

A World Elsewhere

Robert H. Flood, C.S.B. professor of English Literature, philosopher, poet, one evening while discussing the vulgarity of pop culture of the day in the early 1960's in a lecture to students of which I was one, described the cultural term good taste as the habit of correct thinking. He emphasized the point of good taste being the result of a habit in one of its dictionary meanings: the prevailing disposition of character of a person's thoughts and behaviour. His thoughts that evening have remained with me ever since and have helped explain, to my satisfaction, some of the more troublesome areas of human conduct and behaviour in our society, along with a few precious examples of great and noble thoughts.

Today's most important example of troublesome human behaviour is one of worldwide interest and importance. It is the strange midnight pardoning of two fugitives from American justice, Mr. Marc Rich and Mr. Pincus Green, by President Bill Clinton in the early morning hours of his last day of President of the United States. As the explosive news of these pardons spread across America, in the immediate aftermath of President George W. Bush's January 20th Inauguration, Americans of all stripes across the nation saw this presidential action as a major national embarrassment and a humiliating blow to their sense of justice and fair play. They are mystified, angry and cynical of his late-night actions and want to learn the reasoning he used to determine that these pardons were justified. Was it a matter of just bad taste and judgment, or were there other underlying factors involved? They want to know why!

Both men left the country as fugitives seventeen years ago while under investigation and charges of tax evasion, financial fraud, dealing with the enemy, and illegal arms trading by the Justice Department of the Federal Government. They are being described as multimillionaires living in Switzerland who are now citizens of Israel having renounced their American citizenships.

Ever since the Inauguration Ceremonies the focus of the nation and its news reporting media has been dominated by the yet unexplained reasons for these pardons. Two congressional committees are holding public hearings, probing for the answers as to why these pardons to Mr. Rich and Mr. Green were granted, when clearly the fugitives are considered by most Americans to be unpardonable due to the seriousness and nature of their alleged crimes against the nation. Was it money changing hands or influence from high places or a combination of both? the so-called quid pro quo factor. It is now known and acknowledged that Clinton was vigorously and persistently lobbied by high-ranking Israeli leaders to grant these pardons, and that their friends and associates in the United States have recently donated large sums of money to the Clinton Library fund and to the Democratic Party of the United States. To date nothing has stuck to the ex-president and now it seems unlikely that anything will. Mr. Clinton's only response has been an innocuous letter published in the New York Times.

Mr. Rich and Mr. Green are not minor criminals guilty of lesser crimes of importance in need of presidential clemency, but rather are men of major international importance in the murky world of global oil markets and financing. The rationale or even a payback obligation of the ex-president may be eventually found in the even murkier world of secret societies, hand shakes and brotherhoods; an unseen world of mutual aid, worship of self interests, and international pacts and agreements.

Some people, probably most believe that these esoteric groups or societies are remnants of the mythologies of the middle ages and have no meaning, rank or influence in today's educated enlightened free and democratic societies. Twentieth Century scholars, their literature, and international political insights and investigations have shown that the opposite is true. They are here today, organized, active and influential as leaders in politics, the arts and sciences and financial institutions of the world. In reality they possess no special knowledge or power or alchemy, only a thirst for power, privilege and control. Their political, economic and social power is great but their annual harvest produces only bitter grapes of wrath. They are found wanting and of little value when the goal is the creation of a better world, a more generous society, a greater nation of happy and prosperous citizens.

From time-to-time this social phenomenon of secret societies has manifest itself again and again, as they may have done in the Clinton pardons. Any doubts that a myriad of secret societies exists in the world will be dispelled with a reading of Umberto Eco's *Foulcault's Pendulum*, published in 1989, of Rupert Corwell's 1983 publication of *God's Banker*, the story of the affairs of Roberto Calvi, a disgraced Italian banker found hanging from the Black Friars Bridge in London, England and his association with the notorious P-2 Red Lodge a group of Italian bankers, politicians, and businessmen, who formed and operated a shadow government overriding the authority and fundamental operations of the duly elected Italian government of the day. The workings of these societies and their political agendas will also be found by reading *My Autobiography*, by Benito Mussolini, who very early in his life discovered secret societies and their impact on Italian and European politics and history. He was determined that they would play no role in any of the political and social ambitions he envisaged for the people of Italy. He prohibited their existence in 1925.

Finally, we come to the thoughts of Marshall McLuhan on learning the role and importance of secret societies in our social institutions. McLuhan, Canadian scholar and world famed theorist of communications, was a man of great knowledge, intellectual integrity and religious faith. In their 1987 book *The Letters of Marshall McLuhan*, Corinne McLuhan and others have selected and edited letters of correspondence her husband had with friends and colleagues around the world. In a letter to Ezra Pound, dated February 28, 1953 McLuhan starts his letter with this thought: Last year has been spent in going through rituals of secret societies with fine comb. As I said before I am in a bloody rage at the discovery that the arts and sciences are in the pockets of these societies. In a letter to Wyndham Lewis he writes: Only in the past year have I become fully aware of the reality of the secret societies in the arts, philosophy and politics. In a letter to Walter J. Ong. S.J., also dated 1953 he writes: For the past year I have been exploring the relations between Secret Societies and the arts. A grisly business. I do not know what you know, but I know there is not a living artist or critic of repute who is not playing their game. I mean their rituals and doctrine as basis of artistic organization. Marshal McLuhan was not a radical or a gullible conspiracy theory expositor, but rather one of the world's great academic minds of this or any other century.

Keeping in mind the thoughts of professor Flood regarding the habit of correct thinking one would be wise to look at many of the world's historical and contemporary, political, social, and financial affairs with a jaundiced eye and perceptive insight.

Robert H. Flood is no longer with us, but thanks to his poetry published in **A WORLD ELSEWHERE**, 1961, his spirit remains in his poem **To A Youth Newly Girded**:

***There are some things you've got to know
Before you, so young a man, older grow.***

You'll hear this said by the really dead:

***Life's a lie, a trick, a sham - you should never give a damn.
Or: Love's a waste, a snare, a fraud - and you need never be by it
awed;***

***Young man, the woods are trees and full of facile liars covered with
pit-smell of easy mires- "Against"'s so easy for these criers.
Prudently watch Truth yield to fees from the Owners, from the
Forceful, from the hacks, the cynics, from the shooters of bull.
Be aware the Fair's worth the fight- make Love your first and second
sight.***