

The King of the World

RENE GUENON



TRADITION

THE LORD OF THE WORLD

LE ROI DU MONDE

RENE GUENON

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL

NOTE BY

PIETRO NUTRIZIO

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PREFACE

THIS translation introduces English readers for the first time to Guenon's scholarly study of the traditions surrounding the mysterious 'supreme spiritual centre' of this planet. First published in French in 1927, it remains one of the most important works on the subject and draws on a wealth of ancient, truly 'traditional', symbolisms.

The title 'Lord of the World' has been used instead of the more literal 'King of the World' to evoke, in the mind of the English-speaking reader, the possibility of simultaneous spiritual and temporal authority that the literal rendering of *Roi* as 'King' would tend to inhibit. In certain places, the translators have added a footnote, or insertion in square brackets, to clarify a point for the English-speaking reader. To avoid the complications of dealing with Guenon's French transliterations of foreign words, the translators have not included diacritical marks and, as far as possible, standard English transliterations have been used. Some unusual Latin phrases used by Guenon have been left as in the original.

The translation has been gone through by Monsieur Yeha, Guenon's heir, who has offered valuable comments and corrected certain errors. Appended to the text is a biographical note on Rene Guenon by Pietro Nutrizio, included here with the kind permission of Monsieur Yeha.

Translation extensively revised by Anthony Cheke and Anthony Blake from original drafts by Carolyn Shaffer (text) and Olga de Nottbeck (footnotes).

WESTERN IDEAS ABOUT AGARTTHA

CONTAINED in the posthumous work *Mission de l'Inde*, by Saint-Yves d'Alveydre (published in 1910),¹ there is a description of a mysterious centre of initiation called *Agarttha*; many readers have no doubt assumed it was a purely imaginary story, a sort of fiction without any foundation in reality. In fact it does contain, if one takes it absolutely literally, unlikelihoods which could justify such an opinion, particularly for those given to seeing only external appearances. The author no doubt had his reasons for not publishing the book himself, although it was written long ago (albeit left unedited). The only previous mention in Europe of *Agarttha* and its chief the *Brahmatma* was made by a rather superficial writer called Louis Jacolliot,² who cannot be considered authoritative and who seems to have heard tell of these things whilst in India, and created his own fantasy about them as he did with the rest. However, in 1924 a book entitled *Beasts, Men and Gods* appeared unexpectedly on the scene. In this book Ferdinand Ossendowski wrote of a thrilling journey made across central Asia in 1920 and 1921, using descriptions that tally, especially in the latter part of the book, almost identically with those of Saint-Yves. The keen interest aroused by this book has provided a favourable opportunity at last to break the silence on the question of *Agarttha*.

There were hostile and sceptical critics, of course, quick to accuse Mr Ossendowski of plagiarizing Saint-Yves, and supporting their case by pointing out the parallel passages in the two books: there are in fact a good number which show an astonishing similarity even of detail. For example, one of

¹ Second edition, 1949.

² *Les Fils de Dieu*, pp. 236, 213-67, 272; *Le Spiritisme dans le monde*, pp. 27-8.

the most improbable statements offered by Saint-Yves must be that an underground world exists, its network branching everywhere - underneath whole continents, even oceans - to attain and maintain communication with all the regions of this world. Ossendowski does not attempt to verify this from his own experience, and indeed admits that he does not know what to think of it, but gives the testimony of various people he met in the course of his journey. There is also, on more particular points, the passage where the 'Lord of the World' is depicted in front of his predecessor's tomb and where the question is raised of the origin of the gypsies,³ who are said to have lived originally in *Agarttha*. Saint-Yves writes that there are moments during the subterranean celebration of the 'cosmic Mysteries' when desert travellers stop motionless and even animals are silent;⁴ Ossendowski assures us that he was present himself at such a moment of universal contemplation. Most important of all, both writers by strange coincidence tell of an island - now vanished - inhabited by extraordinary men and beasts. Saint-Yves cites the summary of the journey of Iambulus by Diodorus of Sicily, whereas Ossendowski describes the journey of an old Buddhist from Nepal; both accounts are remarkably similar, so that if there do really exist two versions from such widely different sources it would be interesting to rediscover them, in order to compare them carefully.

Although it is necessary to make all these observations, it should be emphasized that we are convinced that the charge of plagiarism is wholly unfounded; in any case it is not our intention to enter on a discussion which is of little interest for us. Independently of the evidence offered by Ossendowski, we know through other sources that stories of this kind are widely current in Mongolia and throughout Central Asia, and we can add that there is something similar in the traditions of

³ We should say that in this connection the existence of peoples 'in tribulation', of which the gypsies are one of the most striking examples, is truly something very mysterious that demands close examination.

⁴ Dr Arturo Reghini brought to our attention that this could have some connection with the *timor panicus* of the ancients; this association does indeed seem to us to be extremely likely.

most peoples. From another point of view, however, it is difficult to see why, if Ossendowski did copy parts of the *Mission de l'Inde*, he should deliberately omit certain passages or change the spelling of words, such as writing 'Agharti' instead of 'Agarttha'. However, this is easily explained if he was basing his information on a Mongolian source and not on Saint-Yves's Hindu sources (it is known that the latter had been in contact with at least two Hindus).⁵ Likewise, he would hardly name the head of the Initiation Hierarchy 'Lord of the World' when that title does not appear anywhere in Saint-Yves's work. And even if a certain amount of plagiarism were to be admitted, the fact remains that Ossendowski puts forward various original ideas which definitely are not to be found in the *Mission de l'Inde* and which he certainly would not have been able to invent in their entirety. Added to which, he was far more preoccupied with politics than with the pursuit of ideas or doctrines, and so ignorant of anything which touched upon the esoteric, that he was manifestly incapable himself of seizing their true import. For example, he tells the story of the 'Black Stone' that had originally been sent by the 'Lord of the World' to the *Dalai Lama* and subsequently taken to Urga in Mongolia, where it disappeared approximately one hundred years ago.⁶ In fact, 'black stones' play an important role in many traditions - from the one which is the symbol of Cybele to the one which is enshrined in the *Kaaba* at Mecca.⁷ Here

⁵ The adversaries of Mr Ossendowski wanted to explain the same fact by pretending that he had a Russian translation of the *Mission de l'Inde* at hand; however, the existence of such a translation is very doubtful, as the heirs of Saint-Yves are totally ignorant of it. Mr Ossendowski has also been blamed for writing *Om* while Saint-Yves writes *Aum*; however, while *Aum* is indeed the representation of the sacred monosyllable split into its constituent elements, *Om* is the transcription which is both correct and which corresponds to the actual pronunciation as it exists in India as well as in Tibet and in Mongolia; this detail alone allows one to appreciate the competence of certain critics.

⁶ Mr Ossendowski, who does not know that the stone is a meteorite, tries to explain certain phenomena, such as the appearing of letters on its surface, by supposing that it was a kind of slate.

⁷ A curious connection could also be made with the *lapsit exillis*, a stone fallen from heaven, on which inscriptions also appear under certain circumstances, and which is identified with the Grail in Wolfgang von Eschenbach's version. What makes the thing still more peculiar is that, according to this same version, the Grail was

is another example: the '*Bogdo-Khan*' or 'Living Buddha' who resides at Urga preserves, amongst other precious *memorabilia*, the ring of Genghis Khan that is engraved with a swastika and a copper plaque bearing the seal of the 'Lord of the World'. It appears that Ossendowski only managed to see the first of these two objects, but if this is so, would it not then have been extremely difficult for him to have conjured the other from his imagination? And would it not have been more natural for him to have described a *gold* plaque?

These preliminary observations must suffice, as it is not relevant here to discuss either individuals or polemics. If we cite Ossendowski and even Saint-Yves it is only to serve as a point of departure for considerations well beyond what one might think of either, and the importance of which infinitely surpasses their individualities, as also our own, which should in any case be of no significance in such discussions. Nor is it proposed here to hold a 'critical examination' of their work, but to reveal information that has, to our knowledge, until now been unavailable and that might help to some extent to clarify what Ossendowski calls the '*mystery of mysteries*'.⁸

finally transported to the 'Kingdom of Prester John', which some have wished to identify very precisely with Mongolia, despite the fact that no geographical localization can be accepted literally in this case (cf. *L'Esoterisme de Dante* (1957 edn.), pp. 35-6).*

⁸ We have been most surprised to learn recently that certain people were trying to pass off the present book as a 'testimony' in favour of a certain personage whose very existence was totally unknown to us at the time it was written; we most strongly deny any assertion of this kind, from whatever direction it may come, because, as far as we are concerned, this book is exclusively concerned with an account of information belonging to traditional symbolism and has absolutely nothing to do with any 'personality' whatsoever.

* See p. 30 below - *Trs.*

ROYALTY AND PONTIFICATE

THE title 'Lord of the World', interpreted in its highest, most complete and most rigorous sense, belongs properly to '*Manu*', the primordial and universal legislator. This is the name that, in various forms, is found amongst many ancient peoples: *Mina* or *Menes* of the Egyptians, the Celtic *Menw*, and Greek *Minos*.¹ In reality the name describes not a figure that is more or less historical or legendary, but a principle, a cosmic Intelligence that reflects pure spiritual light and formulates the Law (*Dharma*) appropriate to the conditions of our world and of our cycle of existence. At the same time, it is the archetype of man in his uniqueness, that is to say of man as a thinking being (in Sanskrit *manava*).

It is important to emphasize that it is this principle that can be manifested through a spiritual centre existing in this terrestrial world, by an organization responsible for preserving integrally the repository of sacred tradition which is of 'non-human' origin (*apaurusheya*), and through which primordial Wisdom communicates across the ages to those capable of receiving it. The leader of such a centre or organization is entitled to use the name and attributes of *Manu*, whom he represents, as it were. Also, the degree of knowledge which he must have attained to warrant the conferment of this authority enables him to truly identify with the principle of which he is the human expression, and before which his own individuality disappears. Such was the case of *Agarttha*, if this centre received, as indicated by Saint-Yves, the inheritance of the ancient 'solar dynasty' (*Surya-vansha*) which once resided

¹ With the Greeks, *Minos* was at the same time Legislator of the living and Judge of the dead; in the Hindu tradition, these two functions belong to *Manu* and *Yama* respectively, who are, moreover, represented as twin brothers, indicating a splitting into two of a single principle considered from two different aspects.

at Ayodhya,² and which drew its origin from *Vaivaswata*, the '*Manu*' of the present cycle.

Saint-Yves does not in fact envisage 'The Lord of the World' as the supreme chief of *Agarttha*, but rather as its 'sovereign pontiff', whom he places, moreover, at the head of a 'Brahmanic church' - a somewhat over-westernized conception.³ Apart from this point, Saint-Yves accords completely with Ossendowski: it would seem that both writers took a point of view which complements their personal interests and opinions without understanding that, in fact, leadership of *Agarttha* consisted of a double power - both sacerdotal and royal. The 'pontifical' characteristic, in the truest sense of this word, belongs very really and *par excellence* to the chief of the initiation hierarchy. '*Pontifex*' means literally 'builder of bridges', and this Roman title is, in a way, by its origin a masonic title; symbolically it is he who functions as a mediator enacting communication between this and higher worlds.⁴ Consequently, the rainbow or 'celestial bridge' is used in much the same way by all traditions. For the Hebrews it is the sign of God's union with His people; for the Chinese, the union of Heaven and Earth, and for the Greeks it represents *Iris*, 'the messenger of the gods'. To the Scandinavians as well as the Persians and Arabs, in central Africa, and even as far as certain peoples of North America, it signifies the bridge between the material and higher worlds.

² The seat of the 'solar dynasty', if considered symbolically, can be likened to the 'Solar Citadel' of the Rosicrucians, and doubtless also to the 'City of the Sun' of Campanella.

³ This denomination 'Brahmanic Church' has, as a matter of fact, never been used in India, but was used by the heterodox modern sect of the *Brahma-Samaj*, arising at the beginning of the nineteenth century under European and particularly Protestant influences, soon to be divided into a multiplicity of rival branches and nearly completely extinguished today. One might note in passing that one of the founders of this sect was the grandfather of the poet Rabindranath Tagore.

⁴ Saint Bernard said that 'the pontiff, as indicated by the etymology of this name, is a sort of bridge between God and man' (*Tractatus de Moribus et Officio Episcoporum*, iii. 9). There is in India a term peculiar to the Jains and which is the strict equivalent of the Latin *pontifex*: it is the word *Tirthankara*, literally 'he who makes a ford or crossing'; the crossing in point being the Way of Deliverance (*Moksha*). The *Tirthankaras* number twenty-four, like the old men of the *Apocalypse* who, besides, also constitute a pontifical college.

For the Romans this union of sacerdotal and royal power represented only one aspect of the extraordinarily complex and diverse symbolism of *Janus*, whose gold and silver keys depicted the two respective initiations⁵ that, using Hindu terminology, would correspond to the way of the *Brahmin* and that of the *Kshatriya*. However, at the highest point of the hierarchy there is one common principle from which the one and the other draw their respective attributes, which is therefore above their distinctions. This principle is the source of all legitimate authority, in whatever domain it is exercised; and the initiates of *Agarttha* are *ativarna*, that is to say, 'beyond caste'.⁶

In the Middle Ages there was an expression in which these two complementary aspects of authority were reunited in an interesting fashion; during this era a mysterious country, 'The Kingdom of Prester John',⁷ was often mentioned. Now this was the time when what could be called the 'outer covering' of the initiation centre in question was formed in good part by Nestorians (or those who are rightly or wrongly so called), and by Sabaeans,⁸ who called themselves the 'Mendayeh of

⁵ From another point of view, these keys are those of the 'great Mysteries' and of the 'lesser Mysteries' respectively. In certain representations of *Janus*, the two powers are also symbolized by a key and a sceptre.

⁶ In this connection it can be noted that the social organization of the Middle Ages seems, in principle, to have been copied from the institution of castes; the clergy corresponded to the *Brahmins*, the nobility to the *Kshatriyas*, the commonalty to the *Vaishyas*, and the serfs to the *Shudras*.

⁷ The matter of Prester John arises particularly around the time of Saint Louis, in the travels of Carpin and de Rubruquis. What complicates matters is that, according to some people, there were as many as four personages who bore this title: in Tibet (or in the Pamirs), in Mongolia, in India, and in Ethiopia (this latter word having in any case but the vaguest of meanings); but it is likely that it here refers to different representations of the same power. It is also said that the Genghis Khan wanted to attack the kingdom of Prester John, but that the latter repulsed him by unleashing thunderbolts against his armies. However, since the time of the Muslim invasions, Prester John has ceased to manifest himself, but would appear to be externally represented by the Dalai Lama.

⁸ In Central Asia, and particularly in the region of Turkestan, Nestorian crosses have been found whose form is exactly similar to those of chivalry, and of which some have, moreover, the figure of the swastika in their centre. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the Nestorians, whose relationship with Lamaism seems undeniable, had an important - if rather enigmatic - influence in the beginnings of Islam. The Sabaeans, on their side, exerted a great influence on the Arab world

Yahia' or 'disciples of John'. In this context, one is prompted to remark that it is curious that many oriental groups that were rigidly enclosed communities, from the Ismailis or the disciples of 'The Old One of the Mountain' to the Lebanese Druses - all, without exception, took the same title 'Guardians of the Holy Land' as did the western Orders of Chivalry. The sequel to what is being discussed may be more easily understood than at first appears when it is seen that Saint-Yves had found a very precise expression, possibly more precise than he knew himself, with the term 'The Templars of *Agartha*'. Equally, the meaning of 'exterior covering' may be clarified by noting that initiation into Chivalry was essentially an initiation of *Kshatriyas*. Amongst other things, this explains the dominant role played by the symbolism of Love.⁹

Leaving aside these considerations, the idea of one individual embodying both priest and king is not widely current in the contemporary West even though it is found at the origin of the Christian Church, strikingly enacted by the Magi-kings. Of course, by the Middle Ages, to outside appearances at least, supreme power had already become divided between the Empire and the Papacy.¹⁰ Such a division marks an organization that is incomplete at its head since the common principle, on which the two powers depend, is missing; the true power had then to be found elsewhere. In the East the maintenance of such a separation at the very summit of a hierarchy is rather exceptional. Only amongst certain Buddhist tenets can one recognize something of the kind: one in question is the affirmed incompatibility between the function of *Buddha* and that of *Chakravarti* or 'universal monarch',¹¹ between which, it is said, Shakya-Muni had at a certain moment to choose.

in the time of the Kalifs of Baghdad; it is also said that it is with them that the last of the Neoplatonists found refuge, after a sojourn in Persia.

⁹ This particularity has already been pointed out in our study *L'Esoterisme de Dante*.

¹⁰ In ancient Rome, on the other hand, the Emperor was also *Pontifex Maximus*. The Muslim theory of the *Khalifat* also unites the two powers, at least in some measure, and so does the Far Eastern conception of the *Wang* (see *La Grande Triade*, ch. 17).

¹¹ We have noted elsewhere the analogy which exists between the conception of the *Chakravarti* and Dante's idea of the Empire, and in this respect it is appropriate to mention the treatise *De Monarchia*.


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It is relevant to add that the term *Chakravarti*, far from being particularly Buddhist, applies very well, following the Hindu tradition, to the function of *Manu* or Mann's representatives. '*Chakravarti*' literally means 'He who makes the wheel turn', that is to say the one who, being at the centre of all things, directs all movement without himself participating in it, or who is, to use Aristotle's words, the 'unmoving mover'.¹²

It should be emphasized here that this centre constitutes the fixed point known symbolically to all traditions as the 'pole' or axis around which the world rotates. This combination is normally depicted as a wheel in Celtic, Chaldean, and Hindu traditions.¹³ Such is the true significance of the swastika, seen world-wide, from the Far East to the Far West, which is intrinsically the 'sign of the pole'.¹⁴ It is doubtless here, for the first time in modern Europe, that its real sense has been made known. Contemporary scholars have vainly essayed all kinds of fantastic theories to explain the swastika symbol, but the majority of them, plagued by fixed ideas, have been unable to comprehend it as anything other than an exclusively 'solar' sign.¹⁵ If it has occasionally become such a symbol, it can only have been by accident, as a result of some distortion. Others have come nearer to the truth though

In a quite comparable sense Chinese tradition uses the expression "Invaluable Middle". It is noteworthy that, according to Masonic symbology, the Masters gather in the 'Middle Room'.

¹³ The Celtic symbol of the wheel was retained in the Middle Ages; many examples of it can be found in Romanesque churches and the Gothic rose-window itself seems to have derived from it, as there is a certain relationship between the wheel and the emblematic flowers such as the rose in the West and the lotus in the East.

¹⁴ This very sign was not foreign to Christian hermeticism; we have seen, in the ancient Carmelite monastery in Loudun, very strange symbols, dating probably from the second half of the fifteenth century, amongst which the swastika, together with the sign  (to which we will refer later), occupies one of the most important positions. In this respect, it is noteworthy that the Carmelites, who came from the East, connect the founding of their order to Elias and to Pythagoras (in the same way as Masonry, on its side, considers itself connected simultaneously to Solomon and to Pythagoras, which constitutes a rather remarkable parallel). Additionally, there are those who claim that, in the Middle Ages, they had an initiation very close to that of the Templars as well as to the monks of the Order of Mercy; it is known that this latter Order has given its name to a certain grade of Scottish Masonry, about which we have written at some length in *L'Esoterisme de Dante*.

¹⁵ The same remark can be applied notably to the wheel, of which the true significance has just been indicated.

perceiving the swastika as a symbol of movement, although this interpretation, without being false, is far from sufficient, as it acts not from random movement but from a rotation effected around an immutable centre or axis. It is this fixed point, it should be stressed, that constitutes the essential element to which the symbol in question directly relates.¹⁶

It can be understood now, through what has been said, that the 'Lord of the World' must have a function that is essentially both organizational and regulatory (it is not without reason that this latter word possesses the same root as *rex* and *regere*), so that this function can be summed up in a word such as 'balance' or 'harmony', corresponding precisely to the Sanskrit term '*dharma*',¹⁷ by which we understand the reflection in the manifested world of the immutability of the supreme Principle. Consequently, one can understand why the 'Lord of the World' has the fundamental attributes of 'justice' and 'peace' as they epitomize the balance and harmony inherent in the 'world of man' (*manavaloka*).¹⁸ This is a point of the greatest importance and, beyond its general purport, let it be noted by those who allow themselves certain chimerical fears, such as are faintly echoed in the last lines of Ossendowski's book.

¹⁶ We will only cite as a reminder the opinion, still more fanciful than all the others, which makes of the swastika a diagram of a primitive instrument intended for the production of fire; if this symbol does sometimes have a certain connection with fire (it is in particular an emblem of *Agni*), it is for quite different reasons.

¹⁷ The root *dhri* expresses essentially the idea of stability; the form *dhru*, which has the same meaning, is the root of *drum*, Sanskrit name for the Pole, which some compare to the Greek name of the oak, *drus*; in Latin, moreover, the same word *robur* signifies force or firmness, as well as oak-tree. For the Druids (whose name should perhaps read *dru-vid*, joining force and wisdom), and also at Dodona, the oak-tree represented 'The Tree of the World', symbol of the fixed axis that joins the Poles.

¹⁸ One should remember here the biblical texts in which Justice and Peace are closely joined: 'Justitia et Pax osculatae sunt' (Ps. 84: II), 'Pax opus Justitiae', etc.

Chapter 3

SHEKINAH AND METATRON

CERTAIN timid spirits whose understanding has been curiously limited by preconceived ideas have been so dismayed by the implications of the title 'Lord of the World' that they have found themselves compelled to explain it away as the *Princeps hujus mundi* of the Gospels. It is self-evident that such an assimilation is wholly erroneous and without foundation. Of course, the issue could be avoided altogether by simply observing that the title in Hebrew and in Arabic equally applies to God himself,¹ but while that also might provide some interesting avenues to pursue, we are more concerned here with the theories of 'celestial intermediaries' in the Hebrew Kabbalah that have a direct bearing on the principal subject of this study.

The 'celestial intermediaries' are *Shekinah* and *Metatron* - *Shekinah* denoting in a general sense the 'real presence' of the Divine. The scriptures that make special mention of this presence are mainly those that are concerned with the establishment of a spiritual centre, such as the construction of the Tabernacle and the Temples of Solomon and Zorobabel. Such a centre, set up according to rigorously denned conditions, should be in effect a place of divine manifestation, always represented by 'Light'. It is interesting to note that a description retained by the Masonic order of a 'very light and equable place' seems to be a memory left over from the ancient sacerdotal science that directed the construction of the temples - and that, by the way, was not peculiar to the Jews; this will be discussed later. It is not necessary here to elaborate

¹ There is, however, a great difference of meaning between 'The World' and 'this world', to the point that in certain languages there exist two entirely distinct terms; thus, in Arabic 'The World' is *el-alam*, while 'this world' is *ed-dunya*.

on the theme of 'spiritual influences' (a better translation of the Hebrew *berakoth* than the usual 'blessings', more particularly as it keeps the sense which the Arabic *barakah* has retained), but even if one does only consider these things from this one point of view (the Jewish), it is possible to explain the words of Elias Levita, who is quoted by Vulliaud in his *La Kabbale juive*, as saying: 'The Masters of the Kabbalah hold great secrets on this matter.'

The *Shekinah* presents two leading aspects out of its many facets - one that is internal and the other external. There is in the Christian tradition an expression that describes these two aspects in the clearest possible way: '*Gloria in excelsis deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.*' *Glory* refers to the internal aspect of the principle whilst *Peace* corresponds to the external aspect or manifested world. If these words are considered, it is possible to understand immediately why they are spoken by the angels (*Malakim*) in order to announce the birth of God 'with us' or 'in us' (*Emmanuel*). It also explains, in relation to the first aspect, various theological expositions on 'the light of glory', in and by which the beatific vision is revealed (*in excelsis*). The second aspect, 'Peace', has already been referred to; esoterically it is known as one of the fundamental attributes retained by the spiritual centres of this world (*in terra*). In any case the Arabic term *Sakmah*, a word of identical derivation to that of the Hebrew *Shekinah*, translates as 'Great Peace', which is an exact equivalent of the *Pax Profunda* of the Rosy-Cross; and hence one can certainly explain what the latter meant by the 'Temple of the Holy Spirit'. Likewise one could interpret in a precise fashion the numerous Gospel texts in which 'Peace'² is mentioned, and also the suggestion that 'the secret tradition of the *Shekinah* has a connection with the light of the Messiah'. Is it unintentionally that M. Vulliaud, in giving this last indication,³ says that this is a tradition 'reserved for those who

² Moreover, the Gospels themselves explicitly declare that this term does not mean peace as understood by the secular world (St. John, 14; 27).

³ *La Kabbale juive*, vi. 503.

pursue the path leading to *Pardes*,'* that is to say, as will be seen later, to the supreme spiritual centre?

This question leads to another remark: M. Vulliaud speaks subsequently of a 'mystery related to the Jubilee'⁴† that he relates in one sense to the idea of 'Peace', citing in this context the text of the *Zohar* (III. 52 b): 'The river that flows out of Eden bears the name *lobel*', and that of Jeremiah (17: 8): 'It stretches its roots towards the river', which leads to: 'The central idea of the Jubilee is the return of all things to their original state'. It is clear that this return to the 'primordial condition' is seen in all traditions, a theme that was quite strongly stressed in our work *L'Esoterisme de Dante*. Those who have read this book will be able to make a connection between what was written there about 'Terrestrial Paradise' and 'Celestial Jerusalem' and the statement that 'the return of all things to their primary state will herald the Messianic Era'. The essential interest in all this is that in the various phases of cyclical manifestation it is the *Pardes*, the centre of this world, that in the traditional symbolism for all cultures is compared to the heart, the centre of being and 'divine residence' (*Brahma-pura* in Hindu doctrine). The Tabernacle made in its image is hence called 'Habitable of God' or *mishkan*, a word deriving from the same root form as *Shekinah*.

From another point of view the *Shekinah* is the synthesis of the *Sephiroth*; thus, the 'right-hand column' of the Sephirothic Tree denotes the side of Mercy and the 'left-hand column' that of Rigour.⁵‡ One ought also to find both aspects in the *Shekinah*, where one can say that Justice stands for Rigour and Peace for Mercy;⁶ 'If man sins and strays from the *Shekinah* he falls

⁴ Ibid. i. 506-7.

⁵ An absolutely comparable symbolism is expressed by the medieval figure of the 'tree of the quick and the dead', which has, moreover, a very clear connection with the idea of 'spiritual posterity'; note that the sephirothic tree is also believed to be identifiable with the 'Tree of Life'.

⁶ According to the *Talmud*, God has two seats, the seat of Justice and the seat of

* The 'garden', traditionally symbolizing Jewish mystical practice - *Trs.*

† The Jewish year of emancipation and restoration - *Trs.*

‡ The French word *rigueur* has connotations of law, karma, order. The usual English word 'justice' would be confusing here - *Trs.*

under the power of those forces (*Sarim*) that depend on the Rigour'.⁷ Thus the *Shekinah* is called the 'Hand of Discipline', a description that immediately recalls the well-known symbol, 'the hand of justice'. This appears at first to contradict the maxim: 'If a man approaches the *Shekinah* he will be liberated', but as the *Shekinah* is the 'right hand of God' then it can be seen that the 'hand of justice' becomes the 'hand that blesses'.⁸ This is the mystery of the 'House of Justice' (*Beith-Din*), which is yet another designation of the supreme spiritual centre.⁹ It is scarcely necessary to point out that the two sides under discussion are represented in the Christian religion by the paths of the Saved and the Damned following the Last Judgement. One could equally establish a connection with the two paths symbolized by the Pythagoreans in the letter Y, represented exoterically by Virtue and Vice in the Herculean myth; also by the two doors - celestial and infernal - associated by the Romans with the symbolism of *Janus*, and by the two cyclical ascending and descending phases¹⁰ associated by the Hindus with Ganesh.¹¹ These examples provide a clear understanding of what is truly meant by such expressions as 'right intention' of which more later, and 'good will' ('*Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis*'); those familiar with the various

Mercy; these two seats also correspond to the 'Throne' and to the 'Chair' of Islamic tradition. On the other hand, the latter divides the divine names *sifatiyah*, i.e. those which express the properly so-called attributes of *Allah*, into 'names of majesty' (*jalaliyah*) and 'names of beauty' (*jamaliyah*), which further corresponds to a distinction of the same order.

⁷ *La Kabbah juive*, i. 507.

⁸ According to St. Augustine and various other Fathers of the Church, the right hand, in the same way, represents Mercy or Goodness, whereas the left hand, with God especially, is the symbol of Justice. The 'Hand of Justice' is one of the ordinary attributes of royalty; the 'blessing Hand' is a sign of sacerdotal authority and has sometimes been taken as a symbol of Christ. This figure of the 'blessing Hand' can be found on certain Gaulish coins, as well as the swastika, sometimes with curved arms.

⁹ This centre, or any one of those which are constituted in its image, can be symbolically described as a temple (sacerdotal aspect, corresponding to Peace) and at the same time as a palace or court of law (royal aspect, corresponding to Justice).

¹⁰ We have here the two halves of the Zodiacal Cycle, which one can often find represented on the doorways of medieval churches in an arrangement which obviously gives it the same significance.

¹¹ All the symbols enumerated here would need to be explained at length; we may perhaps do so in another work.

symbols referred to will see that it is not without reason that Christmas coincides with the winter solstice), especially if one leaves aside all those externalist moral and philosophical interpretations which have arisen from the time of the Stoics through to Kant.

'The Kabbalah gives the *Shekinah* a deputy* that bears names identical to its own and that consequently possesses the same characteristics',¹² and that naturally also possesses as many attributes that differ from those of the *Shekinah* itself. Its name is *Metatron*, a title that is numerically equivalent to *Shaddai*,¹³ the 'All-Powerful', said to have been the name of the God of Abraham. The origin of the word *Metatron* is most obscure; one of the most interesting among the many hypotheses that have been advanced is its derivation from the Chaldean *Mitra*, which means 'rain', but relates through its root form with 'light'. Even accepting this proposition, there is still no valid reason for believing that similarity with the Hindu and Zoroastrian *Mitra* represents a borrowing by Judaism from foreign doctrines, as it is not useful to envisage the relationship that exists between the different traditions in such an external manner. For most traditions the symbol of rain signifies the descent of 'spiritual influences' from Heaven to Earth. In this connection, Hebraic doctrine describes a 'dew of light' emanating from the 'tree of life' and through which there occurs the resurrection of the dead, whilst both Alchemical and Rosicrucian symbolism is recalled by the 'effusion of dew' that represents the celestial influence communicating with all the worlds.

'The term *Metatron* conveys the multiple meanings of guardian, Lord, messenger, mediator'; it is the 'author of the theophanies [God's manifestation] in the perceptible world';¹⁴ it is 'the Angel of the Face', and also the 'Prince of the World'

¹² *La Kabbale juive*, i. 497-8.

¹³ The number of each of these two names, obtained by adding the values of the Hebrew letters of which it is composed, is 314.

¹⁴ *La Kabbale juive*, i. 492 and 499.

* The French word *paredre* means a lesser deity, but can be used semi-adjectivally as here - *Trs.*

(*sar ha-olam*), and this last designation indicates that we have in no way strayed from the subject. The traditional symbolism that has been explained up to now may be employed to convey the idea that in the same way as the leader of the initiatory hierarchy is the 'terrestrial pole', so *Metatwn* is the 'celestial pole'. And the one reflects the other, being in direct contact through the 'axis of the world'. 'His name is *Mikael*, the Great Priest who is the burnt-offering and oblation before God. And everything the Israelites do on earth is the reflection of a celestial action. The Great Pontiff here below represents *Mikael*, prince of Clemency . . . Every part of the scripture that tells of an appearance of *Mikael* is concerned with the glory of the *Shekinah*.¹⁵ Although said here of the Israelites, it could equally apply to all peoples inheriting a genuinely orthodox tradition; the point should be made even more strongly for the representatives of the primordial tradition, from which all the rest derive and to which they are all subordinate; this is in tune with the symbolism pertaining to the 'Holy Land', an image of the celestial world that has been referred to already.

To revert to the previous subject, *Metatron* possesses not only the attribute of mercy but also that of justice; it is not only the 'Great Priest' (*Kohen ha-gadol*) but also the 'Great Prince' (*Sar ha-gadol*) and 'commander of the celestial militia', that is to say, it is the principle of royal power, as well as of that sacerdotal or pontifical power that corresponds to the function of 'mediator'. It is worth noting that *Melek*, 'king', and *Maleak*, 'angel' or 'messenger' are in fact two forms of one and the same word. Moreover, *Malaki*, 'my messenger' (that is to say, messenger of God, or 'angel in whom God dwells', *Maleak ha-Elohim*), is an anagram [in Hebrew] of *Mikael*.¹⁶

¹⁵ *La Kabbale juive*, i. 500-1.

¹⁶ This last remark naturally brings to mind the following words: 'Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini'; these are applied to Christ, whom the *Shepherd* of Hermas assimilates precisely to *Mikael* in a way that may seem rather strange, but that should not surprise those who understand the connection which exists between the Messiah and the *Shekinah*. Christ is also called 'the Prince of Peace', and he is also at the same time the 'Judge of the living and the dead'.

Although *Mikael* is identified with *Metatron*, he represents only one aspect. Beside the luminous face, there is a dark face represented by *Samael*, also known as *Sar ha-olam* - in fact, it is this latter aspect, and it only, which symbolizes in a lower sense the 'spirit of the world', or the *Princeps hujus mundi* referred to in the Gospels. *Samael's* relationship with *Metatron*, as the latter's shadow, so to say, justifies the use of the same title in a twofold sense as well as making it clear why the 'number of the beast', the apocalyptic 666, is also a solar number.¹⁷ To quote Saint Hippolytus¹⁸ in conclusion: 'The Messiah and the Anti-Christ both have the lion for their emblem', another solar symbol. The same remarks may be applied to the serpent¹⁹ and to many other symbols. From a Kabbalistic viewpoint, we have here the two opposite faces of *Metatron*; we need not go into the theories we might formulate on this double meaning of symbols, only noting that the confusion between the luminous and the dark aspects is what properly constitutes 'Satanism'. It is precisely this confusion that allows some, unintentionally and through simple ignorance (an excuse, not a justification), to believe that an infernal significance is to be found in the title 'Lord of the World'.²⁰

¹⁷ This number is formed in particular by the name of *Sorath*, demon of the Sun, and opposed as such to the angel *Mikael*; later we will see another significance of this number.

¹⁸ Cited by Vulliaud, *La Kabbah juive*, ii. 273.

¹⁹ The two opposing aspects are figured in particular by the two serpents of the Caduceus; in Christian iconography they are united in the 'Amphisbaena', the two-headed serpent, one of which represents Christ, the other Satan.

²⁰ Let us further point out that the 'Globe of the World', insignia of imperial power or of universal monarchy, is frequently placed in the hand of Christ, which shows, moreover, that he is the emblem of spiritual authority as well as of temporal power.

Chapter 4

THE THREE SUPREME FUNCTIONS

ACCORDING to Saint-Yves, the supreme head of *Agarttha* holds the title of '*Brahatma*' ('*Brahmatma*' would be more correct) or 'sustainer of souls in the Spirit of God'. His two advisors are the *Mahatma*, 'Representative of the universal soul', and '*Mahanga*', 'symbol of the entire material organization of the Cosmos'.¹ They comprise the hierarchical division established in Western terms by the triad 'spirit', 'soul', and 'body', that may be applied here within the analogical framework of the Macrocosm and Microcosm. It is important here to know that Sanskrit terminology defines only the principle inherent in these designations, and cannot be applied to human beings except in so far as they represent these principles, and even then it only applies to their functions, not their individualities. Ossendowski describes the *Mahatma* as 'knowing the events of the future' and the *Mahanga* as 'controlling the causes for these events', while the *Brahatma* is able to 'speak to God face to face'.² This phrase is easily understood if it is remembered that *Brahatma* occupies the central position from where direct communication is established between the terrestrial world and higher states and, through them, with the supreme Principle.³ If the term 'Lord of the World' were to be interpreted in a restrictive sense, in accordance with an understanding only of the terrestrial world, it would prove inadequate; it would be more accurate, in certain respects, to name *Brahatma* 'King of the three worlds',⁴ for in every authentic hierarchy

¹ Ossendowski uses *Brahytma*, *Mahytma*, and *Mahynga*.

² We have seen above that *Metatron* is 'The Angel of the Face'.

³ According to Far Eastern tradition, the 'Invariable Middle' is the point where the 'Activity of Heaven' is manifested.

⁴ We could ask those who might be surprised at such an expression if they have ever reflected upon the significance of the *triregnum*, the three-crowned tiara, which is, with the keys, one of the principal insignia of the Papacy.

he who possesses the highest qualifications possesses by the same token all subordinate qualifications, so that the 'three worlds' (which comprise the *Tribhuvana* of Hindu tradition) are the domains that correspond respectively to the three functions previously enumerated.



'When he comes out from the temple', writes Ossendowski, 'the Lord of the World radiates the Divine Light' - the Hebrew Bible reports exactly the same of Moses when he came down from Mount Sinai.⁵ It is worth noting that Islamic tradition regards Moses as the 'Pole' (*El-Qutb*) of his era. Is it not for this reason that he was instructed, according to the Kabbalah, by *Metatron* himself? It is worth distinguishing at this point between the principal spiritual centre of our world, and those subordinate secondary centres that only represent the former in respect of their particular traditions specially adapted for particular communities. Without labouring the point I should nevertheless add that the function of 'legislator' (Arabic *rasul*) belonging to Moses necessarily supposes a delegation of the power that is the sign of *Manu*. One meaning implicit in the 'Manu' signifies precisely the reflection of the Divine Light.

'The Lord of the World', said a Lama to Ossendowski, 'is in touch with the thoughts of all those who direct the destiny of mankind . . . He knows their intentions and their ideas. If these are pleasing to God, the Lord of the World favours them with his invisible aid. But if they are displeasing to God, he puts a check on their activities. This power is given to *Agharti* through the mysterious science of "Om", the word we use to begin our prayers.' Immediately afterwards comes a phrase that for those who do not know the significance of this sacred monosyllable should occasion great surprise: '*Om* is the name of an ancient saint, the first *Guru*, who lived three hundred thousand years ago.' This sentence would be completely

⁵ It is also said that Moses had then to cover his face with a veil to speak to the people who could not bear its brilliance (Exodus, 24: 29-35); in the symbolical sense, this indicates the necessity for an exoteric adaptation for the multitude. Let us recall in this connection the double significance of the word 'reveal', which can mean 'to draw aside the veil', but also 'to cover with a veil' [re-veil]; it is thus that the word manifests and veils at the same time the thought it expresses.

unintelligible were it not borne in mind that the era mentioned - apparently so vaguely - far precedes that of the present *Manu*. Moreover, the *Adi-Manu* or first *Manu* of our present *Kalpa* (*Vaivasvata* being the seventh) is called 'Swayambhuva' or issue of 'Swayambhu', 'that which subsists of itself, in other words, 'eternal *logos*'. Now the *Logos*, or he who represents it directly, can truly be called the first *Guru* or 'spiritual Master', which means that 'Om' is, in effect, another one of its names.⁶

The word 'Om' at once provides a key to the hierarchical allocation of functions pertaining to '*Brahatma*' and his two advisors. According to Hindu tradition, the three components of this sacred monosyllable represent the 'three worlds' just mentioned of the *Tribhuvana*: 'Earth' (*Bhu*), Atmosphere (*Bhuv*) and 'Sky' (*Swa*), which, to use a different terminology, correspond to the corporeal manifestation, the world of subtle or psychic manifestation, and the non-manifested world of the Principle.⁷ They describe in ascending order the worlds of *Mahanga*, *Mahatma*, and *Brahatma*, as can easily be seen by referring to the interpretation of their titles given

⁶ This name is, rather surprisingly, also found in the ancient Christian symbolism where, among the signs serving to represent Christ, one, later considered an abbreviation of *Ave Maria*, was originally an equivalent of the one that unites the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, *alpha* and *omega*, to signify that the Word is the principle and the end of all things; in reality, it is even more complete as it signifies the beginning, the middle and the end. This sign, , in fact breaks down into AVM, i.e. the three Latin letters which correspond to the three constituent elements of the monosyllable *Om* (the vowel *o*, in Sanskrit, being formed by the union of *a* and *u*). The association of this sign *Aum* and the swastika, both taken as symbols of Christ, seems particularly significant seen from the position we are taking. Furthermore, one must note that the form of this same sign presents two threefold entities placed in opposite ways to each other, which makes them, in certain respects, an equivalent to the 'seal of Solomon'. If one considers the latter in the form  where the horizontal median line specifies the general significance of the symbol by marking the plane of reflection or 'surface of the waters', one sees that both figures comprise the same number of lines and in reality only differ by the disposition of two of them which, from being horizontal in one, become vertical in the other.

⁷ A more ample development of this conception of the 'three worlds' is found in our earlier works, *L'Esoterisme de Dante* and *Man and his Becoming according to Vedanta*. In the first we have mainly stressed the correspondence of these worlds, which are in fact states of mind, with degrees of initiation. In the second we have in particular given a complete explanation, from the purely metaphysical point of view, of the text of the *Mandukya Upanishad*, in which the symbolism here in question is set out in full. The present discussion covers only one particular application.

above. These form the sequence of subordination existing between the different domains that justifies the previous interpretation of '*Brahatma*' as 'Lord of the three worlds'.⁸ 'This being is the Lord of all things, the Omniscient, seeing instantaneously all effects in their cause; the inner organizer residing at the centre of the world and ruling it from within, directing its movement without participating in it. He is the source of all legitimate power, the beginning and end of all beings that belong to the cyclical manifestation in which he represents the Law.'⁹ To use another symbolism, no less exact, the *Mahanga* represents the base of the initiatic triangle, the *Brahatma* its summit, and between the two the *Mahatma* embodies in a certain way the reconciling principle (the cosmic vitality, the *Anima Mundi* of the Hermeticists), the action of which is deployed in 'intermediary space'. All this is depicted very clearly through the corresponding characters of the sacred alphabet called by Saint-Yves *Vattan* and *Vattanan* by Ossendowski, and also by the geometric forms (straight line, spiral, and point) to which the three *matras*, elements constituting the monosyllable *Om*, can be reduced.

This can be defined more exactly: the fullness of both sacerdotal and Royal power, seen as principles in a kind of undifferentiated state, belongs to the *Brahatma*. The two powers subsequently divide in order to manifest, the *Mahatma* specifically representing sacerdotal power, and the *Mahanga* Royal power. The distinction is comparable to that between *Brahmin* and *Kshatriya*, although in other respects the *Mahatma* and the *Mahanga*, being 'beyond castes', have themselves, like the *Brahatma*, elements of both powers. This raises a point that has never been explained satisfactorily, yet is most important: it has been mentioned already that the two powers were united in the 'Magi-Kings' of the Gospels; now it can be revealed that these mysterious personages represented in truth nothing other than the three leaders of

⁸ In the order of universal principles, the function of *Brahatma* refers to *Ishvara*, that of the *Mahatma* to *Hiranyagarhha*, and that of the *Mahanga* to *Viraj*; their respective attributes could easily be deduced from this correspondence.

⁹ *Mandukya Upanishad*, shruti 6.

Agarttha.¹⁰ The *Mahanga* offers gold to Christ and hails him as 'King'; the *Mahatma*, offering incense, greets him as 'Priest'; and the *Brahatma*, greeting him as 'Prophet' or Spiritual Master *par excellence*, proffers myrrh (the symbol of *amrita*¹¹ and balm of incorruptibility). The homage rendered in this way to the new-born Christ, by the authentic representatives of the primordial tradition in the three worlds which are their respective domains, is at the same time, one should note, a sign of the perfect orthodoxy of Christianity in this respect.

Of course Ossendowski was not in a position to consider ramifications of this order. Indeed if he had understood certain things more profoundly he would have noticed at least the strict analogy existing between the supreme triumvirates of *Agarttha* and of Lamaism as he describes it. He points out that the *Dalai Lama* 'embodies the saintliness (or pure spirituality) of *Buddha*', the *Tashi-Lama* 'his science' (not 'magic' as he appears to think but, rather, 'theurgy'), and the *Bogdo-Khan* represents 'his material and warrior power', an identical allocation of function to that dividing the 'three worlds'. He should have drawn the parallels even more readily since he was told that 'the capital of *Agharti* recalls Lhasa where the *Dalai Lama's* palace, the *Potala*, is situated on top of a mountain that is covered over with temples and monasteries'. Through reversing the emphasis of the relationship, this sort of explanation is erroneous, for in reality it is the image that recalls its prototype, not the other way round. Thus, the centre of Lamaism is merely an image of the true 'centre of the world'; but all centres of this kind possess, according to the locality where they are founded, certain topographical peculiarities that, far from being unimportant, have an irrefutable symbolic

¹⁰ Saint-Yves does indeed say that the 'Magi-Kings' came from *Agarttha*, but without bringing any precision to this statement. The names usually attributed to them are doubtless imaginary, excepting however, that of *Melki-Or*, in Hebrew 'King of the Light', which is rather significant.

¹¹ The *Amrita* of the Hindus or the *Ambrosia* of the Greeks (two words etymologically identical), drink or food of immortality, was also clearly seen in the Vedic *Soma* and the Mazdean [Zoroastrian] *Haoma*. Trees producing incorruptible gum or resin play an important role in symbolism; they have, in particular, sometimes been taken as emblems of Christ.

value that must correspond to those laws through which 'spiritual influences' operate. This last topic actually belongs to an area of traditional science which one could call 'sacred geography'.

There is another, no less remarkable, parallel. Saint-Yves, describing the different degrees or circles of the initiatic hierarchy which correspond specifically to certain symbolic numerals, particularly those of the divisions of time, concludes: 'the highest circle, nearest to the mysterious centre, is composed of twelve members who represent the supreme initiation and correspond, amongst other things, with the Zodiacal Zone'. This constitution is reproduced in what is known as the 'Circular Council' of the *Dalai Lama*, a council comprising twelve grand *Namshans* (or *Nomekhans*), a form also found in certain Western traditions such as 'Knights of the Round Table'. Seen from the sphere of cosmic order, the twelve members of *Agarttha's* inner circle represent not only the twelve signs of the Zodiac but also (it is tempting to say 'rather', although neither interpretation negates the other) the twelve *Adityas* which are as many forms of the sun acting in concord with these Zodiacal signs.¹² And naturally, as *Manu Vaivaswata* is called 'Son of the Sun', so also does the 'Lord of the World' count the Sun amongst his emblems.¹³

¹² It is said that the *Adityas* (issue of *Aditi*, or the 'indivisible') were first seven before being twelve and that their chief was then *Varuna*. The twelve *Adityas* are: *Dhatri, Mitra, Aryaman, Rudra, Varuna, Surya, Bhaga, Vivasvat, Pushan, Savitri, Tvashtri, Vishnu*. They are so many manifestations of a unique and indivisible essence; it is also said that these twelve Suns will appear simultaneously at the end of the cycle, entering then into the essential and primordial unity of their common nature. With the Greeks, the twelve great gods of Olympus are also in correspondence with the twelve signs of the Zodiac.

¹³ The symbol alluded to here is exactly the one that catholic liturgy attributes to Christ when it applies the title of *Sol Justitiae* to him; the Word is effectively the 'Spiritual Sun', i.e. the true 'Centre of the World'; besides, the expression *Sol Justitiae* refers directly to the attributes of *Melki-Tsedeq*. To be noted also is that the lion, solar animal, is, in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, an emblem of justice as well as of power; the sign of the Lion in the Zodiac is the proper residence of the Sun. The Sun with twelve rays can be considered as representing the twelve *Adityas*. From another point of view, if the Sun represents the Christ, the twelve rays are the twelve apostles (the word *Apostolos* signifies 'sent', and the rays are also 'sent' by the Sun). In the number of the twelve apostles one can, moreover, see a sign, among many others, of the perfect conformity of Christianity with the primordial tradition.

The first conclusion arising from what has been said is that certain very close similarities exist between the different accounts, found in all countries, of spiritual centres which are more or less hidden or at least difficult of access. The only plausible explanation for this similarity lies in the assumption that if the accounts refer to different centres, as seems to be the case at least for some, then they must all be emanations from one unique and supreme centre, just as all individual traditions are but adaptations of the great primordial tradition.

Chapter 5

SYMBOLISM OF THE GRAIL

THE Knights of the Round Table were briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. It is not inappropriate here to indicate the significance of the 'quest for the Grail', presented in Celtic legends as their chief function. A 'something' that becomes lost or hidden at some past time is mentioned by every tradition. It is, for instance, the *Soma* of the Hindus and the Persian *Haoma*, or 'drink of immortality'. In the same way the *Grail* is the sacred chalice containing the blood of Christ which is also the 'drink of Immortality'. Elsewhere the symbolism is different, as, for example, in the Jewish tradition where it is the pronouncing of the great Divine Name that has been lost.¹ The fundamental idea, however, always remains the same, and we will shortly see to what it exactly corresponds.

It is said that the Holy Grail is the chalice of the last Supper and that it was used by Joseph of Arimathea at the crucifixion to catch the blood and water flowing from the wound opened in Christ's side by the lance of the centurion Longinus.² As legend relates, the chalice was taken to Great Britain by Joseph of Arimathea himself and Nicodemus.³ Here one can see the indication of a link established between Christianity and Celtic tradition. The chalice plays an important role in most ancient

¹ In this respect one must also remember the 'Lost Word' of Masonry, which likewise symbolizes the secrets of the true initiation; the 'search for the Lost Word' is thus but another form of the 'quest for the Grail'. This justifies the relationship pointed out by the historian Henri Martin between the *Massenie du Saint Graal* and Masonry (cf. *L'Esoterisme de Dante* (1957 edn.), pp. 35-6); the explanations given here will facilitate understanding of our previous discussion of the very close connection which exists between the symbolism itself of the Grail and the 'common centre' of all initiatory organizations.*

² This name of *Longinus* is related to the name for the spear itself, in Greek *logche* (pronounced *lonke*); the Latin *lancea* has, moreover, the same root.

³ Here the two personages represent royal power and sacerdotal power respectively; the same applies to Arthur and to Merlin in the institution of the 'Round Table'.

* See Addendum below (p. 30) - TVs

traditions, and particularly so among the Celts. It is frequently associated with the lance - the two symbols are somewhat complementary, but that is taking us away from the point.⁴

The essential significance of the Grail is best understood through various descriptions of its origin. The chalice is said to have been fashioned by Angels from an emerald that dropped from Lucifer's forehead at the time of his fall.⁵ This emerald strongly recalls the '*urna*' or Hindu frontal jewel (subsequently adopted by Buddhists). It usually depicts the place of the third eye of *Shiva*, representing what can be called the 'sense of eternity', as explained elsewhere.⁶ It is said too that the Grail had been entrusted to Adam in the Terrestrial Paradise, but that he lost it as he was unable to take it with him on his banishment from Eden. Thus Man, separated from his centre of origin, found himself trapped in a temporal realm from where he could no longer rejoin that unique place in which all things are contemplated from the standpoint of eternity. In other words, the possession of the 'sense of eternity' corresponds to what all the traditions call the 'primordial state', whose restoration constitutes the first stage of the true initiation, being the preliminary requirement for the effective conquest of the 'supra-human' states.⁷ Furthermore, 'Terrestrial Paradise' stands for the 'Centre of the World', an expression that will be understood later on when the original meaning of *Paradise* is analysed.

Seth obtained permission to return to the Terrestrial Paradise and so was able to recover the precious chalice. Now the name

⁴ We will only say that the symbolism of the lance is often connected to the 'Axis of the World'; in this respect, the blood which drips from the lance has the same significance as the dew emanating from the 'Tree of Life'; besides, it is known that all traditions affirm unanimously that the vital principle is intimately linked with blood.

⁵ Some people say it is an emerald fallen from the crown of Lucifer, but there is a confusion here, occurring because Lucifer, before his fall, was the 'Angel of the Crown' (i.e. of *Kether*, the first *Sephirah*), in Hebrew *Hakathriel*, a name which, moreover, has the number 666.

⁶ *Man and his Becoming according to Vedanta*, p. 144.

⁷ Concerning this 'primordial state' or 'Eden-like state', see *L'Esoterisme de Dante* (1957 edn.), pp. 46-8 and 68-70; *Man and his Becoming according to Vedanta*, p. 176.

'Seth' denotes qualities of reliability and stability; consequently it also indicates to some extent the restoration of the primordial order destroyed by Man's fall.⁸ It can be understood from this that both Seth and those who possessed the Grail after him were able, through that ownership, to establish a spiritual centre destined to replace their lost Paradise, and which was like an image of it. This possession of the Grail, then, represents the integral preservation of the primordial tradition in a spiritual centre. Legend does not record where or by whom the Grail was kept until the time of Christ, although its Celtic origin suggests the Druids had a part in it and should be counted amongst the regular guardians of the primordial tradition.

The loss of the Grail, or of one of its symbolic equivalents, signifies the loss of tradition with all that this conveys. It is truer, in fact, to say that the tradition is hidden rather than lost, or to say that it can be lost only to lesser spiritual centres that have ceased to maintain a direct contact with the supreme centre. This last always keeps the tradition intact, and remains untouched by any changes occurring in the exterior world. It was thus that, according to various Church Fathers, notably Saint Augustine, the Flood failed to reach Terrestrial Paradise, the 'dwelling place of Enoch and Land of Saints',⁹ where its summit 'touches the lunar sphere'. This means that it is to be found beyond the domain of change - the sub-lunar world - at the point of communication between Earth and the Heavens.¹⁰ In the same way that Terrestrial Paradise has become

⁸ It is said that Seth remained forty years in the Terrestrial Paradise; this number 40 has also a meaning of 'reconciliation' or 'return to the Principle'. The periods measured by this number are often met with in the Judaeo-Christian tradition; let us remember the forty years of the flood, the forty years during which the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, the forty days that Moses spent on Sinai, Christ's forty-day fast (Lent has naturally the same significance); and more examples could doubtless be found.

⁹ 'And Enoch walked with God, and he appeared no more (in the visible or external world) for God took him' (Genesis, 5: 24). He would then have been transported to the Terrestrial Paradise; this is what certain theologians like Tostat and Cajetan also believe. See what is said below about the 'Land of Saints' or 'Land of the Living'.

¹⁰ This conforms with the symbolism used by Dante, placing the Terrestrial Paradise on the top of the mountain of Purgatory which, for him, identifies with the 'polar mountain' of all traditions.

inaccessible, the supreme centre, which is basically the same thing, can remain concealed during the course of certain periods without any external manifestation whatsoever. In this state it can be said that the tradition is lost to humanity as a whole, for it is conserved only in centres so emphatically closed that the majority of people have no means of participating consciously or effectively, in contrast to the original situation.¹¹ Such is the state of this present epoch, the beginning of which reaches back well beyond what is accessible to ordinary and 'profane' history. The loss of tradition can therefore be considered both in this general sense and also allied to the veiling of spiritual centres ruling, more or less invisibly, the destinies of particular peoples' civilizations. One must therefore examine each example of symbolism of this kind to see in which of these two senses it should be interpreted.

From what has been said it follows closely that the Grail represents two closely united entities. He who fully 'owns' the primordial *tradition*, who has reached the degree of effective knowledge implied by this 'possession', is, through this, effectively reintegrated in the fullness of the primordial *state*. Both the primordial state and the primordial tradition convey the double meaning inherent in the word *Grail* itself. Owing to one of those verbal assimilations which play quite a significant part in the field of symbolism, and which carry a more profound meaning than is at first obvious, the Grail is at once a 'vase' (*grasale*), signifying the primordial state, and a 'book' (*gradale* or *graduale*), signifying the tradition.¹²

It is not our intention to elaborate on any secondary details belonging to the legend of the Holy Grail, even though they all have a symbolic validity, nor to pursue the history of the 'Knights of the Round Table' and their exploits, except to point

¹¹ The Hindu tradition teaches that there was only one caste originally, named *Hamsa*; this signifies that all men possessed normally and spontaneously the spiritual degree designated by this name, which is beyond the distinctions of the present four castes.

¹² In certain versions of the legend of the Holy Grail both meanings are closely united, as the book then becomes an inscription traced by Christ or by an angel on the chalice itself. Associations with the 'Book of Life' and with certain elements of apocalyptic symbolism could easily be made here.

out that the table was built by Arthur¹³ to Merlin's designs and was intended to receive the Grail subsequent to its being recovered by one of the knights and brought back from Great Britain to Brittany. The table itself is one of those very ancient symbols always associated with the idea of spiritual centres, guardians of the tradition. The circular shape of the table is, moreover, formally linked to the Zodiacal Cycle by the presence around it of twelve principle persons,¹⁴ a characteristic which, as already noted, recurs in the constitution of all such centres.

Another symbol connected to an aspect of the Grail legend, and which merits attention, is that of *Montsalvat* (literally, 'Mount of Salvation'), its peak situated 'at the far horizons where no mortal can approach'. It is depicted as being set in the midst of the sea in an inaccessible region behind which the sun rises. *Montsalvat* is both the 'sacred isle' and 'polar mountain', equivalent symbols that will be discussed in the course of this study. It is the 'Land of Immortality' equated naturally with the Terrestrial Paradise.¹⁵

To return to the Grail itself, it is easy to see that its primary significance is basically the same as that which the sacred vase has everywhere it is found; which, especially in the East, was the sacrificial vessel which originally contained the Vedic *Soma* or Mazdean *Haoma*, the 'draught of immortality', that bestows upon or restores to the drinker who receives it with the due rites his 'sense of eternity'.

A completely separate study would be required to cover fully the symbolism of the chalice and its contents, but what has been said leads on to other questions of great importance to the argument which follows.

¹³ The name *Arthur* has a very remarkable meaning tying it to the 'polar' symbolism, and which we may perhaps explain another time.

¹⁴ The 'Knights of the Round Table' sometimes number fifty (which was, for the Hebrews, the number of the Jubilee and which was also connected to the 'reign of the Holy Ghost'); but, even then, there were always twelve who play a preponderant role. In this connection we must also remember the twelve peers of Charlemagne in other legendary tales of the Middle Ages.

¹⁵ The similarity between *Montsalvat* and *Mount Meru* was pointed out to us by some Hindus, and this is what led us to examine more closely the significance of the Western legend of the Holy Grail.

ADDENDUM ON THE 'MASSENIE OF THE HOLY GRAIL'

From *L'Esoterisme de Dante*, pp. 35-6:

'A hero named Titurel finds a temple in order to deposit therein the holy *Vaisselle*; and it is the prophet Merlin who directs the mysterious construction, initiated as he had been by Joseph of Arimathea in person into the plan of the pre-eminent Temple, the Temple of Solomon. [Here Henri Martin adds as a note: "Parsifal ends up by transferring the *Grail* and rebuilding the temple in India, and it is *Prester John*, the fantastic chief of an imaginary oriental Christendom, who inherits the guardianship of the holy *Vaisselle*."]

'The *Chivalry of the Grail* becomes the *Massenie*, i.e. an ascetic Freemasonry whose members are called the *Templistes*; and one can perceive here the intention to connect to a common centre, figured by this ideal Temple, the Order of the Templars and the numerous confraternities of builders who then renovated the architecture of the Middle Ages. One can catch a glimpse of many openings on what one could call the underground history of those times, much more complex than is generally thought. What is odd, and what one can hardly doubt, is that modern Freemasonry goes back step-by-step as far as the *Massenie of the Holy Grail*'

Chapter 6

MELKI-TSEDEQ

EASTERN tradition speaks of *Soma* being lost at a certain point in time, such that it became necessary for another beverage to be substituted for it, though it bore no relation to the original.¹ The usual replacement was wine, to which a large part of the Greek legend of *Dionysos* is devoted.² Moreover, wine is widely taken to represent the true initiatory tradition: the Hebraic *iain*, 'wine', and *sod*, 'mystery', share the same number³ and were thus interchangeable. Wine symbolizes to the *Sufi* the esoteric knowledge reserved for the small elite and not suitable for all, as all cannot drink wine with impunity. Thus the use of wine in a rite confers upon it a clearly initiatory character; such is the case of the 'eucharistic' sacrifice of Melchizedek,⁴ upon which we must now dwell a while.

Melchizedek, or more precisely *Melki-Tsedeq*, is none other than the title used by Judaeo-Christian tradition to denote the function of the 'Lord of the World'. We have hesitated before publishing this information which explains one of the most enigmatic passages of the Hebrew Bible, but, having decided to treat

¹ According to the tradition of the Persians, there were two kinds of *Haoma*: a white one, which could only be gathered on the 'holy mountain', which they called *Alborj*; and a yellow one which took the place of the first one when the ancestors of the Iranians had left their primitive dwelling-place, but which was also later lost. This concerns the successive phases of the spiritual darkening which occurs gradually throughout the different ages of the human cycle.

² *Dionysos* or *Bacchus* has multiple names corresponding to as many different aspects; in one of these aspects at least, tradition has it that he came from India. The tale according to which he was born from the thigh of Zeus rests on a most curious verbal assimilation: the Greek word *meros*, 'thigh', has been substituted for the name of *Meru*, the 'polar mountain', to which it is phonetically nearly identical.

³ The number of each of these two words is 70.

⁴ The sacrifice of Melchizedek is usually regarded as a 'prefiguration' of the Eucharist; and the Christian priesthood is in principle identified with the priesthood itself of Melchizedek, according to the application to Christ of the following words of the Psalms: 'Tu es sacerdos in aeternum secundum ordinem Melchisedec' [Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek] (Ps. 110: 4).

the issue of the Lord of the World, concluded it could hardly be passed over in silence. The words of Saint Paul are most appropriate: 'We have much to say on this subject and much that is difficult to explain, for you have become slow to understand'.⁵

The biblical text prompting Saint Paul's comment reads as follows: 'And *Melki-Tsedeq*, king of *Salem*, caused bread and wine to be brought; and he was priest to God the Most High (*El Ellon*), And he blessed Abram,⁶ saying: "Blessed be Abram, he of God the Most High, possessor of Heaven and Earth; and blessed be God the Most High who has delivered your enemies into your hands." And Abram gave him the tithe of all he had taken.'⁷

Melki-Tsedeq is thus both king and priest. His name means 'king of Justice' and he is also king of *Salem*, that is of 'Peace', so again we find 'Justice' and 'Peace', the fundamental attributes pertaining to the 'Lord of the World'. Contrary to popular opinion, the name *Salem* has never described a town but, taken as the symbol residence of Melchizedek, can be considered the equivalent of *Agarttha*. Nor can it be interpreted as the primitive name for Jerusalem, as the latter was originally called *Jebus*. On the contrary, had the name Jerusalem been given to the town and its establishment by the Jews as a spiritual centre, it would have been to manifest it as an image of the true *Salem*. It is worth noting that the Temple was built by Solomon, whose Hebraic name (*Shlomoh*), also derived from *Salem*, signifies 'Peaceable'.⁸

Saint Paul comments as follows on the description given of *Melki-Tsedeq*: 'This Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, when he returned from the defeat of the kings came before Abraham whom he blessed and to whom

⁵ Epistle to the Hebrews, 5: II.

⁶ The name *Abram* had then not yet changed to *Abraham*; at the same time (Genesis 17) the name of his wife *Sarai* was changed to *Sarah*, so that the numerological value of the two names together stayed the same.

⁷ Genesis, 14: 19-20.

⁸ We should also note that the same root is found again in the words *Islam* and *Moslem* (Mohammedan); the 'submission to the Divine Will' (this is the proper meaning of the word *Islam*) is the necessary condition for the 'Peace'; the idea expressed here should be likened to the Hindu *Dharma*.

Abraham gave the tithe of all his spoils; who is, first, as his title denotes, king of Justice and also king of Salem, that is to say king of Peace; who is without father, without mother, without origin, who has neither beginning nor end to his life, but who is made in the likeness of God's Son; this Melchizedek dwells as Priest in perpetuity.⁹

Here Melchizedek - as the one giving the blessing - is represented as Abraham's superior: 'It cannot be gainsaid that the inferior is blessed by the superior.'¹⁰ Abraham himself recognized this by surrendering the tithe, the mark of his dependence. The whole episode enacts a true 'investiture', almost in the feudal sense of the word, but with the difference that it is a spiritual investiture, wherein is found the exact point of union between the Hebraic and the great primordial tradition. The 'blessing' is in fact the communication of a 'spiritual influence' in which Abraham would henceforth participate, since the formula used placed him in a position of direct communication with 'God Most High', He whom Abraham afterwards invoked in the name of *Jehovah*.¹¹

If, then, *Melki-Tsedeq* is superior to Abraham it is because his God 'Most High' (*Elion*) is superior to the 'All-Powerful' (*Shaddai*), Abraham's God. Another view is that the first name represents a higher divine aspect than the second. On the other hand a crucial truth that has never been noticed is that *El Elion* is synonymous with *Emmanuel*, as each carry the same number.¹² This fact connects the history of *Melki-Tsedeq* directly with that of the Magi-kings: consequently the priesthood of *Melki-Tsedeq* is that of *El Elion*. The Christian priesthood is that of *Emmanuel*. If, then, *El Elion* is *Emmanuel*, the two priesthoods are one, thus proving that the Christian office with its eucharistic offering of bread and wine is truly 'according to the order of Melchizedek'.¹³

⁹ Epistle to the Hebrews, 7: 1-3.

¹⁰ Ibid. 7: 7.

¹¹ Genesis, 14: 22.

¹² The number of each of these names is 197.

¹³ This is the complete justification of the identity we indicated earlier; it should, however, be observed that participation in the tradition may not always be conscious; in this case it is, for all that, not less real as a means for transmission of the 'spiritual influences', but does not imply effective accession to any rank of the initiatory hierarchy.

Judaean-Christian tradition distinguishes between two forms of priesthood, the one 'according to the order of Aaron', the other 'according to the order of Melchizedek'. The latter is superior to the former, just as Melchizedek is superior to Abraham, whose issue composed the tribe of Levi and consequently the family of Aaron.¹⁴ This supremacy is clearly defined by Saint Paul: 'Levi collected the tithe [from the people of Israel] and paid it, so to speak, through Abraham.'¹⁵ We shall not pursue here the question of the two priesthoods, but these other words of Saint Paul are worth quoting: 'Here [in the Levitic priesthood] these are mortal men who receive the tithes but there that is a man who is attested to be living.'¹⁶ This 'living man' who is *Melki-Tsedeq* is also *Manu*, he who 'lives perpetually' (Hebrew *le-olam*), which means for the duration of his cycle (*Manvantara*) or of the world he specifically controls. For this reason he is 'without genealogy', for his origin is non-human since he is the veritable prototype of man; he is truly 'made like the Son of God'. Through the prescription of his own law he is for this world the expression and image of the Divine Word.¹⁷

The history of the Magi-kings presents three distinct personages, the leaders of the initiatory hierarchy; the account of *Melki-Tsedeq* contains only one, but it is he who has the ability to unite in himself the necessary qualities of all three offices. Thus some have distinguished *Adoni-Tsedeq*, 'Lord of Justice' who is also double in the form of *Kohan-Tsedeq*, 'Priest of Justice' and *Melki-Tsedeq*, 'King of Justice'. These three can

¹⁴ Following what precedes, it can also be said that this superiority corresponds to that of the New Covenant over the Ancient Law (Epistle to the Hebrews, 7: 22). An explanation as to why the Christ was born into the royal tribe of Juda and not from the priestly tribe of Levi (see *ibid.* 7: 11-17) would be opportune here, but these considerations would become too involved. The organization of the twelve tribes, descending from the twelve sons of Jacob, is naturally linked to the duodecimal constitution of spiritual centres.

¹⁵ Epistle to the Hebrews, 7: 9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 7:8.

¹⁷ In the *Pistis Sophia* of the Alexandrine Gnostics, Melchizedek is qualified as 'Great Receiver of Eternal Light'; this also fits the function of *Manu*, who in effect receives the intelligible Light by a ray emanating directly from the Principle to reflect it to the world which is his domain; and, besides, this is why *Manu* is called 'Son of the Sun'.

be taken as corresponding to the functions of the *Brahatma*, the *Mahatma*, and the *Mahanga*.¹⁸ Strictly speaking, the title *Melki-Tsedeq* applies only to the last aspect, but as the function it expresses is the closest to the exterior world and consequently the most immediately manifested, it is normally extended to embrace all three. '*Dharma-Raja*' is the Indian equivalent of *Melki-Tsedeq*, but like 'Lord of The World' and 'King of Justice' refers directly only to royal power.¹⁹

Taking the strict sense of the name '*Melki-Tsedeq*', as 'King of Justice', his proper attributes are the same scales and sword that characterize *Mikael*, 'Angel of Judgement'.²⁰ In the social structure these emblems represent the administrative and military offices that properly belong to the *Kshatriya* caste, and which are the two elements of royal power. Hieroglyphically, they compose two characters to form the Arabic and Hebrew root *Haq* that denotes both 'Justice' and 'Truth'²¹ and which served for many ancient races also to denote royalty.²² '*Haq*' is the enabling power of Justice, the equilibrium symbolized by the scales, whereas power is symbolized by the sword,²³ and it is that which truly characterizes royal power. In a spiritual sense *Haq* signifies the power of Truth. A modified form of the

¹⁸ There exist still other traditions relating to *Melki-Tsedeq*: according to one of them he was consecrated in the Terrestrial Paradise by the angel *Mikael* at the age of 52. This symbolical number 52 plays, furthermore, an important role in the Hindu tradition, where it is considered as the total number of the meanings included in the *Veda*; it is even said that as many different pronunciations of the monosyllable *Om* correspond to those meanings.

¹⁹ This name, or rather this title, of *Dharma Raja* is applied in particular to *Yudishthira* in the *Mahabharata*; but it was first of all applied to *Yama*, the 'Judge of the dead', whose very close connection with *Manu* has been indicated earlier.

²⁰ In Christian iconography the angel *Mikael* figures with these two attributes in the representations of 'The Last Judgement'.

²¹ Similarly, with the ancient Egyptians, *Ma* or *Moat* was at the same time 'Justice' and 'Truth'; one sees her figured on one of the pans of the scales of Judgement, otherwise as a vase, hieroglyphic of the heart. In Hebrew, *hoq* signifies 'decree' (Ps. 2:7).

²² This word *Haq* has the numerical value 108, which is one of the fundamental cyclic numbers. In India the shaivite rosary is composed of 108 beads; and the primary significance of the rosary symbolizes the 'chain of the worlds', i.e. the causal chain of the cycles or existential states.

²³ This significance could be summarized in the following formula: 'force in the service of right' - if modern usage had not misused it to excess by giving it a wholly external meaning.

word was formed by substituting the symbol of spiritual power for that of material strength so that *Haq* became *Hak* or 'wisdom' (Hebrew *Hokmah*), signifying sacerdotal authority rather than the 'royal power' implied by *Haq*. Both corresponding forms exist with similar meanings in the root *kan*, which signifies 'power' or 'enablement' and also 'knowledge' in a diversity of languages.²⁴ *Kan* is essentially the same as the spiritual or intellectual power of Wisdom (hence the Hebrew *Kohen*, 'priest'), whereas *qan* is the material power, from which originated many words denoting 'possession', notably the word *Cain*.²⁵ These roots could no doubt give rise to many other speculations which are, however, out of place here.

The references contained in the Hebrew Kabbalah to the *Shekinah* will complete this subject: it is represented in the 'inferior' world by *Malkuth*, which means 'Kingdom' and which is the last of the ten *Sephiroth*. This in itself is of relevance, but more so are the synonyms given to *Malkuth* of 'Tsedeq' or 'the Just'.²⁶ This convergence of *Malkuth* and *Tsedeq*, or of Royalty (the government of the world) and Justice, reappears in precisely the title '*Melki-Tsedeq*'. In this context it represents the distributive and balanced Justice found in the 'middle column' of the Sephirothic tree. Here, this Justice must be distinguished from that Justice (opposed to Mercy) which is identified with Rigour in the 'left-hand column', since these are two different aspects (and, besides, in Hebrew there are two words to distinguish these aspects: *Tsedaqah* and *Din* respectively). It is the first of these that denotes 'Justice' in both the strictest and most complete sense of the word, because

²⁴ Cf. *L'Esoterisme de Dante* (1957 edn.), p. 58.

²⁵ The word *Khan*, a title given to chiefs by people of Central Asia, is perhaps connected with the same root.

²⁶ *Tsedeq* is also the name of the planet Jupiter, whose angel is called *Tsadquiel-Melek*; the similitude with the name *Melki-Tsedeq* (to which is only added *El*, the divine name forming the common ending of all angelic names) is too evident here to need stressing. In India, the same planet is called *Brihaspati*, who is also the 'celestial Pontiff. Another synonym of *Malkuth* is *Sabbath*, whose sense of 'repose' obviously refers to the idea of 'Peace', all the more as this idea expresses, as we have seen earlier, the external aspect of the *Shekinah* herself, the aspect by which she links herself to the 'inferior world'.

it carries the fundamental idea of balance or harmony and is indissolubly aligned with 'Peace'.

Malkuth is the 'reservoir where the waters that flow from the river above unite, that is to say all the emanations (spiritual influences or graces) that are poured out so abundantly'.²⁷ This river from on high and the waters that descend from it strangely recall the role played in Hindu tradition by the celestial river *Ganga*, and one could also comment that *Shakti*, of which the *Ganga* is an aspect, is not without its similarities to the *Shekinah*, no doubt because of the providential function that is common to them both. This reservoir of celestial waters corresponds naturally to the spiritual centre of our world, from which the four rivers of *Pardes* make their way towards the four cardinal points. The Jews identify the spiritual centre as Mount Sion, calling it the 'heart of the world', in common with all 'Holy Lands'. It corresponds to the Hindu *Meru* or Persian *Alborj*.²⁸ 'The Tabernacle of the Holiness of *Jehovah*, the residence of the *Shekinah*, is the Saint of Saints who is the heart of the Temple, that is itself the centre of Sion (Jerusalem) as the Holy Sion is the centre of the Land of Israel, and as the Land of Israel is the centre of the world.'²⁹ The matter can be taken even further, not only by placing every name enumerated above in an inverse order but also by adding, after the Tabernacle in the Temple, the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle, and on the Ark itself that point between the two *Cherubim* where the *Shekinah* manifests, to represent successive approximations to the 'spiritual Pole'.

Dante depicts Jerusalem as the 'spiritual Pole' in precisely this way, as explained elsewhere,³⁰ but as soon as one leaves the strictly Judaic viewpoint the centre becomes symbolic and is not a location in the strict sense of the term. All secondary

²⁷ P. Vulliaud, *La Kabbale juive*, i. 509.

²⁸ With the Samaritans, it is the mount *Garizim* which plays the same role and which receives the same appellations; it is the 'Blessed Mountain', the 'Eternal Hill', the 'Mount of the Heritage', the 'House of God', and the Tabernacle of their Angels, the dwelling place of the *Shekinah*; it is even identified with the 'Primordial Mountain' (*har Qadim*) where *Eden* was and which was not submerged by the waters of the flood.

²⁹ P. Vulliaud, *La Kabbale juive*, i. 509.

³⁰ *L'Esoterisme de Dante* (1957 edn.), p. 64.

spiritual centres that are constituted with the aim of adapting primordial tradition to determined conditions are, as we have seen, images of the one supreme centre. In fact, Sion can only be one of these subordinate centres, yet is identified with the supreme centre by reason of its resemblance. Jerusalem, as its name indicates, is an image of the genuine *Salem*, and what has been said and what will be said of the 'Holy Land', which is not merely the Land of Israel, will make this attribution comprehensible.

In this connection, another remarkable synonym of the 'Holy Land', 'Land of the Living', clearly describes the 'abode of immortality' in such a way that, strictly speaking, it is applicable to the Terrestrial Paradise or its symbolic equivalents. However, this title has also been carried over to secondary centres, notably the Land of Israel. It is said that the 'Land of the Living comprises seven lands', about which Vulliard observes that 'this land is Canaan in which there were seven peoples'.³¹ Without doubt this is literally exact, but reviewed in a symbolical context these seven lands could equally well, like also those in the Islamic tradition, apply to the seven *dwipas* that, according to Hindu tradition, have *Meru* for a common centre, to which we will return later. There is a striking resemblance, hardly accidental, between the eras of the seven *Manus* - counted from the beginning of this '*kalpa*' to the present epoch³² - and the ancient worlds or preceding creations which are represented by the 'seven kings of Edom' ('seven' in this context relates to the seven 'days' of Genesis).

³¹ *La Kabbak juive*, ii. 116.

³² A *Kalpa* comprises fourteen *Manvantaras*; *Vaivaswata*, the present *Manu*, is the seventh of this *Kalpa*, called *Shri-Shweta-Varaha-Kalpa* or 'era of the White Boar'. Another curious thing to remark is the following: the Jews give the appellation of *Edom* to Rome; now, tradition also speaks of seven kings of Rome, and the second of these kings, *Numa*, who is considered legislator of the city, bears a name which is the exact syllabic reversal of *Manu*, and which can also at the same time be connected with the Greek *nomos*, law. There are therefore good grounds for believing that the seven kings are, from a certain point of view, but a particular representation of the seven *Manus* for a given civilization; as the seven sages of Greece are, on the other hand, and in similar conditions, a representation of the seven *Rishis*, in whom the wisdom of the cycle immediately preceding ours is synthesized.

Chapter 7

LUZ OR THE ABODE OF IMMORTALITY

MANY races possess a tradition of an 'underground world'. We do not intend to bring them all together here, as in any case some of them have little direct relevance to our topic. However, generally speaking, the 'cult of the caverns' is more or less conjoined with the idea of an 'interior' or 'central' place, and in any case the symbol of the cave and that of the heart are very close.¹ On the other hand, there actually exist in Central Asia, America, and possibly elsewhere, caves and underground places where certain initiatory centres have been able to persist for centuries. It is not hard to disentangle one important symbolic fact from these stories, indeed the symbolical associations surrounding these centres indicate that a definite symbolic order, rather than simple prudence, determined the location of the underground centres. Saint-Yves might perhaps have been able to explain this symbolism, but did not, which has given his work some overtones of fantasy.² As for Ossendowski, he was certainly incapable of reading any but the most obvious literal meaning into the symbolism attached to what he was told.

Among the traditions referred to just now, there is one particular belonging to Judaism that carries a special significance. It concerns a mysterious town called 'Luz'.³ This name was originally that of the place where Jacob dreamed his dream, and which he subsequently called '*Beith-El*' or 'House of God'.⁴ It is said that the 'Angel of Death' was unable to

¹ The cavern or the grotto represents the cavity of the heart, considered as the centre of the being and also the interior of the 'Egg of the World'.

² For example, the passage concerned with the 'descent to the Hells'; this may be compared with what I have said on the same subject in *L'Esoterisme de Dante*.

³ The information given here has been partially drawn from the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* (viii. 219).

⁴ Genesis, 28: 19.

enter this town, and had no power over it. By an odd but significant convergence, some place it near to *Alborj*, which is equally, for the Persians, the 'abode of immortality'. Near *Luz* there is purported to be an almond-tree (also *luz* in Hebrew), at the base of which a hollow leads to an underground passage⁵ that gives on to the town, which itself is completely hidden. In its many guises, the word *luz* appears to be derived from a root form denoting everything that is covered, concealed, enveloped, silent, and secret. It is interesting to note that the words describing the Heavens had originally the same meaning. Usually *coelum* is equated with the Greek *koilon* or 'hollow' (which Varro indicates with his '*a cavo coelum*' to be more closely connected with 'cavern' than is popularly supposed). However, the most ancient, original, and most accurate form is judged to be *caelum*, a word very near to the verb *caelare*, 'to hide'. In Sanskrit, too, *Varuna* is born out of *var*, 'to cover'. This is precisely the meaning of the root *kal* which is related to the Latin *celare*, another form of *caelare*, and to its Greek synonym *kaluptein*.⁶ The Greek *Ouranos* is nothing but another form of the same word, *var* changing easily to *ur*. These words, then, can signify 'that which covers',⁷ 'that which conceals',⁸ and 'that which is hidden'. The last has the double meaning

⁵ The traditions of certain peoples of North America also tell of a tree by means of which the men who originally lived in the interior of the earth reached the surface, whereas other men of the same race remained in the underground world. It is likely that Bulwer-Lytton was inspired by these traditions in *The Coming Race*. A newer edition bears the title - *The Race which will exterminate us*.

⁶ Other Latin words derive from the same root *kal*, such as *caligo* and perhaps the compound *occultus*. On the other hand, it is possible that the form *caelare* originated from a different root, *caed*, with the meaning to 'cut', or 'divide' (from which also *cadere*), and subsequently 'separate' and 'hide'; but in any case the ideas expressed by these roots are, as can be seen, very close to one another, which could easily have caused the assimilation of *caelare* and *celare*, even if these two forms are etymologically independent.

⁷ The 'Roof of the World', which can be likened to the 'Celestial World' or 'World of the Living', has, in the traditions of Central Asia, close connections with the 'Western Sky' where reigns *Avalokiteshwara*. Concerning the sense of 'covering', the masonic expression 'to be covered' must be recalled: the star-covered ceiling of the Lodge represents the vault of heaven.

⁸ It is the veil of *Ms* or of *Neith* of the Egyptians, the 'blue veil' of the universal Mother in the Far Eastern tradition (*Tao-te-King*, ch. 6); if one applies this meaning to the visible sky, one can find therein an allusion to the role of astronomical symbolism, hiding or 'revealing' superior truths.

of that which is concealed from the senses in the supra-sensitive realm, and that which during periods of darkness or occlusion ceases to be an openly manifested tradition, so that the 'celestial world' becomes the 'underground world'.

There is still another connection to be made with 'Heaven': *Luz* is called the 'Blue City', and blue, the colour of sapphire,⁹ is known as the celestial colour. In India it is said that the blue colour of the atmosphere is produced by the reflection of light on the meridional face of *Meru*, the face that looks upon the *Jambu-Dwipa* and is made of sapphire. Obviously, this is the same symbolism. The *Jambu-Dwipa* represents not only India, as usually thought, but represents the whole terrestrial world in its present condition. This world can therefore be seen as being situated entirely to the south of *Meru* since the latter is identified with the North Pole.¹⁰ The seven *dwipas* (literally, 'islands' or 'continents') emerge successively during the course of certain cyclic periods so that each is the terrestrial world in its corresponding period. They form a lotus shape and are orientated towards its centre, *Meru*, in accordance with the seven regions of space.¹¹ Therefore one face of *Meru* is turned towards each of the seven *dwipas*, each of which

⁹ The sapphire plays an important role in biblical symbolism. In particular it frequently appears in the visions of prophets.

¹⁰ In Sanskrit the North is called *Uttara*, i.e. the highest region; the South is called *Dakshina*, the region to the right, i.e. the one which is on one's right in turning to the East; the ascending march of the Sun towards the North, beginning with the winter solstice and terminating at the summer solstice, is called *Uttarayana*; the descending march of the Sun towards the South, beginning with the summer solstice and ending at the winter solstice, is called *Dakshinayana*.

¹¹ In Hindu symbolism (which Buddhism has retained in the legend of the 'seven steps'), the seven regions of space are the four cardinal points, plus the Zenith and the Nadir, and then the centre itself; note that their representation forms a cross in three dimensions (six directions, opposed two by two starting from the centre). Similarly, in Kabbalistic symbolism the 'Holy Palace' or 'Interior Palace' is in the centre of six directions, thus forming the septenary, and 'Clement of Alexandria says that from God, "Heart of the Universe", spread the vast stretches directed one upwards, one downwards, this one to the right, that one to the left, one forwards, and the other one backwards; directing his gaze towards these six stretches as towards an always equal number,* he completes the world; he is the beginning and the end (alpha and omega), in him the six phases of time complete themselves, and it is from him they receive their indefinite extension; there is the secret of the number 7' (quoted by P. Vulliaud, *La Kabbah iuive*, i. 215-16). All this is related to the development of

* See Chapter II, note 19 - *Trs.*

reflects one of the colours of the rainbow.¹² The overall synthesis of these colours is white, which is universally attributed to supreme spiritual authority,¹³ and which is the colour of *Meru* taken as a unity. (It will be seen later on that *Meru* is in fact called the 'White Mountain'.) White thus distinguishes the intrinsic *Meru* from its other faces that only represent its aspects in relation to the *dwipas*. It would appear that the *Meru* assumes a different position for each period of manifestation by a *dwipa*, but in fact the centre *Meru* remains immovable, and it is the orientation of the terrestrial world dependent on it which changes from one period to the next.

To return to the Hebrew word *luz*, whose many different meanings merit careful study: in the ordinary sense it means 'almond', by extension 'almond-tree' and also 'kernel'; now, the kernel is the innermost, the most hidden, part and is completely enclosed, so giving rise to the idea of 'inviolability'¹⁴ that is found also in the name *Agarththa*. But it is also the name given to a specific, indestructible body, symbolically represented by an extremely hard bone, to which the body, after death, remains attached until its resurrection.¹⁵ As the kernel contains the germ and as the bone contains the marrow, so *luz* contains those elements necessary for the restoration of an

the primordial point in space and time; the six phases of time, corresponding to the six directions of space respectively, are six cyclic periods, subdivisions of another more general period, and sometimes symbolically represented as six millenia; they can also be likened to the first six 'days' of Genesis, the seventh, or *Sabbath*, being the phase of return to the Principle, i.e. to the centre. We thus have seven periods to which can be related the respective manifestations of the seven *dwipas*; if each of these periods is a *Manvantara*, the *Kalpa* comprises two complete septenary periods; it is, moreover, understood that the same symbolism is applicable to different degrees, according to whether more or less extended cyclic periods are envisaged.

¹² See what has been said earlier about the symbolism of the rainbow. There are in reality but six colours, complementary two by two and corresponding to the six directions opposed two by two; the seventh colour is nothing else than white itself, in the same way as the seventh region is identified with the centre.

¹³ It is therefore not without reason that the Pope is dressed in white in the Catholic hierarchy.

¹⁴ This is why the almond-tree has been taken as the symbol of the Virgin.

¹⁵ It is perhaps of interest to note that this Judaic tradition very probably inspired certain theories of Leibnitz about 'the animal' (i.e. the living being) as perpetually subsisting with a body but 'miniaturized' after death.

individual being; and this restoration will operate under the influence of a 'celestial dew' to revivify the dry bones. Saint Paul describes the process most graphically: 'Sown in corruption he will be resuscitated in glory.'¹⁶ Here, as elsewhere, 'glory' tallies with the *Shekinah* envisaged in the superior world and with which the 'celestial dew' has a close relationship, as has been brought out in a preceding chapter. The *luz*, being imperishable,¹⁷ is in the human world the 'kernel of immortality', as the place of the same name is the 'abode of immortality'. There stops, in both cases, the power of the 'Angel of Death'. It is like a kind of egg or embryo of the Immortal;¹⁸ it can also be compared to the chrysalis from which the butterfly emerges,¹⁹ a parallel that exactly conveys its role in relation to the resurrection.

The *luz* is conventionally sited towards the base of the spinal column. This might seem odd, but is clarified by reference to what the Hindu tradition says about the power called *Kundalini*,²⁰ which is a form of *Shakti*, considered to be immanent in the human being.²¹ This power is represented by a coiled-up snake, in a part of the subtle body corresponding precisely with the base of the spinal column. At least this is how it is in ordinary man, but by means of techniques such as those of *hatha-yoga*, she is aroused, moves, and rises through

¹⁶ First Epistle to the Corinthians, 15: 42. A strict application of the law of analogy can be found in these words: 'What is above is like what is below, but upside down.'

¹⁷ In Sanskrit, the word *akshara* signifies 'indissoluble' and hence 'imperishable' or 'indestructible'; it designates the syllable, first element and germ of language, and is pre-eminently applicable to the monosyllable *Om*, which is said to contain in itself the essence of the triple *Veda*.

¹⁸ The equivalent, in another form, is found in the various traditions, and particularly, with very important developments, in Taoism. In this respect, it is, in the 'microcosmic' order, the parallel of what the 'Egg of the World' is in the 'macrocosmic' order, as it contains the possibilities of the 'future cycle' (the *vita venturi saeculi* of the Catholic credo).

¹⁹ Here reference can be made to the Greek symbolism of *Psyche*, which rests for a great part on this simile (see *Psyche*, by F. Pron).

²⁰ The word *kundali* (feminine *kundalini*) signifies 'rolled up in the shape of a ring or spiral'; this rolled-up condition symbolizes an embryonic state or an 'undeveloped' state.

²¹ In this respect, and in a certain connection, its dwelling is also identified with the cavity of the heart; we have already referred to the relationship existing between the Hindu *Shakti* and the Hebraic *Shekinah*.

the wheels (*chakras*) or lotuses (*kamalas*) which correspond to the various plexuses, to reach the region of the 'third eye', the frontal eye of *Shiva*. This stage represents the restoration of the primordial state, where man recovers his 'sense of eternity' and through that attains what we have elsewhere called 'virtual immortality'. Until this point we are still in the human state; in the next phase the *Kundalini* finally reaches the crown of the head,²² and this stage represents the effective conquest of the higher states of being. What seems to come out of this comparison is that the given position of the *luz* in the lower part of the body only refers to its state in 'fallen man', and for earthly humanity considered as a whole, it compares to the location of the supreme spiritual centre in the 'underground world'.²³

²² This is the *Brahma-randhra*, orifice of Brahma, point of contact of the *sushumna* or 'coronal artery' with the 'solar ray'; this symbolism is discussed in detail in *Man and his Becoming according to Vedanta*.

²³ All this has a very close connection with the true significance of the well-known hermetic saying: 'Visita inferiora terrae, rectificando invenies occultum lapidem, veram medicinam', which gives by acrostic the word *Vitriolum*. The 'philosophers stone' is at the same time, under another aspect, the 'true medicine', i.e. the 'elixir of long life', which is nothing other than the 'drink of immortality'. *Interiora* is sometimes written instead of *inferiora*, but this does not alter the general meaning, and there always remains the same manifest allusion to the 'underground world'.

Chapter 8

THE SUPREME CENTRE CONCEALED DURING THE KALI-YUGA

AGARTHA, it is said, did not always exist underground, and will not always remain so. A time will come when, according to Ossendowski's report, 'the people of *Agharti* will come out of their caves and appear on the surface of the earth'.¹ Before its disappearance from the visible world, the centre bore another name since '*Agarttha*', which means 'ungraspable' or 'inaccessible' (and also 'inviolable' as it is *Salem*, the 'abode of peace'), would not yet have become appropriate. Ossendowski dates its withdrawal underground as 'more than six thousand years ago', which turns out, given a reasonable approximation, to correspond to the beginning of the *Kali-Yuga* or 'Black Age', the 'Iron Age' of the ancient West, which is the last of the four periods into which the *Manvantara* is divided.² Its reappearance should therefore coincide with the ending of this same period.

Reference has already been made to something that is lost or hidden, reported in all traditions, and which is represented by different symbols; in a general sense this loss tallies exactly with the conditions of humanity during the *Kali-Yuga*. The current period is one of occlusion and confusion,³ its conditions

¹ These are the final words of a prophecy that the 'Lord of the World' is said to have made in 1890, when he appeared at the monastery of Narabanchi.

² The *Manvantara*, or era of a *Manu*, also called *Maha-Yuga*, comprises four *Yugas* or secondary periods: *Krita-Yuga* (or *Satya-Yuga*), *Treta-Yuga*, *Dwapara-Yuga* and *Kali-Yuga*, which are identifiable with the 'age of gold', the 'age of silver', the 'age of bronze', and the 'age of iron', respectively, of the Graeco-Latin antiquity. In the succession of these periods there is a kind of progressive materialization resulting from the gradual distancing from the Principle which necessarily accompanies the development of the cyclic manifestation in the corporeal world, starting from the 'primordial state'.

³ The beginning of this age is, in biblical symbolism, represented by the Tower of Babel and the 'confusion of tongues'. One could quite logically think that the fall and the flood correspond to the end of the two first ages; but, in reality, the

are such that initiatory knowledge must remain hidden for as long as they endure, hence the nature of the 'Mysteries' of historical antiquity (which does not even reach back to the beginning of this period)⁴ and the secret societies of all peoples. Such organizations provide an effective initiation only where an authentic traditional doctrine still exists, offering but a shadow when the spirit of the doctrine no longer vivifies the symbols that are merely its external representation; this happens when for different reasons the conscious connection with the supreme spiritual centre of the world is finally broken. This loss of a direct and effective link with the supreme centre is the most significant aspect of the loss of a tradition and that which particularly affects secondary or dependent centres.

It is important to realize that we should be talking of something that is hidden rather than truly lost, because it is not lost to everybody but still possessed in its entirety, albeit by a very few. This gives rise, of course, to the possibility for others to rediscover it, provided they search in the proper manner, which is to say that their intention must be directed in such a way that, through the harmonious vibrations it awakens, it enables an effective spiritual communication to be made with the Supreme Centre,⁵ through the law of 'concordant actions and reactions'.⁶ In all traditional forms

starting-point of the Hebraic tradition does not correspond to the beginning of the *Manvantara*. It must not be forgotten that the cyclic laws apply to different degrees, for periods not of the same extent, which also sometimes encroach on one another; hence the complications which, at first sight, may seem inextricable and which can in effect be resolved only by considering the order of hierarchic subordination of the corresponding traditional centres.

⁴ It appears that notice has never been properly taken of the fact that historians find it practically impossible in almost all cultures to establish an unquestionable chronology for everything anterior to the sixth century before the Christian era.

⁵ What we have just said allows us to interpret the following words of the Gospels in a very precise sense: 'Seek and ye shall find; ask and ye will receive; knock and it will be opened to you.' Here one must naturally refer to the indications we have already given concerning the 'right intention' and 'good will'; the explanation of the expression *Pax in terra hominibus bonae voluntatis* [Peace on Earth to men of good will] is easily seen in this context.

⁶ This expression has been borrowed from the Taoist doctrine; in addition we here understand the word 'intention' in a sense very exactly that of the Arabic *niyah*, which is usually translated thus, and this moreover conforms to the Latin etymology (from *in-tendere*, 'tending towards').

this right intention is always symbolically represented generally by a ritual orientation, properly directed towards some spiritual centre that - whatever it may be - is always but a reflection of the true 'Centre of the World'.⁷ However, the further the *Kali-Yuga* progresses, the more difficult it becomes to attain unity with this centre, which in its turn becomes more and more closed and concealed; at the same time those secondary centres that represent it externally become rarer;⁸ yet when this period finishes the tradition will of necessity be manifested again in its entirety, for the beginning of each *Manvantara* coincides with the end of the preceding one, thus implying the inevitable return of the 'primordial state' for humanity on earth.⁹

In Europe, every consciously established link with the centre through the medium of orthodox organizations is now broken, as has been the case for several centuries. This severance was gradual, completed in various successive stages rather than at once.¹⁰ The first of these breaks occurred at the beginning of the fourteenth century, at which time one of the principal roles of the Orders of Chivalry was to make a direct connection between East and West. The importance of such a link will be readily understood when it is recalled that the centre has always, at least in 'historical' times, been depicted as being situated in the Orient. After the destruction of the Order of the Templars, the liaison was maintained in a less overt fashion by the Rosicrucians, or those to whom this name was afterwards given.¹¹ The Renaissance and the Reformation

⁷ In Islam, this orientation (*qiblah*) is as it were the materialization, if we may use this expression, of intention (*niyah*). The orientation of Christian churches is another particular case which is essentially connected to the same idea.

⁸ Only a relative exteriorization is of course meant, as these secondary centres have themselves been more or less strictly closed since the beginning of the *Kali-Yuga*.

⁹ This is the manifestation of the celestial Jerusalem, which is, in connection with the cycle which is ending, the same thing as is the Terrestrial Paradise in connection with the cycle which is beginning, as explained in *L'Esoterisme de Dante*.

¹⁰ In the same way, from a wider point of view, there are degrees for humanity in the remoteness from the primordial centre, and it is to these degrees that the distinction of the different *Yugas* corresponds.

¹¹ Here again we must refer to our study *L'Esoterisme de Dante*, where we have given all the necessary supporting information.

marked another critical phase, after which, as Saint-Yves appears to suggest, the complete and final rupture coincided with the treaties of Westphalia which ended the Thirty Years War in 1648. It is a remarkable fact that several writers have agreed that the true Rosicrucians left Europe shortly after the Thirty Years War to retire into Asia: it may be recalled that the Rosicrucian adepts numbered twelve like the members of *Agarttha's* inner circle; both, therefore, complied with the constitution common to so many other spiritual centres formed in the image of the supreme centre.

Since that last period, the store of effective initiatory knowledge has not been truly kept by any western organization. According to Swedenborg, the 'lost Word' must henceforth be sought among the Sages of Tibet and of Tartary, where the mysterious 'Mount of Prophets' of Anne-Catherine Emmerich's vision is also set. The fragmentary information that Madame Blavatsky was able to gather on this subject - without fully understanding its true significance - gave birth to her conception of the 'Great White Lodge', which we should call not an image, but quite simply a caricature or imaginary parody, of *Agarttha*.¹²

¹² Those who understand the considerations set forth here will see as a clear consequence why we cannot possibly take seriously the many pseudo-initiatory organizations born in the contemporary West: not one of them, if subjected to a rather rigorous examination, could provide the slightest proof of 'regularity'.

Chapter 9

THE OMPHALOS AND THE SACRED STONES

ACCORDING to Ossendowski's report, the 'Lord of the World' formerly appeared several times in India and in Siam, 'blessing the people with a golden apple surmounted with a lamb'. This is an extremely important detail when it is compared with Saint-Yves's description of the 'cycle of the Lamb and the Ram'.¹ It is even more remarkable that there exist in Christian symbolism innumerable representations of the Lamb on a mountain from which flow down four rivers that are clearly identical with those four rivers of Terrestrial Paradise.² As already mentioned, *Agarttha* possessed a different name before the onset of the *Kali-Yuga*; it was called *Paradesha*, which in Sanskrit means 'supreme country', and which applies well to the spiritual centre *par excellence*, also called the 'Heart of the World'. It is the word from which the Chaldeans formed *Pardes*, and Westerners *Paradise*. Such is the original sense of this last word, which should make it clear why, in one form or another, it always signifies the same thing as the *Pardes* of the Hebrew Kabbalah. On summing up what has been discussed about the symbolism of the 'Pole', it is not difficult to understand that the mountain of Terrestrial Paradise is the

¹ We should be reminded here of the allusion, already made elsewhere, to the connection that exists between the Vedic *Agni* and the symbol of the Lamb (*L'Esoterisme de Dante* (1957 edn.), pp. 69-70; *Man and his Becoming according to Vedanta*, p. 44); in India the ram represents the vehicle of *Agni*. Furthermore, Mr Ossendowski points out on several occasions that the cult of *Rama* still exists in Mongolia; hence there is something more than Buddhism there, contrary to what most of the orientalisks maintain. From another side, we have had communications about the memories of the 'Cycle of Ram', which are said to still subsist in Cambodia, giving information which appeared so extraordinary that we have preferred not to remark on it; we therefore mention it only as a reminder.

² Note also the representation of the Lamb on the book sealed by seven seals mentioned in the *Apocalypse*; Tibetan lamaism also possesses seven mysterious seals and we doubt if this connection is purely accidental.

same as the 'polar mountain'. Almost every tradition has its name for this mountain, such as the Hindu *Meru*, the Persian *Alborj*, and the *Montsalvat* of Western Grail legend. There is also the Arab mountain *Qaf*³ and the Greek *Olympus*, which has in many ways the same significance. This consists of a region that, like the Terrestrial Paradise, has become inaccessible to ordinary humanity, and that is beyond the reach of those cataclysms which upset the human world at the end of certain cyclic periods. This region is the authentic 'supreme country' which, according to certain Vedic and Avestan texts, was originally sited towards the North Pole, even in the literal sense of the word. Although it may change its localization according to the different phases of human history, it still remains polar in a symbolic sense because essentially it represents the fixed axis around which everything revolves.

Before the advent of the *Kali-Yuga*, the mountain naturally figured as the 'centre of the world'; that is to say it existed somewhat openly, and had not yet gone underground. Accordingly, this corresponds to what one may call a normal period, and was outside those special conditions imposed by an occluded period wherein a sort of reversal of established order is imposed. It must be added that apart from the considerations of cyclical laws, the symbols of the mountain and the cave have each their own reason for being, and are truly complementary;⁴ in addition, the cavern may be envisaged as being situated inside the mountain itself or immediately beneath it.

There are other symbols in ancient traditions which represent the 'centre of the world', one of the most remarkable and widely spread of which is that of the *Omphalos*.⁵ In Greek the

³ It is said of the mountain *Qaf* that it can be attained 'neither by land nor by sea' (*La bil-barr wa la bil-bahr*; cf. what was said earlier of *Montsalvat*), and it has, among its other designations, that of 'Mountain of the Saints' (*Jabal el-Awliya*), to be connected to the 'Mountain of the Prophets' of Anne-Catherine Emmerich.

⁴ This complementarity is that of two triangles placed inversely towards one another which form the 'seal of Solomon'; it can also be compared to that of the spear and of the cup mentioned earlier and to many other equivalent symbols.

⁵ In a book called *Omphalus*, which appeared in 1913, W. H. Roscher has assembled a considerable quantity of documents establishing this fact for all manner of peoples,

word signifies 'umbilical', but in a general sense describes everything that is central, and in particular the hub of a wheel. The Sanskrit *nabhi* has the same connotations, as do various words in the Germanic and Celtic languages derived from the same root, found in the forms '*nab*' and '*nav*'.⁶ In Gaelic, '*nav*' or '*na*', which is plainly identical with these, carries the sense of 'chief' and is even applied to God; so it is indeed the idea of a central Principal that is being expressed.⁷ The meaning of 'hub' is particularly important to this issue as the wheel universally symbolizes the world rotating around a fixed point - a symbolism also associated with the swastika. In the latter, however, the circumference is not delineated in order to give an immediate indication of the centre: the swastika is not an image of the World, but of the action of the Principle in relation to the World.

The symbol of the *Omphalos* could be placed in a position that was simply the centre of a particular area - the spiritual centre, of course, rather than the geographical one, although in certain cases these might coincide. If the latter was the case, the place was indeed, for the people who inhabited the region in question, the physical image of the 'centre of the world', in the same way as their own tradition was an adaptation of the primordial tradition expressed in a form that suited best their mentality and conditions of existence. The best-known *Omphalos* is the one in the temple at Delphi, the temple that was the genuine spiritual centre for all ancient Greece.⁸

but he is wrong to maintain that this symbol is linked to these peoples' idea of the shape of the earth's surface. He imagined it to be the belief in a centre of the earth-surface in the most grossly literal sense, which opinion implies a complete ignorance of the deep significance of the symbolism. In what follows we will utilize certain information from a work by J. Loth on *L'Omphalos chez les Celtes*, published in *La Revue des etudes anciennes* (July-September 1915).

⁶ In German *Nabe*, 'hub', and *Nabel*, 'navel'; similarity in English *nave* and *navel*, this last word also having the general meaning of centre, or middle. The Greek *omphalos* and the Latin *umbilicus* come from a simple modification of the same root.

⁷ In the *Rig-Veda* *Agni* is called 'the navel of the world', which is again linked to the same idea; the swastika is often, as we have already mentioned, a symbol of *Agni*.

⁸ There were other spiritual centres in Greece, but more particularly reserved to initiation in the Mysteries, like Eleusis and Samothrace, whereas Delphi had a social role concerned directly with the totality of the Hellenic collectivity.

Without enumerating all the reasons for making this assertion, it should be noted that there assembled twice yearly at Delphi the Council of Amphictyons, which consisted of representatives from all the Hellenic peoples and which in fact provided the only effective link between these peoples. The strength of this bond lay in its essentially traditional character.

The material representation of the *Omphalos* usually consisted of a sacred stone, commonly called [in French] a 'betyle', a word apparently none other than the Hebrew *Beith-El* or 'House of God'.* This name was the name given by Jacob to the place where the Lord manifested Himself to him in a dream: 'And Jacob awoke from his sleep and said; "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." And he was afearred and said: "How awesome is this place! It is the house of God and the door to Heaven." And Jacob arose early in the morning and took with him the stone on which he had laid his head, made it into a pillar and poured oil over it to consecrate it. And he named this place *Beith-El*, but the first name of this place was "*Luz*".'⁹ It is said that *Beith-El*, 'the House of God', subsequently became *Beith-Lehem*, 'House of Bread', the town where Christ was born.¹⁰ The symbolic relationship existing between stone and bread is always worth examining,¹¹ and it

⁹ Genesis, 27: 16-19.

¹⁰ The phonetic similarity between *Beith-Lehem* and the form *Beith-Elohim*, which also figures in the text of Genesis, should be noted.

¹¹ 'And the tempter, approaching, said to Jesus: "If you are the son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread" ' (St. Matthew, 4: 3, and St. Luke, 4: 3). These words have a mysterious meaning, connected with what we indicate here: Christ did indeed have to accomplish such a transformation, but spiritually, not materially as asked of him by the tempter; now the spiritual order is analogous to the material order, but upside down, and the mark of the demon is to take everything backwards. It is Christ himself who, as manifestation of the Word, is 'the living bread descended from Heaven', whence the answer: 'Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word issuing from the mouth of God'; this is the bread which, in the 'New Covenant', had to be substituted for the stone as 'House of God'; and, let us add, furthermore, this is why the oracles have ceased. In connection with this bread which is identified with the 'flesh' of the manifested Word, it may be of interest to note in addition that the Arab word *lahm*, which is the same as the Hebrew *lehem*, does precisely signify 'flesh' and not 'bread'.

* A *betyle* is a stone believed to be the dwelling-place of the deity i.e. rather more than a 'sacred stone'. There is no English equivalent - *Trs.*

should be made clear that *Beith-El* applies not only to the place but to the stone itself: 'And this stone that I have raised as a pillar will be the house of God.'¹² Thus, this stone must be the true 'divine habitation' (*mishkan*), the seat of the *Shekinah*, although the designation was later transferred to the Tabernacle. All this relates naturally to the subject of 'spiritual influences' (*berakoth*), so that when the 'cult of stones', common to so many ancient peoples, is mentioned, it can be seen at once that it was not the stones themselves that were worshipped but the Divinity residing in them.

The stone representing the *Omphalos* could take the form of a pillar, like Jacob's. It is very likely that some of the 'menhirs' of the Celts had the same significance; oracles were uttered in association with them, as at Delphi, which is easily understood if it is seen that they were the abode of the Divinity. The 'House of God' is naturally identifiable with the 'Centre of the World'. The *Omphalos* could also have been represented, like the black stone of Cybele, by a conical shape where the cone represents the 'sacred mountain', symbol of the 'pole' or 'Axis of the World'. Another version was an ovoid, which would bring it into direct relationship with another extremely important symbol, the 'Egg of the World'.¹³ While the *Omphalos* was usually depicted by a stone, it sometimes took the form of a mound or sort of tumulus, again an image of the sacred mountain. In China, for example, a mound or hillock in the shape of a quadrangular pyramid was built in the centre of every kingdom or feudal state, made out of earth brought from the 'five regions'. Its four sides corresponded to the four

¹² Genesis, 28: 22.

¹³ Sometimes, and notably on certain Greek *omphaloi*, the stone was encircled by a serpent; this serpent can also be seen coiled at the base or at the summit of certain Chaldean boundary-stones which should be considered to be real 'betyles'. Moreover, the symbol of the stone, as that of the tree (another figure of the 'Axis of the World') is, in a general way, in close connection with the symbol of the serpent; it is equally so for the symbol of the egg, notably with the Celts and the Egyptians. A remarkable example of the representation of the *omphalos* is the sacred stone of Kermaria, the general shape of which is that of an irregular cone, rounded at the top, and one of its faces bearing the sign of the swastika. J. Loth, in the work mentioned earlier, has given photographs of this 'betyl', as well as of other stones of the same kind.

cardinal points and its summit to the centre itself.¹⁴ Strangely enough, these 'five regions' were also to be found in Ireland, where the 'Chiefs standing stone' was in a similar way erected in the middle of each domain.¹⁵

Among Celtic nations it is Ireland that provides the most data about the *Omphalos*; the country was formerly divided into five kingdoms, one of which was called *Mide*, nowadays Anglicized as 'Meath', from the ancient Celtic word *medion*, or 'middle', identical to the Latin *medius*.¹⁶ The kingdom of *Mide* has been formed by deducting portions of land from the other four kingdoms and became, through prerogative, the property of Ireland's supreme king, to whom the other monarchs were subordinate.¹⁷ There was a gigantic stone at Uisneach* - the exact centre of the country - called both the 'navel of the earth' and 'stone of portions' (*ail-na-meeran*), because it marked the place where the dividing boundaries of the four older kingdoms converged inside the kingdom of *Mide*. There, a general assembly was held annually on 1 May, that was very like the annual reunion of the Druids at their 'consecrated place', *medio-lanon* or *medio-nemeton* in Gaul in the country of the Carnutes. The similarity with the assembly of the Amphictyons at Delphi is clear.

Ireland's division into four kingdoms, plus its central region where the supreme ruler resided, was a legacy of very ancient tradition. It was this arrangement that caused Ireland to be named the 'Island of the four masters',¹⁸ though this title and its synonym, 'Green Isle' or *Erin*, had originally been used to denote another, much more northerly, land called *Ogygia* or rather *Thule*, now unknown, perhaps vanished, which was once one of the principal spiritual centres, if not, during a

¹⁴ The number 5 has a quite special symbolic significance in the Chinese tradition.

¹⁵ *Brehon Laws*, cited by J. Loth.

¹⁶ Note that China is also designated as 'Middle Empire'.

¹⁷ The capital of the kingdom of *Mide* was *Tara*; now, in Sanskrit the word *Tara* means 'star' and designates more particularly the North Star.

¹⁸ The name of Saint Patrick, which is usually known only in its latinized form, was originally Cathraige, which signifies 'the servant of the four'.

* Current Gaelic spelling - *Trs*.

certain cycle, the supreme one. The memory of this 'island of four masters' is also to be found, although previously unnoticed, in the Chinese tradition, contained in a Taoist text: 'The emperor Yao took a great deal of trouble, and sincerely believed he had reigned in an ideal way. However, after his visit to the four masters on the distant island of *Ku-shih'* - inhabited by 'real men', *chenjen*, those who have been restored to their 'primordial state' - 'he realized that he had spoilt everything. The ideal, he discovered, consists of the indifference (or rather the detachment in action that is non-action) of the superior man¹⁹ who allows the cosmic wheel to turn.²⁰ In another interpretation, the 'four masters' are identified with the four *maharajas* or 'great kings' who, in Indian and Tibetan traditions, preside at the four cardinal points.²¹ They correspond at the same time to the elements. The supreme Master, the fifth, who resides in the centre, on the sacred mountain, represents the ether, *Akasha*, the 'quintessence' or *quinta essentia* of the Hermeticists, which is the primordial element from which proceed the other four.²² Analogous traditions are also to be found in Central America.

¹⁹ The 'true man', being positioned in the centre, no longer participates in the movement of things, but in reality he directs this movement by his very presence, because the 'Activity of Heaven' is reflected in him.

²⁰ *Tchoang-tseu* [Chuang-Tzu], ch. 1, translated [into French] by Father L. Weiger, p. 213. It is said that the emperor Yao reigned in the year 2356 BC.

²¹ One could also make a connection with the four *Awlad* of Islamic esoterism.

²² In cross-shaped figures, such as the swastika, this primordial element is also represented by the central point, which is the Pole; the four other elements, as well as the four cardinal points, correspond to the four branches of the cross, symbolizing moreover, fourfoldness in all of its applications.

NAMES AND SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATIONS OF SPIRITUAL CENTRES

MANY other traditions accord with all that has been discussed about the 'supreme country'. There is notably another name for it that is probably even older than *Paradesha*. This name is *Tula*, which the Greeks called *Thule*, a name which we have already understood to be apparently the true equivalent of 'isle of the four Masters'. The name has, however, been given to many different regions, so that even today it is still to be found as far afield as Russia and Central America. No doubt each of these regions constituted the seat of a spiritual power in some era more or less long past, and which was an emanation of the power of the primordial *Tula*. It is known that the Mexican *Tula* owes its origin to the Toltecs who came, it is said, from *Aztlan*, the 'land in the middle of the water', which is evidently Atlantis. They brought the name *Tula* from their country of origin and gave it to a centre which consequently must have replaced, to a certain extent, that of the lost continent.¹ On the other hand, the Atlantean *Tula* must be distinguished from the Hyperborean *Tula*, which latter represents the first and supreme centre for the entire current *Manvantara* and is the archetypal 'sacred Isle', situated, as we have seen, in a literally polar location. All the other 'sacred isles', although everywhere bearing names of equivalent meaning, are still only images of the original. This even applies to the spiritual centre of Atlantean tradition, which only governed a secondary historical cycle, subordinate to the *Manvantara*.²

¹ The ideographic sign of *Aztlan* or of *Tula* was the white heron; in the West the heron and the stork play the same roles as the ibis in the East, and these three birds figure among the emblems of Christ. For the Egyptians, the ibis was one of the symbols of *Thoth*, i.e. of wisdom.

² The great difficulty in precisely determining the meeting-point of the Atlantean

In Sanskrit, the word *Tula* means 'balance' or 'scales', and specifically denotes the Zodiacal sign of Libra; however there is a Chinese tradition in which the heavenly balance was originally the Great Bear.³ This point is very important, as the symbolism connected with the Great Bear is naturally connected in the closest possible way to that of the Pole.⁴ This subject could usefully be pursued further than is possible here;⁵ however, it is worth looking at the relationship that may exist between the polar scales and the Zodiacal balance. Libra of the Zodiac is regarded as the sign of judgement and, as we have noted apropos of *Melki-Tsedeq*, an attribute of Justice, so that it can be seen that its name was the designation of the supreme spiritual centre.

Tula is in addition called the 'white island', the colour, as we have seen, representing spiritual authority. In the American traditions, *Aztlán* is symbolized by a white mountain, although this applied originally to both the Hyperborean *Tula* and the 'polar mountain'. In India, the 'white isle' (*Shweta-dwipa*), commonly considered to be set in the remote regions of the North,⁶ is regarded as the 'Abode of the Blessed', a name easily identifiable as the 'Land of the Living'.⁷ There is,

and the Hyperborean traditions comes from certain substitutions of names which can cause multiple confusions; but the question is nevertheless perhaps not entirely insoluble.

³ The Great Bear is even said to have been called the 'Scale of Jade', jade being a symbol of perfection. With other people the Great Bear and the Little Bear have been compared to the two pans of a scale. This symbolic scale is not without connection with the scale referred to in the *Siphra di-Tseniutha* (the 'Book of Mysteries' in the Zohar section); the latter is 'suspended in a place which is not', i.e. in the 'non-manifested', represented for our world by the polar point; one can, moreover, say that the equilibrium of the world effectively rests on the Pole.

⁴ In India the Great Bear is the *sapta-riksha*, i.e. the symbolic dwelling of the seven *Rishis*; this naturally conforms with the Hyperborean tradition, whereas, in the tradition of Atlantis, the Pleiades, which are also formed of seven stars, take the place of the Great Bear in this role; besides, it is known that for the Greeks the Pleiades were the daughters of Atlas and, as such, also called *Atlantides*.

⁵ It is also interesting to note that, in connection with what we said earlier concerning the phonetic comparison between *Meru* and *meros*, the ancient Egyptians called the Great Bear the constellation of the Thigh.

⁶ *Shweta-dwipa* is one of the eighteen subdivisions of *Jambu-dwipa*.

⁷ This can also bring to mind the 'Fortunate Isles' of Western antiquity; but these islands were situated to the West (the 'garden of the Hesperides'): *hesper* in Greek, *vesper* in Latin, are the evening, i.e. the West, which indicates a tradition of Atlantean

however, an apparent exception, in that Celtic traditions describe a 'green isle' as being the 'isle of Saints' or 'isle of the Blessed',⁸ but still the 'white Mountain', its summit purple,⁹ stands in the centre, never submerged by any flood.¹⁰ This 'mountain of the sun', as it is also called, is the equivalent of *Meru*, also entitled 'white mountain'. *Meru* is encircled by a green belt, by the fact of being situated in the middle of the sea,¹¹ and a triangle of light radiates at its peak.

The designation of spiritual centres as 'white isles' was applicable, like the others, to secondary centres and not only to the supreme centre, their source. To these must be added the names of places, countries, and towns that express the idea of whiteness. These are frequent enough, from Albion to Albania, through Alba Longa, the mother city of Rome,¹² and the Greek town of Argos.¹³ The reason for these things will be clarified shortly.

An additional comment is called for on the representational origin, and which can also, on the other hand, remind us of the 'Western sky' of Tibetan tradition.

⁸ The name 'island of the Saints' has been subsequently given to Ireland, as well as 'green isle', and even to England. Note that the name of the island of *Heligoland* also has the same significance.

⁹ Here the three Hermetic colours, green, white, and red, of which we spoke in *L'Esoterisme de Dante*, are met again.

¹⁰ Similar traditions concerning the earthly paradise have already been pointed out. In Islamic esoterism, the 'green island' (*el jezirah el-khadrah*) and the 'white mountain' (*el jabal et abiod*) are also well known, although very little mentioned in public.

¹¹ On the other hand, a rainbow-coloured belt is sometimes mentioned, which can be compared to the scarf of *Iris*; Saint-Yves refers to it in his *Mission de l'Inde*, and the same thing is found in the visions of Anne-Catherine Emmerich. Refer to what was said above about the symbolism of the rainbow, as well as about the seven *dwipas*.

¹² The Latin *albus*, 'white', is, moreover, to be connected to the Hebrew *laban*, which has the same meaning, and of which the feminine gender *Lebanah* is used to designate the moon; in Latin, *Luna* can signify 'white' as well as 'luminous', both ideas being, moreover, connected.

¹³ Between the adjective *argos*, 'white', and the name of the city, there is only a simple difference of accentuation; the same name in the masculine gender is that of Argus. This leads one to think of the ship *Argo* (which was, moreover, said to have been constructed by Argus and whose mast was made of an oak-tree from the forest of Dodona); in this case the word could also signify 'rapid', rapidity being considered an attribute of light (and especially of lightning), but the first meaning is 'whiteness' and then 'luminosity'. Silver, which is the white metal and which corresponds astrologically to the moon, derives from the same word; the Latin *argentum* and the Greek *arguros* have obviously an identical root.

tion of a spiritual centre as an island containing a 'sacred mountain', for while such a locality may have had a tangible existence (even though not all 'holy lands' were islands) there should also be a symbolic meaning. Historical facts, especially those pertaining to sacred history, translate in their own way truths of a higher order owing to the law of correspondence which is the foundation of symbolism, and which unites all the worlds in total and universal harmony. The idea evoking the representation under discussion is essentially one of 'stability' that is itself a characteristic of the Pole: the island remains immovable amidst the ceaseless agitation of the waves, a disturbance that reflects that of the external world. Accordingly, it is necessary to cross the 'sea of passions' in order to reach the 'Mount of Salvation', the 'Sanctuary of Peace'.¹⁴

¹⁴ 'The *Yogi*, having crossed the sea of passions, is united with Tranquillity and possesses the "Self" in its plentitude', says Shankaracharya (*Atma-Bodha*). Here the passions are taken to mean all the contingent and transitory modifications which constitute the 'flow of forms'; it is the domain of 'inferior waters', according to the symbolism common to all traditions. This is why the conquest of the 'Great Peace' is often represented by an image of navigation (and that is one of the reasons why, in Catholic symbolism, the Church is represented by a boat); it is also sometimes represented by a war, and the *Bhagavad-Gita* can also be interpreted in this way, as could likewise the theory of the 'holy war' (*jihad*), according to Islamic law. Let us add that the 'walking on the waters' symbolizes domination over the world of form and change: *Vishnu* is called *Narayana*, 'He who walks on the waters'; a connection with the Gospels, where Christ is precisely seen walking on the waters, is inevitable here.

THE LOCATION OF SPIRITUAL CENTRES

THE question as to where the 'supreme country' was actually situated has been left to one side until now, partly because it is such a complex topic, but also because it has been peripheral to the point of view we wished to express. There is every reason for supposing that there have been several successive locations, each corresponding to different cycles, themselves subdivisions of another, more drawn-out cycle called the *Manvantara*. Were the whole cyclical content somehow placed outside of time, there would be seen to be a hierarchical order in this determining of positions that correspond to the way traditional forms were established, forms that are themselves no more than adaptations of the principal, primordial tradition dominating the entire *Manvantara*. At this point it must be repeated that it is possible to have several subsidiary centres existing at the same time as the principal centre, attached to it and reflecting its image. This can rather easily create confusion, since these dependent centres, being more overt, are for that reason more conspicuous than the supreme centre.¹

In reference to this last point, the similarity between Lhasa, centre of Lamaism, and *Agartha*, has already been indicated. Even in the West, at least two cities, Rome and Jerusalem, show topographical situations suggesting a comparable origin; it has already been explained that Jerusalem is a manifested image of *Melki-Tsedeq's* mysterious *Salem*. In fact there existed in ancient times what one could call a sacred or sacerdotal geography through which precise laws² determined the posi-

¹ Adapting Saint-Yves's terminology, borrowed from the symbolism of the Tarot, the supreme centre is, in relation to other centres, like the 'closed zero of the twenty-two arcana'.

² Plato's *Timaeus* appears to contain certain veiled allusions to the science in question.

tion of cities and temples. This indicates the links that existed uniting 'sacerdotal art' and 'royal art' with the art of the builder³ and the reason that ancient guilds and corporations actually did possess a true initiatory tradition.⁴ Between the foundation of a town and the development of a doctrine, or of a new form of tradition arising through adaptation to conditions defined by the time and the place, there was already a certain relationship which resulted in the construction of the town symbolizing the unfolding of the doctrine.⁵ Naturally, the most meticulous precautions were taken when selecting the site of a town destined to become the metropolis or centre for a specified area of the world, so that the names of such towns merit careful study, as do the reported circumstances of their foundation.⁶

Such a town or centre existed in pre-Hellenic Crete,⁷ and it seems that there were several in Egypt, probably founded in successive epochs, like Memphis and Thebes.⁸ The name of

³ Note here what we said about the title of *Pontifex*; note also that the expression 'royal art' has been maintained by modern masonry.

⁴ For the Romans, Janus was at once both the god of initiation to the Mysteries and the god of corporations of craftsmen (*collegia fabrorum*); there is a particularly significant fact in this double attribution.

⁵ We will use as an example the symbol of Amphion building the walls of Thebes by the sounds of his lyre; we will shortly see what is indicated by this name of the town of Thebes. The importance of the lyre in Orphism and Pythagorism is well known; note that instruments of music playing a similar role are often mentioned in Chinese tradition, and it is evident that what is said about it must also be understood symbolically.

⁶ Where names are concerned, a few examples can be found in what has been said previously, particularly in connection with those connected with the idea of whiteness, and we will indicate a few more. Much could also be said about the sacred objects to which, in some cases, were linked the very power and preservation of the city; it was thus for the legendary Palladium of Troy; thus also were, in Rome, the shields of the Sali (which were said to have been cut from a meteorite in the time of *Numa*; the college of the Sali was composed of twelve members); these objects were supports for 'spiritual influences', as was the Ark of the Covenant for the Hebrews.

⁷ The name *Minos* is in itself a sufficient indication in this respect, as was *Menes* where Egypt is concerned; refer also to what we said of the name of *Numa* for Rome, and recall the significance of the name of *Shlomo* for Jerusalem. In relation to Crete, let us point out in passing the use of the labyrinth as a significant symbol by builders of the Middle Ages; the oddest thing is that covering the circuit of the labyrinth traced on the floor of some churches on foot was considered a substitute for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land for those who could not achieve the latter.

⁸ That Delphi played this role for Greece has already been noted; its name calls to mind the name of the dolphin, whose symbolism is very important. Babylon is

the latter, also denoting a Greek city, is of particular interest as a designation of a spiritual centre, as it is plainly cognate with the Hebrew *Thebah*, or Noah's Ark of the great flood. This is itself another representation of the supreme centre, especially in the sense of preserving the tradition in a sort of veiled state⁹ during a transitory period which is like the interval between two cycles and which is marked by a cosmic cataclysm destroying all prior conditions to give place to a wholly new state.¹⁰ The role of Noah¹¹ in the Bible is very similar to that played in the Hindu tradition by *Satyavrata*, who subsequently became, under the name *Vaivaswata*, the current *Manu*. This latter tradition is allied to the commencement of the present *Manvantara*, whereas the biblical flood marked the advent of another more restricted cycle, within this same *Manvantara*;¹² they do not represent the same event, but simply two analogous ones.¹³

It is worth mentioning the association that exists between the symbolism of the Ark and that of the rainbow, and which is suggested by the description in the Bible of the rainbow appearing at the culmination of the flood as proof of the

another remarkable name; *Bab-Ilu* signifies 'gateway of Heaven', which is one of the qualities applied by Jacob to *Luz*; it can, besides, also have the meaning 'House of God', like *Beith-El*; but it becomes synonymous with 'confusion' (*Babel*) when the tradition is lost; it then is the reversal of the symbol, *Janua Inferni* taking the place of *Janua Coeli*.

⁹ This state is comparable to the one represented by the 'Egg of the World', for the beginning of a cycle, containing in seed form all the possibilities which will develop during the cycle; in a similar way the Ark contains all the elements destined for the restoration of the world, which are thus the seeds of its future state.

¹⁰ One more function of the 'pontificate' is to ensure the passage or the traditional transmission from one cycle to the other; the construction of the Ark has here the same meaning as that of a symbolical bridge, as both are equally destined to allow the 'passage of the waters', which has, besides, multiple significance.

¹¹ It is also noteworthy that Noah is said to be the first to plant the vine (Genesis 9: 20), a fact to be connected with what was said earlier regarding the symbolic significance of wine and its role in rites of initiation with regard to the sacrifice of Melchizedek.

¹² One of the historical meanings of the biblical flood can be connected to the cataclysm in which Atlantis disappeared.

¹³ The same remark can naturally be applied to all the flood traditions met among a very great number of peoples; there are some which concern still more particular cycles, as is the case with the floods of *Deucalion* and *Ogyges* among the Greeks.

alliance between God and earthly creatures.¹⁴ During the cataclysm of the flood, the Ark floats on the ocean of the inferior waters, then the rainbow appears 'in the clouds' in the region of the superior waters, to signify the re-establishment of order out of chaos and the subsequent renovation of all things. Ark and rainbow form a strictly analogous relationship, inverse and complementary to each other. The convex shape of the Ark is directed downwards, that of the rainbow upwards, so that in meeting they comprise the two halves¹⁵ of a circular or cyclical form, which had been in fact complete at the beginning of the cycle. This form is the vertical slice of a sphere; its horizontal cut is represented by the circular girdle of the Terrestrial Paradise,¹⁶ the latter divided by a cross formed by the four rivers issuing from the 'polar mountain'.¹⁷ The reconstitution (of the whole) necessarily takes place at the end of the same cycle, but note that in the design of the celestial Jerusalem the circle is replaced by a square¹⁸ to indicate

¹⁴ Genesis, 9: 12-17.

¹⁵ These two halves correspond to those of the 'Egg of the World' as the 'superior waters' and the 'inferior waters' themselves; during the period of trouble, the superior half became invisible, and it is in the inferior half that there happened what Fabre d'Olivet calls the 'accumulation of species'. The two complementary figures concerned can, furthermore, from a certain point of view be compared to two lunar crescents turned inversely towards each other (one being, as it were, the symmetrical reflection of the other in connection with the separating of the waters), which refers to the symbolism of *Janus*, one of whose emblems is, in any case, the ship. To be noted also is that there is a kind of symbolic equivalence between the crescent, the cup, and the ship, and that the word 'vessel' serves to designate both the latter two at the same time (the 'Holy Vessel' is one of the most frequent names for the *Grail* in the Middle Ages).

¹⁶ This sphere is, again, the 'Egg of the World'; the Terrestrial Paradise is situated in the plane which separates it into its two superior and inferior halves, i.e. at the limit between Heaven and Earth.

¹⁷ These four rivers correspond to the four letters which form the word *Pardes*, according to the Kabbalists; we have pointed out elsewhere their analogical connection with the four rivers of Hell (*L'Esoterisme de Dante* (1957 edn.), p. 63).

¹⁸ This substitution corresponds to the replacement of the vegetable symbolism by the mineral symbolism, the significance of which I have indicated elsewhere (*L'Esoterisme de Dante* (1957 edn.), p. 67). The twelve Gates of the celestial Jerusalem naturally correspond to the twelve signs of the Zodiac, as well as to the twelve tribes of Israel. There is therefore a transformation of the Zodiacal Cycle, following the arrest of the rotation of the world and its fixation into a final state which is the restoration of the primordial state once the successive realization of the possibilities it contained is completed.

The 'Tree of Life', which was at the centre of the Terrestrial Paradise, is equally at the centre of the celestial Jerusalem, and here it bears twelve fruits; these are not

achievement of what the Hermeticists symbolically called 'squaring of the circle'. The sphere, representing the development of possibilities through the expansion of the primordial, central point, is changed into a cubic form on completion of this development and when the final balance for the particular cycle is achieved.¹⁹

without a certain connection with the twelve *Adityas*, such as the 'Tree of Life' itself has with *Aditi*, the unique and indivisible essence whence they have issued.

¹⁹ One could say that the sphere and the cube correspond here to the dynamic and static points of view respectively; the six faces of the cube are orientated according to the three dimensions of space, as are the six arms of the cross traced from the centre of the sphere. Where the cube is concerned, it is easy to see a connection with the Masonic symbol of the 'cubic stone', which is also connected to the idea of completion and perfection, i.e. the realization of fullness of the possibilities implied in a certain state.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

ONE conclusive piece of evidence emerges quite clearly from the corresponding testimony of all traditions: that an archetypal 'Holy Land' does exist; that it is the prototype for all other 'Holy Lands', the spiritual centre to which all others are subordinate. The 'Holy Land' is also the 'Land of the Saints', the 'Land of the Blessed', 'Land of the Living', and 'Land of Immortality'. All these titles have equal validity, including that of the 'Pure Land'¹ which Plato aptly bestows on the 'Abode of the Blessed'.² This 'abiding' usually takes place in an 'invisible world', but if one wants to understand this, one must remember that it is the same with 'spiritual hierarchies', spoken of by all traditions and which represent in fact degrees of initiation.³

In this contemporary period of our terrestrial cycle - that is

¹ Among the Buddhist schools which exist in Japan there is one, the *Jyo-do*, whose name is translated as 'Pure Land'; this recalls the Islamic denomination of the 'Brothers of Purity' (*Ikhwan Es-Safa*), not to mention the Cathars of the Western Middle Ages, whose name signifies 'pure'. Besides, it is probable that the word *Sufi*, indicating Muslim initiates (or more precisely those who have reached the final goal of initiation, like the *Yogis* of Hindu tradition), has exactly the same significance; in point of fact, vulgar etymology, which derives it from *suf*, 'wool' (of which the clothing worn by the *Sufis* was supposed to be made), is very unsatisfactory, and the derivation from the Greek *sophos*, 'sage', while appearing more acceptable, has the inconvenience of calling on a term foreign to the Arabic tongue; it seems preferable, therefore to accept the interpretation which derives *Sufi* from *safa*, 'purity'.

² The symbolic description of this 'Pure Land' can be found towards the end of the *Phaido* (transl. Mario Meunier, pp. 285-9); it has already been noted that a kind of parallel can be drawn between this description and the one made by Dante of the Terrestrial Paradise (John Stewart, *The Myths of Plato*, pp. 101-13).

³ Besides, the various worlds are, properly speaking, states, not places, although it is possible to describe them symbolically as such; the Sanskrit word *loka* which serves to designate them, and which is identical to the Latin *locus*, contains in itself the indication of this special symbolism. There is also a temporal symbolism, according to which these same states are described in the form of successive cycles, although time, as well as space, is in reality only a condition pertaining to one of them, so that succession is here but an image of a causal chain.

to say during the *Kali-Yuga* - this 'Holy Land', which is defended by guardians who keep it hidden from profane view while ensuring nevertheless a certain exterior communication, is to all intents and purposes inaccessible and invisible to all except those possessing the necessary qualifications for entry. Should its setting in a definite location now imply that this is literally so, or is it only a symbol, or is it both at the same time? The simple answer is that both geographical and historical facts possess a symbolic validity that in no way detracts from their being facts, but that actually, beyond this obvious reality, gives them a higher significance.⁴

We do not claim that this subject has been fully explored; far from it. Indeed, the relationships already discussed could lead to the elucidation of many more. On the other hand, this study has gone deeper than any preceding it, inviting reproach perhaps, from some. We do, however, believe we have not said too much, nor anything that should not be disclosed, even though we may be less disposed than some people to dispute the fact that there is a proper moment for publicly discussing unusual material. Also, on this point of the right moment, note that in the circumstances in which we live today, events happen with such speed that many things, the reasons for which are not immediately obvious, may find real applications much sooner than expected, possibly in ways wholly unforeseen. Although we wish to refrain from anything that may smack of 'prophecies', these words of Joseph de Maistre,⁵ even truer today than a century ago, are most fitting

⁴ This can be compared to the multiplicity of meanings according to which the sacred texts are interpreted, and which, far from opposing or destroying one another, on the contrary complement and harmonize each other in the knowledge of integral synthesis. From the point of view indicated here, historical facts correspond to a temporal symbolism, and geographical facts to a spatial symbolism; there is, moreover, a link or a necessary correlation between them, as there is between time and space themselves, and that is why the spiritual centre may be in a different place according to the periods envisaged.

⁵ *Soirees de Saint-Petersbourg*, eleventh conversation. It is hardly necessary, in order to avoid any apparent contradiction with the cessation of oracles alluded to earlier on, and that Plutarch had already observed, to point out that this word 'oracle' is used by Joseph de Maistre in a very wide sense, the sense often given in current language and not the proper and precise sense it had in antiquity.

to conclude with: 'We must be ready for an immense event in the divine order which we are travelling towards with an accelerated speed that must astound all those who watch. Awesome oracles have pronounced already that the time is now.'

RENE GUENON

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Rene Guenon was born in Blois, France, on 15 November 1886 and died in Cairo, Egypt, on 7 January 1951. Although well known in French intellectual circles since the early inter-war years, his work at first remained almost unknown in the rest of Europe and the world. It is only since the 1940s that serious translations of the more important works have begun to appear in several countries, such as England, Italy, Spain, and Argentina.

He felt it necessary to put into words the teachings he brought to light and his thought, in order to rebut the attacks and insinuations that were directed against him from many directions. To call this thought 'his' is a figure of speech only, as it was profound beyond any distinction of subject and object, and would conform to no current 'label' or system of classification.

He was in fact no 'orientalist', although the spiritual East held no secrets for him. Nor was he a 'philosopher', however much he clothed his thought in a rational language that ensured his position as a writer of exceptional clarity and power. Nor yet was he an 'occultist' (being referred to as one vexed him immeasurably), even though subjects forbidden by the limited horizon of modern science often flowed from his pen. One can deduce from his works that he would perhaps have accepted being described as a 'metaphysician', if this word is not also one of those which evoke in people images too false to be used without precaution.

There is no doubt, however, that Guenon has been, in this final phase of Kali-Yuga that humanity is at present living through, one of the most accurate interpreters of traditional doctrines. His work is of such breadth that it can only be compared with that of such intellectual and spiritual giants as were Shankaracharya or Muhiyuddin ibn-Arabi.

Rene Guenon, only son of Jean-Baptiste Guenon, an architect, and Ann-Leontine Jolly, spent his childhood and early adolescence at Blois receiving his early education from a maternal aunt who was a schoolteacher. This was followed by a period at the school of

Notre-Dame des Aydes, an institution run by religious teachers. In 1902 he moved to College Augustin-Thierry, gaining his *bachelier* the following year in *Lettres-Philosophie*. In 1904 he left for Paris, where he studied higher mathematics at the College Rollin. Around 1906 he gave up his academic course due, it is said, to his delicate health.

The interruption of his academic studies was followed by a period rich in encounters and productive of writings. In 1909 he founded *La Gnose* [Gnosis], a periodical in which appeared the outlines of some of his more important future books: *Symbolism of the Cross*, *Man and his Becoming according to Vedanta*, and *Principles of Infinitesimal Calculus*. In 1910 he made the acquaintance of the Swedish painter John-Gustaf Agelii, who had entered Islam in 1897 under the name of Abdul Hadi, and had been initiated into *Tasawwuf* (Islamic Mysticism) by Sheikh Abder-Rahman Elish el-Kebir.

La Gnose ceased publication in February 1912. On 11 July the same year Guenon married Miss Berthe Loury in Blois and, still in the same year, entered Islam. Some time during 1913-14 he met a Hindu, Swami Narad Mani, who provided him with a dossier on the Theosophical Society. It was no doubt this material, at least in part, which he used to assemble a penetrating critique of that organization entitled *Theosophy, a History of a Pseudo-religion*. During the years 1915 to 1919 he held a job as teacher at College Saint-Germain-en-Laye, lived a while at Blois, and was lecturer in philosophy at Setif in Algeria. From there he returned to Blois and thence to Paris.

His first two books, *A General Introduction to Hindu Doctrines* and *Theosophy*, appeared in 1921, followed in 1923 by *The Spiritualist Error*. In 1924 (and until 1929) he gave courses in philosophy at the College Saint-Louis. Also in 1924 he chaired a meeting bringing together Ferdinand Ossendowski (Polish author of a book of his own travels in Mongolia and Tibet which had excited a great deal of interest a few years earlier*), Gonzague True, Rene Grousset, and Jacques Maritain. *East and West* appeared in 1924.

In 1925 he was associated with the Catholic periodical *Regnabit* ['He will reign'], edited by Father Anizan, to whom he had been introduced by the archeologist Louis Charbonneau-Lassay of Loudun; this association lasted until 1927. Two more books, *Man*

* See Chapter 1 of the present book - *Trs*.

and his *Becoming* and the *Esoterism of Dante*, appeared in 1925, followed in 1927 by two more: *Lord of the World* and *The Crisis in the Modern World*.

Guenon's wife died on 15 January 1928. In the same year he began an association with the periodical *La Voile d'Isis* [The Veil of Isis], which in 1933 changed its title to *Etudes traditionnelles* [Studies in Tradition]. In 1929 he published two more books: *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power* and the short study *Saint Bernard*.

In 1930 Guenon left France for Egypt, where he settled permanently (in Cairo) and where in 1934 he married the daughter of Sheikh Muhammed Ibrahim, who bore him four children (two sons and two daughters), the last of them posthumously. All his other works were written during his sojourn in Egypt from 1930 to 1951, the year of his death at the age of 65. Over this period he published *The Symbolism of the Cross* (1931), *The Many States of Being* (1932), *Oriental Metaphysics* (1939), *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times* (1945), *Perspectives on Initiation, Principles of Infinitesimal Calculus*, and *The Great Triad* (1946).

Since his death a number of books have been published collating articles by Guenon that were never assimilated into the books he wrote himself, his 'major' works. These have been put together according to the criteria of their various editors. *Initiation and Spiritual Realization* appeared in 1953, intended by the compiler as a sequel to *Perspectives on Initiation*. 1954 saw *Perspectives on Christian Esoterism*; 1962 *Fundamental Symbols of the Sacred Science*; and 1964, *Studies on Freemasonry and Knight-Companionage*, an anthology of almost all of Guenon's writings on Masonry and its symbols published in the periodical *Etudes traditionnelles*. In 1967 appeared *Studies on Hinduism*, followed by *Traditional Forms and Cosmic Cycles* in 1970, *Reviews and Perspectives on Islamic and Taoist Esoterism* in 1973, and *Miscellany* in 1976.

PIETRO NUTRIZIO

[Translator's note: the titles of all Guenon books have been given in English, even in those cases where no translation has yet been made; other translations are given in square brackets.]