuela.

The Disciples

The first was Jose Manuel Estrada (1900-82), who identified R. de la Ferrière as the Master he had long been expecting. He was the UGB director general from 1950-58. The other two were Alfonso Gil Colmenares (1922-2015), a young rural teacher, who was UGB's director general from 1958-65; and Juan Victor Mejias (1915-2001), prizefighter who was director general from 1966-75.

R. de la Ferrière lived with them in Ashram No. 1 in Venezuela for 18 months. Then, he went to New York and journeyed the five continents. Mejias accompanied him on part of this journey, namely in Europe, India, and Australia.

When he returned to Europe on December 3, 1953, his fourth and last disciple David Ferriz Olivares (1921-92) joined UGB in Mexico. He was well educated, and at the time 32 years old. They never met in person but developed an epistolary relationship comprising more than 600 letters from R. de la Ferrière: an average of two letters per week for seven years. Ferriz translated the Master's most important books under his supervision. He was also entrusted with other responsibilities, including the preservation of his literature and safeguarding his legacy. He was the last director general from 1975-85 and Rector of the School of Initiation from 1985-1990.

Estrada in 1958 distanced himself from the UGB and in 1971 founded his own UGB, Solar Line. Various similar groups also began to emerge.

Doctrinal Readjustment

In Europe, R. de la Ferrière reestablished communication with his disciples in America. He noticed his texts were being altered and being published with many errors of grammar and meaning to the point of exclaiming: "If, anonymously I would set foot in the Foundation today, I would not be interested in becoming a member ... It is the limit that a founder would not recognize his own foundation, and yet that is so." He recognized the need to readjust his work and duly set about this task. His efforts were reported throughout his literature, especially in his 36 Psychological Purposes and his monthly Circular letters, not to mention the hundreds of letters to UGB members clarifying issues, calling their attention to various matters, and encouraging the study of his texts.

When R. de la Ferrière died in 1962, the UGB hierarchy comprised Gil, Mejias, and Ferriz with evident ideological, methodological, and conceptional differences among them. Ferriz brought his considerable intellectual and spiritual talents to the challenge of re-establishing UGB as a cultural and

spiritual and initiating institution. Regrettably, his efforts were not only misunderstood but were contested by the two other emblematic disciples. They not only opposed Ferriz's vision but when Ferriz ended his period of UGB directorship, his disciples were mistreated, prosecuted, expelled. The UGB became an undemocratic dogmatic theocracy, with dire consequences: claims of infallibility, absolutism, authoritarianism. These were clear manifestations of the rejection to the UGB's readjustment.

Theocratic Precursors

Ferriz (1989) elaborates on the precursors of theocracy listed by R. de la Ferrière in 1947.

The Reformation of the 16th Century resulted in the ending of hierarchical absolutism and of interdicts promulgated by the Church and of indulgences. There was also suppression of tithes, the destruction of monasteries and churches, and a degree of secularization. A more understandable liturgy was fashioned and there was a return to the Bible as a source of authority. National churches emerged and the laity played an increasing role. Luther founded a doctrinal body based on the Epistles of Saint Paul. Munzer advocated a form of egalitarianism or Christian communism. Calvin established the University of Geneva and cultivated the study of the Bible and its publication in various languages. The Elector of Saxony, the Landgrave of Hesse, and Albert of Brandenburg, the Great Master of the Teutonic Order, joined together to form the League of Magdeburg. The Catholic Counter-Reformation led to great wars, but by the second half of the 17th century, when the religious map stabilized, the Reformation had triumphed in Switzerland, northern and central Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and England, many of them powerful countries

The French Revolution in the late 18th century witnessed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen; the secularization of church property; the National Convention elected by universal suffrage; the advent of democracy; definitive State secularization; divorce was instituted; the final abolition of the feudal regime; the abolition of monarchy; the proclamation of the republic; liberation from absolutism by means of popular plebiscites; mass mobilization; compulsory and free schooling.

During both the Reformation and the French Revolution numerous democratic shifts in both religious and social life were observable. They were aimed at groups that believed themselves superior and destined by the simple fact of birth to govern. What they in fact did was to oppress humanity and hinder its development by disobeying human and divine laws. Ferriz points out that this fallacy shouldn't be repeated in the Age of Aquarius and even less in the UGB, which should be a bastion of the New Age and not of the already ended Piscean Age.

The spread of the Gospels throughout the world: From the third century onwards, the four authors of the Gospels are designated with attributes corresponding to the four figures of the Apocalypse: the angel, the lion, the bull, and the eagle. This represents the vertical and horizontal lines of the Aquarian Cross, with its initiation content, while the 14th Epistle of Saint Paul Apostle provides the doctrinal and ideological support.

Development of Atheism: In the contemporary world, atheism is linked to a series of sociological phenomena: freeing people from religious fanaticism and also the so-called death of God's theology. Further there is R. de la Ferrière's statement at the beginning of his Fifth Message: Mysticism in the 20th century that the "The search for Truth must not be limited to any dogma." Therefore, theocracy in the New Age must not be dogmatic, fanatical, nor autocratic.

Foundation of the International Tribunal in The Hague: All member countries of the United Nations are members. It is composed of 15 judges, appointed by the General Assembly and the Security Council. All members may submit any concerns they deem necessary. This institution reveals a spirit of international justice among all member countries, not of unilateral judgments by any one of them. This is a magnificent precedent at the opening of the New Era for theocratic justice.

The League of Nations and the UN. The League of Nations was an international cooperation body created on April 28, 1919. The UN's Charter entered into force on October 24, 1945, two years prior to the first steps to fund the FISS (the first institution founded by R. de la Ferrière) and three years before the UGB (the second of his foundations). In the UN, there are specified purposes and principles organizations should follow, among them respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people.

Currently, the UN is facing several challenges. Will it ever be able to fulfil its mandate?

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which came into force during the first months of the New Age in 1948, consists of 30 articles that universalize and adapt the partial declarations promulgated earlier. It recognizes the rights inherent in the human person, inalienable and universal, concerning freedom (of thought, conscience, religion, opinion, expression, information, meeting and association, education, etc.). Likewise, there are the rights of the child, women, and elders that frame a new balanced society.

This achievement is also currently under threat. It needs to be consolidated wisely.

Hydroelectric power. Electric power has illuminated the night, allowing greater time for study, research, and cultural pursuits. It has made possible the electronic world with its remote communications uniting the most distant and different cultures. It has also facilitated the emergence of the Universal Man and the Transcendental Man.

Feminism: Social movements advocate equal rights for men and women, and in general women's emancipation. Likewise Master de la Ferrière advocates women's initiation, notwithstanding the social, intellectual and spiritual mismatch that still persists.

Return of the Israelites to Palestine: This is in fulfilment of the prophecies contained in Luke 21: 24, Hebrews 9:28. The state of Israel was proclaimed on May 14, 1948, during the first months of the New Age.

Regrettably this has also been religiously and politically manipulated, with dire consequences!

A World's Council of Sages

R. de la Ferrière (1982) cites Dufrenne and Ricoeur's argument that faith and religion develop a typical mentality based on obedience, a mentality that pervades dogma, church commandments, and the endemic temptations of theocracy. He adds categorically: "the philosopher is the wise advocate against the Church's usurpation and its pseudo-empirical statements about miracles, the origins of the world and of man. He or she is the apostle of freedom of thought." (PPII, p. 258.)

He (1987) points out that "humanity will organize itself for a world government that will have at its head not politicians, but psychologists, pedagogues, initiates, sages". (PPI, p. 63)

R. de la Ferrière (1978) also notes:

"Throughout time there is one sole country which has been preserved from revolts and wars: Tibet, whose governmental form is Theocracy. It was not as an entirely initiatic form but rather an organized religious form. This small deficiency reverberates within the tranquility of Tibet as for a long time the system has lacked perfection and now it is only a question of time before this country will be disturbed in its serenity. Definitely, there should be a recourse to the initiatic form of government, establishing a scientific-esoteric Theocracy, with Sages at the head of the world-wide institution based on true values." [YYY, p.188]

"It will not be the leadership of monks or representatives of any religion, but a theocracy in the most plausible sense of the word, a spiritual hierarchy and authority based on knowledge and wisdom, a kingdom of realization for all. [YYY, p. 306]

He (1975) states:

"A kingdom of priests! Such is the key-word of the Tora."

Is not that just a world organized by the Initiatic Colleges, whose idea we have so long professed? Of course, it is not a fanatical theocratic government, but a World Council of Sages. (Prudent)" [PP III, p. 88]

Such misunderstanding about theocracy has had deeply problematic consequences. R. de la Ferrière (1982) notes:

"This first theocracy was cut off from its source because of its prideful wish to organize a limited society (a tower). But quickly the theocrats could not understand anything more. They did not speak the same language. This was not, of course, a question of different languages (those existed before), but rather of the meaning of the words; the spirit with which they were to understand each other no longer existed." [PPII, p. 275]

Conclusion

From an operational point of view, the misunderstanding and misuse of theocracy is one of the main sources of UGB's deformation, because it gives rise to great errors in a potential spiritual government and in leaders' attitudes. This misunderstanding and misuse was one of the causes of the dire failure of the doctrinal readjustment. There was an abysmal ideological and doctrinal incompatibility between UGB's beliefs and R. de la Ferrière's thought.

The UGB Foundation strayed from the founder's original ideas. In order to safeguard UGB, D. Ferriz sought to rescue the victims from infallible, absolute, and autocratic thinking. Ferriz left deformed UGB in Exodus and created a new UGB or Magna Fraternitas Universalis, following exactly R. de la Ferrière's thought to replace the deformed one.

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Note

The translations and interpretations from Spanish are of my own. Whatever errors and shortcomings have crept into this paper are entirely my own.

