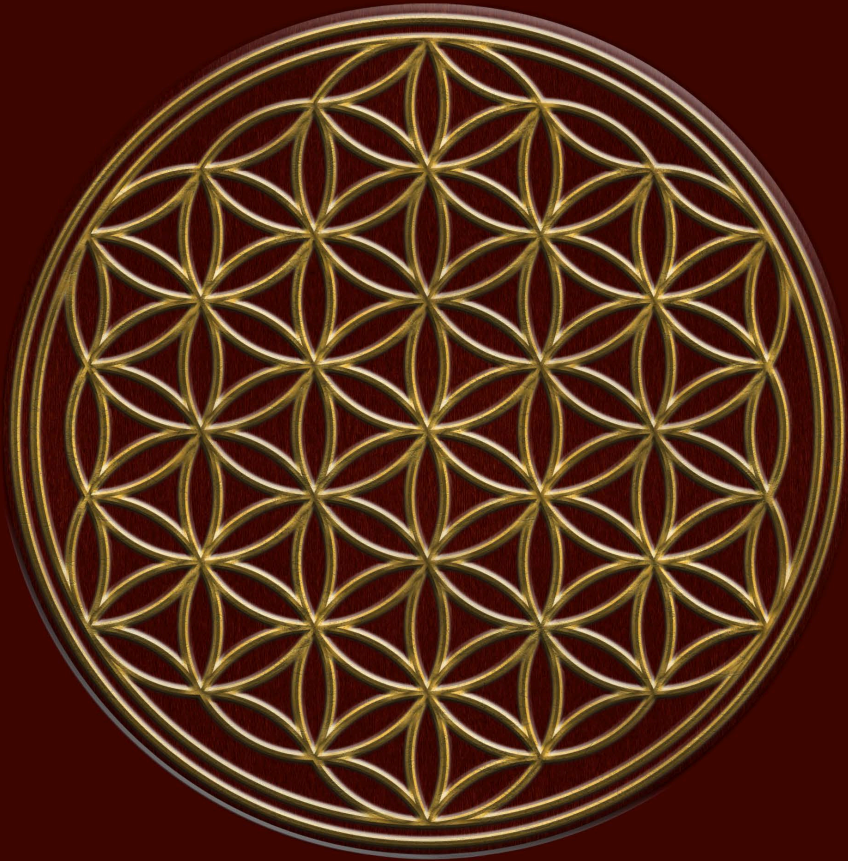


RENÉ GUÉNON



TRADITIONAL STUDIES

VOLUME I

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TRADITION

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SPIRITUAL
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1

AUTHORITY & HIERARCHY

THROUGHOUT the various ages of history, and even well before what are conventionally known as historical times, we find (as far as the concordant evidence of oral and written tradition permits)¹ clues of a frequent opposition between the representatives of two powers, one spiritual and the other temporal. This opposition can be discerned despite the special forms sometimes assumed by these two powers in adapting to different circumstances of time and place. This does not mean however that the opposition and the struggles it engenders are 'as old as the world', as this much-abused expression would imply. Such would be a manifest exaggeration, for all traditions teach that in order for this opposition to arise humanity had to reach a phase quite distant from the pure primordial spirituality. Besides, these two powers did not originally exist as separate functions exercised by different individuals. On the contrary, they were two indivisible aspects of the common principle from which they both proceeded, linked indissolubly in the unity of a synthesis that was at once superior and anterior to their distinction. Hindu doctrine expresses exactly this when it teaches that in the beginning there was only one caste. The name *Hamsa* given to this single primordial caste indicates spirituality of a very high

I. In the beginning, these traditions were always oral, and sometimes, as with the Celts, never written down: their concordance proves their common origin and thus their connection with a primordial tradition, as well as the strict fidelity of the oral transmission the maintenance of which is one of the primary functions of the spiritual authority.

degree which, though quite exceptional today, was originally common to all men, and possessed by them as it were spontaneously.² This high degree of spirituality lies beyond the four castes that were subsequently established and among which the different social functions were distributed.

The principle of the institution of castes, so completely misunderstood by Westerners, is nothing else but the differing natures of human individuals; it establishes among them a hierarchy the incomprehension of which only brings disorder and confusion, and it is precisely this incomprehension that is implied in the 'egalitarian' theory so dear to the modern world, a theory contrary to all established facts and belied even by simple observation, since equality is really nowhere to be found—but this is not the place to enlarge on a point we have already treated elsewhere.¹ The words used to designate caste in India signify nothing but 'individual nature', implying all the characteristics attaching to the 'specific' human nature that differentiate individuals from each other; and it should immediately be added that heredity plays only a partial role in the determination of these characteristics, for were it otherwise

2. The same indication is to be found just as clearly formulated in the tradition of the Far-East, as is shown especially in the following passage from Lao T'zu: 'The ancient seers had a mastery over Logic, Clairvoyance, and Intuition. This Force of Soul remained unconscious. This Unconsciousness of their Inner Force rendered their appearance majestic. Who in our days could by his majestic lucidity clarify the internal darkness? In our days, who could revive the internal death by his majestic life? They, on the other hand, carried the Way (*Tao*) in their soul and were Autonomous Individuals; as such, they saw the perfections of their weaknesses' (*Tao Te Ching*, chap. 4, [French] translation by Alexandre Ular; cf. Chuang Tzu, chap. 6, which comments on this passage). The 'Unconsciousness' mentioned here refers to the spontaneity of this state, which at that time was not the result of any effort; and the expression 'Autonomous Individuals' should be understood in the sense of the Sanskrit term *svayehihari* 'he who follows his own will', or, according to another equivalent expression found in Islamic esoterism, 'he who is his own law'.

[As has been pointed out elsewhere (*The King of the World*, chap. 7, 118, and chap. 9, nil, and *The Multiple States of the Being*, chap. 6, 116), Guenon relied for his texts from the Chinese tradition on a rendering that diverges somewhat from any current English version. En.]

3. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 6. On the principle of the institution of castes, see Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines, pt. 3, chap. 6.

all the individuals of a family would be identical. Thus, caste is not in principle strictly hereditary, even though it has frequently become so in fact and in practice. Besides, since there cannot be two individuals identical and equal in all respects, there are inevitably some differences among those belonging to the same caste. But just as there are more common characteristics among beings of the same species than among beings of different species, so also are there more common characteristics, within a given species, among individuals belonging to the same caste than there are among those of different castes. One could say then that the distinction between castes in the human species constitutes a veritable natural classification to which the distribution of social functions necessarily corresponds. In effect, each man, by reason of his proper nature, is suited to carry out certain definite functions to the exclusion of all others; and in a society established on a regular traditional basis, these aptitudes must be determined according to precise rules, so that, by the correspondence of the various functions with the principal categories in the classification of 'individual natures', each finds his proper place (barring exceptions due to errors of application which, although possible, are reduced to a minimum), and thus the social order exactly expresses the hierarchical relationships that result from the nature of the beings themselves. This in brief is the fundamental reason for the existence of castes, and one must at least be acquainted with these essential notions in order to understand the allusions we shall have to make in the course of this study, whether to the constitution of caste such as it exists in India or to analogous institutions found elsewhere; for it is evident that the same principles, albeit with varying modes of application, have presided over the organization of all civilizations possessing a truly traditional character.

In short, caste distinction, along with the differentiation of social functions which corresponds to it, results from a rupture of the primordial unity; only then do the spiritual power and the temporal power appear separate from one another. The distinct exercise of these two powers in turn constitutes the respective functions of the first two castes: the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. Moreover, between these two powers (as more generally among all the social

functions thereafter attributed to different groups of individuals) there must originally have been a perfect harmony by which the original unity was maintained, at least to the degree that the conditions of humanity in its new phase would allow; for in essence harmony is simply a reflection or image of true unity. It was only at a later stage of development that this distinction was to be transformed into opposition and rivalry, destroying the original harmony and so making way for a struggle between the two powers, while the inferior functions in their turn laid claim to supremacy, resulting finally in total confusion, negation, and the overthrow of all hierarchy. The general conception just outlined conforms to the traditional doctrine of the four successive ages into which the history of terrestrial humanity is divided. This doctrine is found not only in India, but also in the ancient West, particularly among the Greeks and Romans. These four ages are the different phases humanity traverses as it moves away from the principle and so away from primordial unity and spirituality. They are like stages in a kind of progressive materialization that is necessarily inherent in the development of the entire cycle of manifestation, as we have explained elsewhere.¹

It is only in the last of these four ages, known as the *Kali-Yuga* or 'dark age' in the Hindu tradition, and corresponding to the present era, that the subversion of the normal order can occur, and the temporal power for the first time can prevail over the spiritual authority. However, the first manifestations of the revolt of the Kshatriyas against the authority of the Brahmins lie much further back than the beginning of this age,⁵ a beginning that is itself far earlier than anything known to ordinary or 'profane' history. This opposition of the two powers, this rivalry between their respective representatives, was depicted among the Celts as a wild boar and a bear locked in combat, a symbolism of Hyperborean origin and thus connected to one of the most ancient traditions of humanity (if not the oldest of

-1. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. I.

5. An indication of this can be found in the story of *Parasurama* who, it is said, annihilated the rebel Kshatriyas at a time when the ancestors of the Hindus still inhabited a northern region.

all), the true primordial tradition. This symbolism could give rise to many further relied ions that would be out of place here, but which we will perhaps explain on another occasion.⁶

It is not our intention here to trace everything back to its origins, and all our examples will be drawn from epochs much closer to us, corresponding to what we may call the last part of the *Kali-Yuga*. This is a time accessible to ordinary history since it begins precisely in the sixth century before the Christian era. It was nonetheless necessary to give this brief summary of the elements of the whole of traditional history, without which the rest would only be understood imperfectly, for one cannot really understand any epoch except by assigning it its proper place in the whole of which it is but one element; it is thus, as we have recently shown, that the particular characteristics of the modern age can only be explained if one considers it to be the final phase of the *Kali-Yuga*.⁷ We are fully aware that this synthetic point of view is entirely contrary to the spirit of analysis that governs the development of 'profane' science, the only one known to most of our contemporaries, yet it is all the more essential to clearly affirm this point of view because it is very much misunderstood; it is moreover the only one that can be adopted by all those who wish to remain in strict conformity with true traditional orthodoxy, and not make any concession to the modern spirit which, as we cannot repeat often enough, is one with the spirit of the anti-tradition itself.

No doubt, the prevailing tendency at present is to treat the facts of the most remote period of history, such as those to which we have just alluded, as 'legendary', or even as 'mythical'; and the same applies to other far less ancient facts—some of which will concern us in what follows—since they are inaccessible to the means of

6. It should also be noted that these two symbols—the wild boar and the bear do not necessarily appear in combat with each other or in opposition. They can also sometimes represent the spiritual and temporal powers, or the two castes of the Druids and the Knights, in their normal and harmonious relationship. This is especially clear in the legend of Merlin and Arthur, who are in fact the boar and the bear. We shall explain this point of symbolism in another study. [See 'The Wild Boar and the Bear', in *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 24. Ed.]

7. See *The Crisis of the Modern World*.

investigation available to 'profane' historians. Those who might think in this way, by virtue of habits acquired through an education that today more often than not produces real mental deformity, should, if they have retained some degree of understanding, be able to at least take these facts simply at their symbolic value, a value which for us does not diminish in any way their own reality as historical facts. After all, this symbolic value is what matters most, for it confers on them a superior meaning, of a much profounder order than they can have in themselves. But this point requires further explanation.

All that is, in whatever mode it may be, necessarily participates in universal principles, and nothing exists except by participation in these principles, which are the eternal and immutable essences contained in the permanent actuality of the divine Intellect; consequently, one can say that all things, however contingent they may be in themselves, express or represent these principles in their own manner and according to their own order of existence, for otherwise they would only be a pure nothingness. All things, in every order of existence, are connected and correspond to one another so as to contribute to universal and total harmony; for harmony, as we have already said, is nothing other than the reflection of principial unity in the multiplicity of the manifested world; and it is this correspondence that is the true foundation of symbolism. This is why the laws of an inferior domain can always be taken as symbols for realities of that superior order which is their ground, and which is both their principle and end; and we note in passing the error of modern 'naturalistic' interpretations of the ancient traditional doctrines, which purely and simply invert the hierarchy of relationships between the different orders of reality. Let us cite here as an example just one of today's most prevalent theories. Contrary to the naturalistic point of view, symbols or myths have never played the role of representing the movements of the stars, although it is true that one often finds in myths images inspired by them. These images are meant to explain analogically something altogether different, because the laws of this movement translate physically the metaphysical principles on which they depend. It is on this that the true astrology of the ancients rested. The inferior may symbolize the superior, but the

inverse is impossible. Besides, if the symbol were further removed from the sensible order than that which it represents—rather than being closer—how could it carry out its destined function, which is to render the truth more accessible to man by furnishing a ‘support’ to his understanding? It is obvious on the other hand that the use of astronomical symbolism—to take the same example—does not prevent astronomical phenomena from existing as such, nor does it deny them all the reality they have in their own order; and it is exactly the same in the case of historical facts which, like any facts, express higher truths in their own way and conform to the law of correspondence we have just mentioned. While these facts have a real existence, they are at the same time also symbols; and from our point of view, they are much more worthy of interest as symbols than as facts. It could not be otherwise, since we intend to relate everything to principles, and it is precisely this which, as we have explained elsewhere,⁸ essentially distinguishes ‘sacred science’ from ‘profane science’. If we insist on this point it is in order to avoid confusion: one must put each thing in its proper place, and history properly understood also has its place in integral knowledge, though it has no value in this respect except insofar as it enables us to find a point of support, in the very contingencies that constitute its immediate object, from which to raise ourselves above these same contingencies.

As for the point of view of ‘profane history’, which clings exclusively to facts without going beyond them, it is of no interest in our eyes, like all else that belongs to the field of mere erudition. It is then not at all as an historian, taking the term in the latter sense, that we consider the facts, and this is what allows us to ignore certain ‘critical’ prejudices particularly dear to our age. It does seem moreover that the exclusive use of certain methods may have been imposed on modern historians solely to prevent them from seeing clearly in matters that were not to be broached, for the simple reason that they might have led to conclusions contrary to the ‘materialistic’ tendencies that ‘official’ teaching has made it its mission to uphold, it goes without saying that for our part we do not feel at all obliged

8. *the Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 4.

to maintain this reserve. This having been said, we think that the subject of our study can now be approached directly without tarrying further over these preliminary observations, which were meant only to define as clearly as possible the spirit in which we write and also the spirit in which this study should be read if one really wishes to understand its meaning.

2

FUNCTIONS OF PRIESTHOOD & ROYALTY

THE opposition between the spiritual and temporal powers is found in one form or another among almost all peoples. This is not surprising since it corresponds to a general law of human history, relating moreover to the system of 'cyclical laws' that we have frequently alluded to throughout our works. In the most ancient periods this opposition is usually found in traditional accounts expressed in symbolic form, as in the case of the Celts mentioned above; but it is not this aspect of the question that we propose especially to develop here. For the moment we shall restrict ourselves to two historical examples, one taken from the East and the other from the West. In India the antagonism between the spiritual and the temporal is found in the form of a rivalry between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas (about which we shall recall some episodes presently); in medieval Europe it appears especially in the so-called dispute between the priesthood and the empire, even though it had other more particular aspects that were equally characteristic,¹ as we shall see in what follows. It is only too easy to point out

1. We could easily find many more examples, especially in the East: in China the struggles that took place in certain epochs between Taoists and Confucianists, whose respective doctrines are linked to the domains of the two powers, as we shall explain later; and in Israel, the hostility shown initially by the kings toward lamaism, which ended not only in the latter's triumph, but in the complete absorption of the temporal power within the 'theocratic' organization that still exists today. [1 his work was written in 1929. Ed.]

that the same struggle continues to this day, although due to the disorder of the modern world and the 'mingling of castes' it is complicated by heterogeneous elements that may sometimes conceal it from the notice of a superficial observer.

It is not that anyone has contested (at least generally speaking and notwithstanding certain extreme cases) the fact that each of these two powers, which we can call sacerdotal power and royal power, for such are their true traditional names, had its own purpose and its own domain; in the final analysis, the dispute usually bears only on the question of the hierarchical relationships that should exist between them. It is a question of a struggle for supremacy, a struggle invariably arising in the same manner: having first been subject to the spiritual authority, warriors, the holders of the temporal power, revolt against this authority and declare themselves independent of all superior power, even trying to subordinate to themselves the spiritual authority that they had originally recognized as the source of their own power, and finally seeking to turn the spiritual authority to the service of their own domination. This alone should suffice to show that in such a revolt there must be a reversal of normal relationships; but the point becomes all the more clear when these relationships are considered, not as between two more or less clearly defined social functions naturally tending to encroach upon one another, but as between two separate domains in which these functions are respectively exercised. It is in fact the relationships between these domains that must logically determine those between the corresponding powers.

However, before tackling these considerations directly, we must make some remarks that will facilitate their comprehension by precisely defining certain terms which will come up often in our discussion. This is all the more necessary in view of the fact that in current usage these terms have taken on quite vague meanings sometimes far removed from their original ones. First of all, if we speak of two powers, and if we do so in cases where it becomes necessary for various reasons to maintain a certain external symmetry between them, we prefer to use the word 'authority' rather than the word 'power' for the spiritual order. The word 'power' can then be reserved for the temporal order, to which it is better suited when taken in its strictest sense. In fact, the word 'power' almost inevitably evokes the idea of

strength or force, and above all the idea of a material force,² a force which manifests itself visibly and outwardly and affirms itself by the use of external means, for such means indeed characterize the temporal power by very definition.³ On the contrary, spiritual authority, interior in essence, is affirmed only by itself, independently of any sensible support, and operates as it were invisibly. If we can speak in this context of strength or force, it is only by analogical transposition, and, at least in the case of a spiritual authority—in its purest state so to speak—it must be understood that it is an entirely intellectual strength whose name is 'wisdom' and whose only force is that of truth.*

The expressions sacerdotal power and royal power, which we have just introduced, call for even more explanation here. What exactly is meant by priesthood and royalty? To begin with the latter, we can say that the royal function includes everything that in the social order constitutes what is properly referred to as the 'government'; and this is so even if the government does not take the form of a monarchy. This function belongs properly to the entire Kshatriya caste, for the king is no more than the first among them; it is in a way twofold: administrative and judicial on the one hand, and military on the other. With regard to its regulatory and stabilizing function it must ensure the maintenance of internal order, and with regard to its function of protecting the social organism it must maintain outward order. These two constituent elements of the royal power are symbolized in diverse traditions respectively by the scales and the sword. We see from this that royal power is indeed

2. One could moreover also include in this notion the force of will, which is not 'material' in the strict sense of the word but which for us is still of the same order since it is essentially oriented toward action.

3. the name of the caste of the Kshatriyas is derived from *kshum*, which denotes 'force'.

4. In Hebrew, the distinction indicated here is marked by the use of roots that correspond with each other but differ by the presence of the letters *caph* and *koph* which, by their hieroglyphic interpretation, are respectively the signs of spiritual force and material force, whence, on the one hand, such senses as truth, wisdom, and knowledge, and on the other, those of power, possession, and domination. Such also are the roots *haf* and *hak*, *can* and *kun*, the first forms designating the attributions of the sacerdotal power, the second those of the royal power (see *The King of the World*, chap. 6).

synonymous with temporal power, even when this latter is taken in its broadest sense. But the much more restricted idea that the modern West has of royalty can prevent this equivalence from being perceived immediately, and for this reason it was necessary to formulate this definition now so that we might not lose sight of it in what follows.

As for the priesthood, its essential function is the conservation and transmission of the traditional doctrine, in which every regular social organization finds its fundamental principles. This function is, moreover, obviously independent of all the special forms the doctrine may take in adapting to the particular conditions of any given era, for these forms do not in any way affect the substance of that doctrine, which remains everywhere and at all times identical and immutable, provided the traditions involved are authentically orthodox. It is easy to understand that the function of the priesthood is not exactly what is attributed by Western conceptions, especially today, to 'clergy' or 'priests'. While these conceptions may apply in certain cases and to a certain extent, the function of the priesthood can also be something very different. In fact, what truly possesses a 'sacred' character is the traditional doctrine and all that is directly attached to it, and this doctrine does not necessarily take a religious form.⁵ The terms 'sacred' and 'religious' are by no means equivalent, for the first is much broader than the second. While religion is part and parcel of the 'sacred' domain, this latter includes elements and modalities that have absolutely nothing religious about them; and the 'priesthood' [i.e. *sacerdoce*], as its name indicates, relates without any restriction whatsoever to all that can truly be called 'sacred'.

The true function of the priesthood, then, is above all one of knowledge and teaching, and this is why, as we said above, its proper attribute is wisdom.⁶ It is of course true that certain other

5. Moreover, we shall later see why the religions form properly speaking is particular to the West.

6. It is due to this function of teaching that in the Purusha-Sukta of the Rig-Veda the Brahmins are represented as corresponding to the mouth of Purusha considered as 'Universal Man', whereas the Kshatriyas correspond to his arms because their functions relate essentially to action.

more outward functions, such as the performance of rites, equally belong to it, because they require doctrinal knowledge, at least in principle, and participate in the 'sacred' character inherent to it. But these functions are only secondary, contingent, and, in a way, accidental.' If, in the Western world, the accessory seems here to have become the principal, if not the only function, this is because the real nature of the 'priesthood' has been almost completely forgotten, this being one of the effects of the modern deviation, which negates all intellectuality (we think it almost superfluous to recall here that this word is always taken in the sense of pure intelligence and supra-formal knowledge). And if this deviation has not been able to make all doctrinal leaching disappear, it has at least 'minimized' it and relegated it to the background. That it has not always been so is proved by the very word 'clergy', for the word 'clerk' originally signified 'scholar' as opposed to 'layman', which designates a man of the people, that is, of the 'vulgar', who is to be classed among the ignorant or the 'profane', and whose only recourse is to believe whatever he cannot understand, this being the only way for him to

7. I lie exercise of intellectual functions on the one hand, and rituals on the other, has sometimes given rise within the priesthood itself to two divisions, of which a clear example is found in Tibet: "The first of the two great divisions comprises those who preach observance of moral precepts and the monastic rule as the means of salvation, and the second all who prefer a purely intellectual method (the "direct path"), liberating the one who follows it from all laws whatsoever. It is essential that the followers of these two systems be kept strictly separate from each other, the monks attached to the first system rarely fail to recognize that the virtuous life and discipline of monastic observances—truly quite excellent and in most cases indispensable though they may be—nevertheless constitute only a preparation for a higher path. As for the partisans of the second system, all without exception fully believe in the beneficent effects of strict fidelity to the moral laws and also to those decreed especially for the members of the Sangha (Buddhist community). Moreover, all are unanimous in declaring that the first of the two methods is more recommendable for the majority of people" (Alexandra David-Neel, 'Le Thibet Mystique', in the *Rente Jeunis*, February 1928). This passage seemed worth quoting in full even though certain of its expressions call for some reservations: for example, there are not two systems" which, as such, need necessarily exclude each other; but on the other hand, the role of contingent means, which is that of rites and observances of all sorts and their subordination with respect to the purely intellectual path, are defined here quite clearly and in a manner conforming strictly to the teachings of the Hindu doctrine on the same subject.

participate in the tradition to the extent his possibilities allow.⁸ It is curious to note that those who today take pride in calling themselves 'laymen', as well as those who take pleasure in calling themselves 'agnostics' —they are indeed often the same people—do nothing but boast of their own ignorance, and for them to fail to realize that such is the meaning of the labels they attach to themselves, their ignorance must indeed be great and truly irremediable.

If the 'priesthood' is in essence the depository of traditional knowledge, this is not to say that it has a monopoly on it, since its mission is not only to conserve it integrally but also to communicate it to all who are fit to receive it, to distribute it hierarchically, so to speak, according to the intellectual capacity of each. All knowledge of this order thus has its source in sacerdotal teaching, which is the instrument of its regular transmission. What appears to be reserved especially to the priesthood, because of its character of pure intellectuality, is the superior part of the doctrine, that is the knowledge of the principles themselves, whereas the development of certain applications is more suitable for the aptitudes of other men whose own functions put them in direct and constant contact with the manifested world, that is, with the sphere to which these applications relate. This is why we see in India, for example, that

8. This does not mean that it is legitimate to extend the meaning of the word 'clerk' as did Julien Benda in his book *La Trahison des Clercs*, for this extension implies ignorance of a fundamental distinction, that of 'sacred knowledge' and 'profane knowledge'. Spirituality and intellectuality certainly do not have the same significance for Benda as for us, and he includes in the domain he qualifies as spiritual many things that are in our view of a purely temporal and human order. But this must not prevent us from acknowledging that there are in his book very interesting considerations that are in many respects true.

The distinction made in Catholicism between the 'teaching Church' and the 'Church taught' ought precisely to be one between 'those who know' and 'those who believe', but though this is so in principle, in the present state of things is it still so in fact? We will content ourselves with raising this question, as it is not for us to resolve it, and besides, we have not the means to do so. Indeed, though many an indication leads us to fear that the reply can only be negative, we lay no claim to an exhaustive knowledge of the present organization of the Catholic church, and can only express the wish that there may still exist within this Church a center where not only the 'letter' but also the 'spirit' of the traditional doctrine is integrally conserved.

certain secondary branches of the doctrine are studied more especially by the Kshatriyas, whereas the Brahmins attach only a relative importance to them, their attention being constantly fixed on the order of the transcendent and immutable principles of which all the rest constitute but accidental consequences. Or, to look at it from the other direction, the attention of the Brahmins is fixed solely on the highest goal, in relation to which all the rest is nothing but a contingent and subordinate means.⁹ There are even traditional books specifically intended for the use of the Kshatriyas because they present doctrinal aspects adapted to their own nature,¹⁰ and also 'traditional sciences' especially suited to them, whereas pure metaphysics is the prerogative of the Brahmins.¹¹ All this is perfectly legitimate, for these applications or adaptations are also a part of sacred knowledge viewed in its integrality; and besides, even though the sacerdotal caste does not take a direct interest in them on their own account, these applications or adaptations are nevertheless its work, since it alone is qualified to control their perfect conformity with principles. Yet it may happen that when they revolt against spiritual authority the Kshatriyas fail to recognize the relative and subordinate character of that knowledge, considering it their own property and denying that they received it from the Brahmins, and finally going so far as to proclaim it superior to the

9. We have had occasion to point out in another study a case that illustrates what we are saying here: whereas the Brahmins have always applied themselves almost exclusively, at least for their personal practice, to the immediate realization of final 'Deliverance', the Kshatriyas developed by preference the study of conditioned and transitory states corresponding to the various stages of the two 'ways of the manifested world', called *deva-wna* and *pitri-yima* (*Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, chap. 21).

It). In India, such is the case of the *hirusas* and the *Puranas*, whereas the study of the *Veda* properly concerns the Brahmins because it is the principle of all sacred knowledge. *Besides, as we shall see later, the distinction between the objects of study suitable for the two castes corresponds in a general way to that of the two parts of the tradition called in the Hindu doctrine shruti and smriti.*

11. We are still speaking of the Brahmins and Kshatriyas taken as a whole. *If there are individual exceptions, they do not in any way affect the principle of caste itself, proving only that the application of this principle can only be approximate, especially under the conditions of the Kali-Yuga.*

knowledge that is the exclusive possession of the latter. The outcome of this is the reversal of the normal relationships between principles and their applications, or even, in the most extreme cases, the pure and simple negation of all transcendent principles. In all such cases we have the substitution of the 'physical' for the 'metaphysical', taking these words in their strictest etymological sense, or in other words what can be called 'naturalism', as we shall see better in what follows.¹²

From this distinction, in sacred or traditional knowledge, between two orders broadly designated as 'principles' and 'applications' (or the 'metaphysical' and the 'physical' orders, as we have just said) was derived the distinction, in the ancient mysteries of both East and West, between what were called the 'greater mysteries' and the 'lesser mysteries', the latter comprising essentially knowledge of nature and the former knowledge of what is beyond nature.¹⁵ This same distinction corresponds precisely to that between 'sacerdotal initiation' and 'royal initiation'. In other words, the knowledge taught in these two mysteries was regarded as necessary to the exercise of the respective functions of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, or the equivalents of these two castes in the institutions of other peoples.^{1.*} But it goes without saying that it was the priesthood that, by virtue

12. Although we speak here of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, since the use of these words greatly facilitates the expression of what we have in mind, it must be clearly understood that all we are saying here does not apply to India only. The same remark holds true wherever these same terms are employed without special reference to the Hindu traditional form—a point we shall elaborate shortly.

13. From a slightly different though closely related point of view, one can also say that the 'lesser mysteries' concern only the possibilities of the human state whereas the 'greater mysteries' concern the supra-human states. By the realization of these possibilities or these states the two mysteries lead respectively to the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and the 'Celestial Paradise', as Dante put it in a passage of his *De Monarchia*; and it should not be forgotten that, as Dante also indicates quite clearly in his *Divine Comedy*, the 'Terrestrial Paradise' should be considered only as a stage on the path leading to the 'Celestial Paradise'. These points will be addressed later.

14. In ancient Egypt, which had a constitution that was distinctly 'theocratic', it seems that the king was assimilated to the 'priestly' caste by virtue of his initiation into the mysteries, and that he was even sometimes chosen from among the members of this caste. This at least is what Plutarch affirms: 'Their kings were appointed

of its teaching function, conferred both initiations and thus assured the effective legitimacy not only of its own members, but also of those of the caste to which the temporal power belonged, it being from this that the 'divine right' of kings derives,¹⁵ as we shall see later. This is so because possession of the 'greater mysteries' implies necessarily and a *fortiori* possession of the 'lesser mysteries', for every consequence and every application is contained in the principle from which it proceeds, the superior function 'eminently' comprising the possibilities of the inferior functions.¹⁶ It is necessarily so in all true hierarchy, which is founded upon the very nature of beings.

One more point should be at least summarily mentioned here, though we do not wish to overstress it: along with the expressions 'sacerdotal initiation' and 'royal initiation', and in parallel with them so to speak, we also come across those of 'sacerdotal art' and 'royal art', which designate the practical application of the knowledge taught in the corresponding initiations, together with all the 'techniques' pertaining to their respective domains. These designations

from the priests or from the military class, since the military class had eminence and honour because of valour, and the priest because of wisdom. But he who was appointed from the military class was at once made one of the priests and a participant in their philosophy, which, for the most part, is veiled in myths and in words containing dim reflexions and adumbrations of the truth....' ('Isis and Osiris', in *t'Imawh: MorMo*, vol.w tr. Frank ('ole Babbitt [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993], par. 9, pay). It is to be noted that the end of this passage contains a very explicit indication of the double meaning of the word 'revelation' (cf. the King of the World, chap. 4, ns).

15. It should be added that in India the third caste, that of the Vaishyas, whose proper functions are those of the economic order, also has access to an initiation entitling it to the qualities, which it has in common with the first two, of *arya* or 'noble' and of *itvijn* or twice-born'. The knowledge belonging properly to this caste represents moreover, in principle at least, only a limited portion of the 'lesser mysteries', such as we have defined them; but this is a point we need not stress here since the object of the present study is only to consider the relations between the first two castes.

16. We can say then that the spiritual power belongs 'formally' to the sacerdotal caste, whereas the temporal power belongs 'eminently' to this same sacerdotal caste and 'formally' to the royal caste, just as according to Aristotle the superior 'forms' contain 'eminently' the interior forms'.

were preserved for a long time in the ancient guilds, and the second—that of 'royal art'—had a curious destiny, for it was transmitted right up to the time of modern Freemasonry, in which of course it subsists, in company with many other terms and symbols, only as a misunderstood vestige of the past.¹⁷ As for the designation 'sacerdotal art', it has entirely disappeared; nevertheless, it was apt for the cathedral builders in the Middle Ages, just as it was for the art of the temple builders of antiquity. But a confusion between the two domains must have taken place due to an at least partial loss of the tradition, itself a consequence of the encroachment of the temporal upon the spiritual; and thus it was that even the very expression 'sacerdotal art' was lost, doubtless toward the time of the Renaissance, which marks in all respects the consummation of the rupture of the Western world with its own traditional doctrines.¹⁸

17. Apropos of this it should be noted that among the Romans, Janus, who was the god of initiation into the mysteries, was at the same time the god of the *Collegia Fabrorum*. This connection is particularly significant from the point of view of the correspondence indicated here. On the transposition by which all art as well as all science can receive a properly 'initiatic' value, see *The Esoterism of Dante*, chap. 2.

18. Some fix the date of this loss of the ancient traditions precisely in the middle of the fifteenth century, a loss that led in 1459 to the reorganization of the brotherhoods of builders on a new basis, from that time forward incomplete. It is to be noted that it is from the end of this epoch that the churches ceased to be oriented in a regular way, a fact of more considerable importance, as regards the present subject, than one may at first think (cf. *The King of the World*, chaps. 8 and 11).

3

KNOWLEDGE & ACTION

WE HAVE said that the relationships between the spiritual and temporal powers must be determined by those of their respective domains. The question, thus brought back to its principle, seems to us very simple, for it is fundamentally nothing other than that of the relationship between knowledge and action. One could object, from what we have just shown, that those who possess temporal power must normally possess a certain knowledge also; however, leaving aside for the moment the fact that they do not possess it of themselves —since they derive it from the spiritual authority—this knowledge is in any case related to applications of doctrine and not to the principles themselves and thus is properly speaking only a knowledge by participation. Knowledge par excellence—the only one that truly deserves this name in its fullest sense—is knowledge of principles, independent of all contingent applications; and this belongs exclusively to those who possess spiritual authority because there is nothing in it deriving from the temporal order, even taking this in its widest sense. Applications of this knowledge on the other hand refer to the temporal order because this knowledge is no longer envisaged only in and for itself, but insofar as it gives to action its law; and it is in this measure that it is necessary to those whose proper function is essentially in the domain of action.

It is obvious that in all its diverse forms—military, judicial, and administrative—the temporal power is entirely engaged in action; by virtue of these very attributions it is confined, then, within the

same limits as action, within the limits that is to say of the world that can properly be called 'human', including in this term moreover possibilities much more extensive than those usually imagined. Spiritual authority on the contrary is based entirely upon knowledge, since, as we have seen, its essential function is the conservation and teaching of doctrine, and thus its domain is as limitless as truth itself.¹ What is reserved for this authority by the very nature of things—what it cannot communicate to men whose functions are of another order because their possibilities do not include it—is transcendent and 'supreme' knowledge,² which lies beyond the 'human' domain and even, more generally, beyond the manifested world—that is to say, knowledge which is no longer 'physical' but 'metaphysical' in the etymological sense of the word. It should be clearly understood that there is no question here of any wish on the part of the sacerdotal caste to keep the knowledge of certain truths for itself, but of a necessity that results directly from the differences of nature existing among beings, differences that, as we have already said, constitute the *raison d'etre* and the foundation of caste distinction. Those who are made for action are not made for pure knowledge, and in a society constituted on truly spiritual bases each person must fulfill the function for which he is really 'qualified'; otherwise, all is confusion and disorder and no function is carried out as it should be—which is precisely the case today.

We are well aware that by reason of this very confusion the considerations we are setting forth here can only appear quite strange to the modern West, where what is called 'spiritual' usually has only a remote connection with the strictly doctrinal point of view and with knowledge free of all contingency. Here one can make a rather curious observation: today people are no longer content simply to distinguish between the spiritual and the temporal, which is legitimate and even necessary, but also want to separate them radically;

1. According to Hindu doctrine, the three terms 'truth, Knowledge, Infinity' are considered identical in the supreme Principle, which is the meaning of the formula *Satyam Jainam Aitaitam Halana*.

2. In India, knowledge (*vidya*), according to its object or its domain, is distinguished into 'supreme' (*paia*) and 'non-supreme' (*apaia*).

nevertheless it happens that the two orders have never been as mixed together as they are at present, and that, above all, temporal preoccupations have never so affected what ought to be absolutely independent of them. This is doubtless inevitable by reason of the very conditions of our epoch, which we have described elsewhere. In order to avoid all false interpretations we should therefore state clearly that what we say here concerns only what we have called spiritual authority in its pure state, of which we should be wary of looking around for examples. If one wishes, this may be thought of as a theoretical type—an 'ideal', so to speak—although in truth this way of considering things is not entirely our own. We do recognize that in historical applications it is always necessary to take contingencies into account, at least to a certain extent; but even while doing so, we have to take the civilization of the West for what it is: a deviation and an anomaly that can be explained by the fact that it corresponds to the last phase of the Kali-Yuga.

But let us return to the relationship between knowledge and action. We have already had occasion to treat this question to a certain extent,³ and consequently we shall not repeat all that was said at that time. It is indispensable however at least to recall the most essential points. We consider the antithesis of East and West in the present state of things to amount to this: the East maintains the superiority of knowledge over action whereas the modern West affirms on the contrary the superiority of action over knowledge (when it does not go so far as to deny knowledge completely). We refer here only to the modern West since things were quite otherwise in antiquity and in the Middle Ages. All traditional doctrines, whether Eastern or Western, are unanimous in affirming the superiority and even the transcendence of knowledge in relation to action, in reference to which it in a way plays the role of Aristotle's 'unmoved mover', which of course does not mean that action has no legitimate place and importance within its own order. But this order is only that of human contingencies. Change would be impossible without a principle from which it proceeds and which, by the very fact that it is the principle of change, cannot itself be subject to

3. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 3.

change, thus being necessarily ‘unmoved’ and at the center of the ‘wheel of things’.⁴

In the same way, action, which belongs to the world of change, cannot have its principle in itself, since it derives its reality from a principle that lies beyond its domain and that can only be found in knowledge. Indeed, knowledge alone enables one to leave behind the world of change or ‘becoming’ and its inherent limitations; and when it attains the immutable, as is the case in principial or metaphysical knowledge—which is knowledge *par excellence*—it itself possesses immutability, for all true knowledge is essentially identification with its object. By the very fact that it implies possession of this knowledge, the spiritual authority also possesses immutability. The temporal power, on the contrary, is subject to all the vicissitudes of the contingent and the transitory unless a higher principle communicates to it, in a measure compatible with its nature and character, the stability it cannot have on its own. This principle can only be that represented by spiritual authority. In order to subsist, then, temporal power needs a consecration that comes from spiritual authority; it is this consecration that confers upon it legitimacy, that is to say conformity with the very order of things. Such was the *raison d’être* of the ‘royal initiation’, as we explained in the preceding chapter; and it is in this that the ‘divine right’ of kings properly consists, what the Far-Eastern tradition calls the ‘mandate of Heaven’: the exercise of temporal power by virtue of a delegation of the spiritual authority, to which that power ‘eminently’ belongs, as we explained earlier.⁶ All action that does not proceed from knowledge is lacking in principle and thus is nothing but a vain agitation; likewise, all temporal power that fails to recognize its subordination

4. The unmoving center is the image of the immutable principle, movement being understood here as the symbol of change in general, of which it is only one particular kind.

5. On the other hand, ‘physical’ knowledge is only knowledge of the laws of change, laws that are merely the reflection of the transcendent principles in nature, the latter being nothing other than the domain of change. Moreover, the Latin *natura* and the Greek *physis* both express the idea of ‘becoming’.

6. This is why the word *melek*, which means ‘king’ in Hebrew and Arabic, has at the same time, and indeed foremost, the meaning of ‘envoy’.

vis-a-vis spiritual authority is vain and illusory: separated from its principle, it can only exert itself in a disorderly way and move inexorably to its own ruin.

Since we have just spoken of the 'mandate of Heaven', it will not be out of place to relate here how, according to Confucius himself, this mandate was to be carried out: 'In order to make the natural virtues shine in the hearts of all men, the ancient princes first of all applied themselves to governing their own principality well. In order to govern their principality well, they first restored proper order in their families. In order to establish proper order in their families, they worked hard at perfecting themselves first. In order to perfect themselves, they first regulated the movements of their hearts. To regulate the movements of their hearts, they first perfected their will. To perfect their will, they developed their knowledge to the highest degree. One develops knowledge by scrutinizing the nature of things. Once the nature of things is scrutinized, knowledge attains its highest degree. Knowledge having arrived at its highest degree, will becomes perfect. Will being perfect, the movements of the heart are controlled. The movements of the heart having been controlled, every man is free of faults. After having corrected oneself, one establishes order in the family. With order reigning in the family, the principality is well-governed. With the principality being well-governed, the empire soon enjoys peace.'

One must admit that this is a conception of the role of the sovereign that differs singularly from what this role is imagined to be in the modern West, making it all the more difficult to put into practice, although also giving it an altogether different significance; and one can note in particular that knowledge is indicated explicitly as the primary condition for the establishment of order even in the temporal domain.

It is easy now to understand that the reversal of the relationships between knowledge and action in a civilization is a consequence of the usurpation of supremacy by the temporal power; this power must in fact claim that there is no domain superior to its own, which is precisely that of action. If matters stopped there, however,

7. *Tu-Hio*, pt. 1, tr. P. Cotivreur.

we would still not have reached our present impasse, where knowledge is denied any value. For this to take place, the Kshatriyas themselves had to be deprived of their power by the lower castes.⁸ Indeed, as we observed earlier, even when the Kshatriyas rebelled, they still had a tendency to affirm a truncated doctrine, one falsified by ignorance or denial of all that goes beyond the 'physical' order, but one within which there still remains certain real knowledge, however inferior. They made a pretense of passing off this incomplete and irregular doctrine as the expression of the genuine tradition, an attitude—condemnable though it may be as regards the truth—not altogether devoid of a certain grandeur.⁹ Besides, do not terms such as 'nobility', 'heroism', and 'honor' designate in their original acceptations qualities that are essentially inherent to the nature of the Kshatriyas? On the other hand, when the elements corresponding to the social functions of an inferior order come to dominate in their turn, all traditional doctrine, even if mutilated or altered, disappears entirely; there subsists not even the slightest vestige of 'sacred science', so that the reign of 'profane knowledge' is ushered in, the reign, that is, of ignorance pretending to be science and taking pleasure in its nothingness. All of which can be summed up in a few words: the supremacy of the Brahmins maintains doctrinal orthodoxy; the revolt of the Kshatriyas leads to heterodoxy; but with the domination of the lower castes comes intellectual night, and this is what in our day has become of a West that threatens to spread its own darkness over the entire world.

Some will perhaps reproach us for speaking as if castes existed everywhere, and for improperly extending to all social organizations designations that properly fit only India; but since these latter

8. In particular, the fact of according a preponderant importance to considerations of an economic order, which is a very striking characteristic of our times, may be regarded as a sign of domination by the Vaishyas, whose approximate equivalent is represented by the bourgeoisie in the Western world. It is indeed the latter who have dominated since the French Revolution.

9. This attitude of the rebel Kshatriyas could be characterized quite exactly by the designation 'Luciferianism', which must not be confused with 'Satanism', although there is doubtless a certain connection between the two: 'Luciferianism' is the refusal to recognize a superior authority whereas 'Satanism' is the reversal of normal relationships and of the hierarchical order, the latter being often a consequence of the former, just as after his fall Lucifer became Satan.

essentially point to functions necessarily found in every society, we do not think this extension unwarranted. It is true that caste is not just a function; it is also and above all that which, in the nature of individuals fits them to exercise this or that function in preference to any other, but these differences of nature and aptitude also exist wherever there are men. The difference between a society where there are castes in the true sense of the word and a society where there are none is that, in the first case, there is a normal correspondence between the nature of individuals and the functions they carry out (subject only to errors of application that are in any event exceptions), whereas in the second this correspondence does not exist, or at least exists only accidentally, the latter case showing what happens when the social organization lacks a traditional foundation.¹⁰ In normal cases there is always something comparable to the institution of castes, with the modifications proper to this or that people; but the organization we find in India is the one that represents the most complete type with respect to the application of metaphysical doctrine to the human order. In short, this reason alone should suffice to justify the terms we have adopted in preference to others that we might have borrowed from institutions having, by their more specialized form, a much more limited field of application, for these other terms would be unable to furnish the same possibilities for expressing certain truths of a very general order.¹¹ Besides, there is another reason which, though more contingent, is not negligible: it is very remarkable that the social organization of the Western world in the Middle Ages was based precisely on the division of castes, the clergy corresponding to the Brahmins, the nobility to the Kshatriyas, the third-estate to the Vaishyas, and the serfs to the Shudras.¹² They were not castes in the full meaning

10. It hardly needs pointing out that social 'classes', as they are understood in the West today, have nothing in common with true castes, being at most only a kind of counterfeit of them. without validity or significance, since they are not at all based upon the differences in possibilities implied in the nature of individuals.

11. The reason for this is that, among the traditional doctrines having survived up to the present day, the Hindu doctrine seems to derive most directly from the primordial tradition. But this is a point on which we need not dwell here.

12. The old English designations 'Lords Spiritual' and 'Lords Temporal' refer to the first two of these Western 'castes'. Ed.

of the word, but this coincidence, which is certainly not fortuitous, still permits a very easy transposition of terms in passing from the one case to the other; and this remark will find its application in the historical examples we shall consider below.

4

BRAHMINS & KSHATRIYAS: THEIR RESPECTIVE NATURES

WISDOM and strength: such are the respective at-tributes of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, or, if one prefers, spiritual authority and temporal power; and it is interesting to note that among the ancient Egyptians one of the meanings of the symbol of the Sphinx joined precisely these two attributes, viewed according to their normal relationships. In fact, its human head can be considered as representing wisdom and its leonine body as representing strength. The head is the spiritual authority which directs, and the body is the temporal power which acts. It should be noted moreover that the Sphinx is always represented at rest, for the temporal power is taken here in the 'non-acting' state, in its spiritual principle where it is contained 'eminently' and therefore as a possibility of action only, or, to put it better, in the divine principle, which unifies the spiritual and the temporal because it lies beyond their distinction and is the common source whence both proceed—the first directly, and the second only indirectly through the mediation of the first. Elsewhere we find a verbal symbol that by its hieroglyphic constitution is an exact equivalent of the Sphinx: this is the word *Druid*, which is read as *dru-vid*, the first root signifying strength and the second wisdom.¹ Besides showing that royalty is contained implicitly within the priesthood, the union of the two attributes in this name, like

1. This name moreover has a double meaning related to yet another symbolism, *dru* or *thru*, like the Latin *adui* designating both strength and the oak (in Greek *δρυς*). In Sanskrit on the other hand, *vid* is wisdom or knowledge, assimilated to

that of the two elements of the Sphinx in one and the same being, is doubtless a memory of the remote epoch when the two powers were still united in the state of primordial indifferenciation, in their common and supreme principle.²

We have already dedicated a special study to this supreme principle of the two powers,³ in which we indicated how this principle, at first visible, became invisible and hidden, and retreated from the 'external world' in proportion as the latter moved away from its primordial state—which was to lead inevitably to an apparent sundering of the two powers. We also showed how this principle is found, under various names and symbols, in all traditions, and how it appears in particular in the Judeo-Christian tradition in the figures of Melchizedek and the Magi-Kings. Here we will simply recall that in Christianity recognition of this unique principle still subsists, at least theoretically, and this is confirmed by the affirmation of the two functions of priesthood and royalty as inseparable in the person 'of Christ. From a certain point of view, when these two functions are related in this way to their principle, they can also be envisaged as complementary; in this case, although the second has its immediate principle in the first, there is a kind of correlation between the two in their very distinction. In other words, from the moment the priesthood does not hold the regular, effective exercise of royalty, the respective representatives of priesthood and royalty must then derive their power from a common source that is 'beyond caste'. The hierarchical difference between them lies in the fact that the priesthood receives its power directly from this source, with which it is in immediate contact by its very nature, whereas royalty, owing

vision, but also to the mistletoe: thus, *dru-vid* is the mistletoe of the oak, which was in fact one of the principal symbols of Druidism, and at the same time it signifies the man in whom abides wisdom sustained by strength. Moreover, the root *dru*, as is seen in the equivalent Sanskrit forms *dhru* and *dhri*, includes the idea of stability, which is also one of the meanings of the symbol of the tree in general and of the oak in particular; and this sense of stability corresponds very exactly to the attitude of the Sphinx in repose.

2. As we pointed out above in the citation from Plutarch, the incorporation in Egypt of the king into the priesthood was like a vestige of this ancient state of affairs.

3. *The King of the World*.

to the more external and strictly worldly character of its function, can receive its power only through the intermediary of the priesthood. Indeed, the latter truly plays the role of 'mediator' between heaven and earth, and it is not without reason that in the Western traditions the priesthood in all its plenitude received the symbolic name of 'pontificate', for, as Saint Bernard says, 'the Pontiff, as indicated by the etymology of his name, is a kind of bridge [pout] between God and man.'¹ If one then wishes to go back to the primal origin of the priestly and royal powers, one must look to the 'celestial world'. This can be understood moreover both literally and symbolically,⁵ but to develop this question would exceed the scope of our present study, and if we have nonetheless provided this brief sketch, it is because we will not be able to avoid referring to this common source of the two powers in what follows.

Returning to the starting-point of this digression, it is obvious that the attributes of wisdom and strength relate to knowledge and action respectively. In India, on the other hand, it is still said in connection with this same point of view that the Brahmin is the type of stable beings and the Kshatriya is the type of changing beings.⁶ In

4. Trucus de Minibus di officio Episcopono 111,9. In this connection, and in reference to what we said about the Sphinx, it is to be noted that the latter represents Heru pa khert, the 'Lord of the Two Horizons', that is the principle uniting the two worlds, the sensible and the suprasensible or the terrestrial and the celestial; and this is one of the reasons why, during the early period of Christianity in Egypt, the Sphinx was regarded as a symbol of Christ, another reason being that the Sphinx, like the griffin spoken of by Dante, is 'the animal of two natures' and as such represents the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. Yet a third reason can be found in the aspect by which it represents, as we have said, the union of the two powers—spiritual and temporal, priestly and royal—in their supreme principle.

5. Involved here is the traditional idea of the 'three worlds' which we have explained elsewhere on various occasions. From this point of view royalty corresponds to the 'terrestrial world', the priesthood to the 'intermediate world', and their common principle to the 'celestial world'; but it should be added that from the time this principle became invisible to men, the priesthood came to outwardly represent the 'celestial world' as well.

is the sum total of all beings, thus divided into the stable and the changing, is designated in Sanskrit by the composite term *sthavara-jangama*; thus all beings, according to their natures, stand principally in relation either with the Brahmins or with the Kshatriyas.

other words, in the social order—which is moreover in perfect correspondence with the cosmic order—the first represents the immutable element and the second the mutable element. Here again, the immutability in question is that of knowledge, which is figured by the immobile posture of a man in meditation; for its part, mobility is inherent to action by reason of its transitory and temporary character. Finally, the proper natures of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya are distinguished fundamentally by the predominance of different *guilds*. As we have explained elsewhere,⁷ the Hindu doctrine envisages three *gunas*, which are the constituent qualities of beings in all their states of manifestation: *sattva*, conformity to the pure essence of universal Being, which is identified with intelligible light or knowledge and represented as an ascending tendency; *rajas*, the expansive impulse, by which the being develops within a certain state and, so to speak, at a determined level of existence; and lastly *taigas*, obscurity, assimilated to ignorance and represented as a descending tendency. In the primordial indifferentiation the *gunas* are in perfect equilibrium, and all manifestation represents a rupture of that equilibrium. These three elements are present in all beings, but in varying proportions that determine their respective tendencies. In the nature of the Brahmin it is *sattva* that predominates, orienting him toward the supra-human states, and in the nature of the Kshatriya it is *rajas*, which tends to the realization of the possibilities contained in the human state. To the predominance of *sattva* corresponds that of intellectuality, and to the predominance of *rajas* that of what, for lack of a better term, might be called sentiment, and this is another justification of what we were saying earlier: the Kshatriya is not made for pure knowledge. The path suitable for the Kshatriya is what could be called ‘devotional’, if one may take the liberty of using such a word to render, albeit

7. *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, chap. 4.

8. *To the three gunas correspond the symbolic colors: white to sattva, red to rajas, and black to taivas*. As regards our present subject, the first two of these colors also symbolize spiritual authority and temporal power respectively, and it is interesting to note apropos of this that the banner of the kings of France was red; the later substitution of white for red as the royal color marks in a way the usurpation of one of the attributes of the spiritual authority.

imperfectly, the Sanskrit term *bhakti*, that is to say the path that takes as its point of departure an element of an emotive order; and, although this path is found outside of strictly religious forms, the role of the emotive element is nowhere so developed as here, where it colors the expression of the entire doctrine with a special tinge.

This last remark allows us to understand the true *raison d'être* of these religious forms: they are especially suitable for races whose aptitudes are generally speaking directed above all toward action, those races, that is, which, when envisaged collectively, exhibit a preponderance of the 'rajasic' element that characterizes the nature of the Kshatriyas. This is the situation we find in the Western world, which is why, as we have explained elsewhere,⁹ it is said in India that if the West were to return to a normal state and acquire a regular social organization, many Kshatriyas would be found there but few Brahmins; and this also explains why religion, understood in its strictest sense, is properly Western, and also why there does not seem to be a pure spiritual authority in the West, or at least any that asserts itself outwardly as such with the characteristics we have just described. Nevertheless, adaptation to a religious form, like the establishment of any other traditional form, is the responsibility of a true spiritual authority in the fullest sense of this term; and this authority, which then takes on a religious appearance, can at the same time also remain something else in itself so long as there are true Brahmins at its heart, by which we mean an intellectual elite that remains aware of what lies beyond all particular forms, that is to say of the profound essence of the tradition. For such an elite the form can only play the role of 'support', while also providing a means for those who do not have access to pure intellectuality to participate in the tradition; but the latter naturally do not see anything beyond the form, for their own possibilities do not let them go any further. Consequently, the spiritual authority need not show itself to them under any other aspect than that corresponding to their nature,¹⁰ although, exterior as it may be, its teaching is always

9. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 3.

10. Symbolically, it is said that when the gods appear to men they always adopt forms in keeping with the nature of those to whom they appear.

inspired by the spirit of the higher doctrine." But it may happen that once this adaptation is made, those who are the depositories of that traditional form subsequently find themselves confined to this adaptation, having lost effective consciousness of what lies beyond it. This may be due moreover to various circumstances, above all to the 'mingling of castes', by reason of which there are found among them men who are in reality for the most part Kshatriyas. From this it is easy to understand that such a case is possible principally in the West, all the more in that the religious form there particularly lends itself to this. The combination of intellectual and sentimental elements that characterizes this form actually creates a kind of mixed domain where knowledge is envisaged less in itself than in its application to action. If the distinction between 'sacerdotal initiation' and 'royal initiation' is not maintained clearly and rigorously, we have an intermediate ground where all sorts of confusions can arise, not to mention certain conflicts that would not even be conceivable if the temporal power had to face a pure spiritual authority.¹²

Our present purpose is not to inquire as to which of these two possibilities corresponds to the religious state of the Western world at present, and the reason for this is easy to understand: a religious authority cannot have the appearance of what we call a pure spiritual authority even if it carries such a reality within itself. There was certainly a time when the religious power did effectively possess this

11. This is again the distinction between 'those who know' and 'those who believe'.

12. When 'supreme' knowledge has been forgotten there exists only a 'non-supreme' knowledge, no longer due to a revolt of the Kshatriyas as in the case described earlier, but rather to a sort of intellectual degeneration of the element corresponding by its function, if not by its nature, to the Brahmins. In this case the tradition is not altered as it is in the former, but only diminished in its superior part. At the end-point of this degeneration there is no longer any effective knowledge, for only its virtuality subsists due to the conservation of the 'letter', and nothing remains but a simple belief shared by all without exception. We must add that the two cases being distinguished here theoretically can in fact also be combined, or at least they can occur concurrently in the same milieu and can reciprocally condition one another, so to speak. But no matter, for on this point we do not intend to make any application to specific facts.

reality, but is this still the case?¹³ This would be all the more difficult to determine because when true intellectuality has been lost as completely as it has in modern times, it is natural that the superior and 'interior' part of the tradition should become more and more hidden and inaccessible, since those who are capable of understanding it are no more than a tiny minority. Until we have proof to the contrary, we claim that such is the case, and that consciousness of the integral tradition, with all that it implies, still subsists effectively among some few, however small their number may be; besides, even if this consciousness had entirely disappeared, the fact remains that by the mere conservation of the 'letter' and its protection from any alteration, every regularly constituted traditional form always maintains the possibility of its own restoration, which will one day take place if among its representatives there are those who possess the requisite intellectual aptitudes.

In any case, even if by some means we had more precise information on this subject, we would not be obliged to state it publicly unless we were led to do so by exceptional circumstances, and the reason is this: an authority that is only religious is nevertheless, even in the most unfavorable case, still a relative spiritual authority; we mean that, without being a fully effective spiritual authority, it nonetheless bears this within itself from the beginning as a virtuality; and from this very fact it can always carry out this function externally;¹⁴ it thus legitimately plays this role vis-a-vis the temporal power, and it must be truly considered as such in its relations with the latter. Those who have understood our point of view will

13. This question corresponds, in another form, to the one raised earlier on the subject of the 'teaching Church' and the 'Church taught'.

14. It should be clearly noted that those who thus fulfill the external function of the Brahmins without really having the requisite qualifications are even so not usurpers, as would be rebel Kshatriyas if they were to take the place of the Brahmins in order to set up a divergent tradition. This is merely a situation arising from the unfavorable conditions of a particular milieu, a situation moreover that ensures the maintenance of the doctrine in the fullest measure compatible with these conditions. In the worst instance, one could always apply here the saying of the Gospel: 'I he scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses's seat; so practice and observe whatever 'hey tell you....' (Mall. 23:2-3).

realize without difficulty that in case of a conflict between a spiritual authority—whatever it may be, even a relative one—and a purely temporal power we must in principle always take the side of the spiritual authority; we say ‘in principle’, for it must be clearly understood that we have not the slightest intention of actively intervening in such conflicts, nor above all of taking any part whatever in the quarrels of the Western world, for this could never be our role.

In the examples to be considered in what follows we will not therefore make any distinction between those concerning a pure spiritual authority and those concerning only a relative spiritual authority; in every case we shall consider as a spiritual authority that which fulfills this function socially. Moreover, the striking similarities presented by all these cases, however distant they may be from one another historically, will sufficiently justify this assimilation. We would only have to make a distinction if the question of the effective possession of pure intellectuality happened to arise, and this question does not in fact arise here; similarly, we would not have to demarcate the exact boundary, so to speak, of an authority that is exclusively attached to a particular traditional form except in cases where it claimed to surpass these limits, and such cases do not figure among those we shall examine.

On this last point we shall recall what we said earlier: the superior ‘eminently’ contains the inferior; whoever then is competent within the limits that define his own domain, is so also *fortiori* for all other domains that lie within these same limits, whereas, on the other hand, he is not competent for that which lies beyond. If this

simple rule were observed and applied properly—at least by those who have a true notion of hierarchy—no confusion of domains and no error of ‘jurisdictions’, so to speak, would ever occur. Some will no doubt see only precautions of a dubious utility in the distinctions and reservations we have formulated here, and others will be tempted to assign to them only a theoretical value; but we think that there are still others who will understand that they are in reality something else entirely, and it is these latter whom we invite to reflect on them with particular attention.

5

THE DEPENDENCE OF ROYALTY ON PRIESTHOOD

LET US now direct our attention to the relationship between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas in the social organization of India. To the Kshatriyas normally belongs outward power since the field of action, which concerns them directly, is the external and perceptible world; but this power is nothing without an interior principle, a purely spiritual one, that incarnates the authority of the Brahmins and in which it finds its only real guarantee. We see here that the relationship between the two powers could still be represented by that between the 'interior' and the 'exterior', a relationship that in fact symbolizes well that between knowledge and action or, to put it differently, between the 'mover' and the 'moved', taking up again the idea we explained above in reference to Aristotelean theory as well as Hindu doctrine.¹ It is from the harmony between this 'interior' and 'exterior'—a harmony moreover that must not be conceived as a kind of 'parallelism', which would imply an ignorance of the essential differences of the two domains—that there results the normal life of what can be called the social entity. By the use of such an expression, we do not mean to suggest any sort of comparison of the collectivity to a living being, especially as certain people have abused this notion in the strangest way in recent times,

1. Here one could again apply the image of the center and the circumference of the 'wheel of things'.

mistaking what is mere analogy and correspondence for a true identity.²

In exchange for the guarantee of their power by the spiritual authority, the Kshatriyas must use this power to ensure that the Brahmins will have the means to peacefully accomplish their proper function of knowledge and teaching, sheltered from trouble and agitation. This is what is represented in Hindu symbolism by the image of Skanda, lord of war, protecting the meditation of Ganesha, lord of knowledge.⁵ It should be noted that the same thing was taught, even outwardly, in the Western Middle Ages; indeed, Saint Thomas Aquinas expressly declares that all human functions are subordinate to contemplation as their superior end, 'so that, when considered properly, they all seem to be in the service of those who contemplate the truth,' the true *raison d'être* of the entire government of civil life fundamentally lying in the assurance of the peace necessary for this contemplation.

One sees how far this is from the modern point of view, and also how the predominance of a tendency to action, as it incontestably exists among Westerners, does not necessarily bring about the disparagement of contemplation, that is of knowledge, at least so long as a people possesses a civilization of a traditional character, whatever form that tradition may take—which in the context cited was religious, whence the theological nuance that Saint Thomas always

2. The living being bears within itself the principle of its unity, which is superior to the multiplicity of the elements that enter into its constitution, and since there is nothing similar in the collectivity, which is strictly speaking only the sum of the individuals that compose it, a word such as 'organization' when applied to either cannot be taken in strictly the same sense. One can say however that the presence of a spiritual authority introduces into the social collectivity a principle superior to its constituent individuals, since this authority by its nature and origin is itself 'supra-individual'. But this presupposes that society be not envisaged merely under its temporal aspect, and this consideration—the only one that can make of it something more than a simple collectivity in the sense just indicated—is precisely one of those that escapes most completely the contemporary sociologists who claim to identify society with a living being.

3. Ganesha and Skanda are moreover represented as brothers, both being sons of Shiva, which is another way of saying that both the spiritual and the temporal powers proceed from a common principle.

attached to contemplation, whereas in the East the latter has always been envisaged in the order of pure metaphysics.

On the other hand, in Hindu doctrine and in the social organization that is its direct application—and therefore among a people where a contemplative aptitude understood in the sense of pure intellectuality is manifestly preponderant and even generally developed to a degree found perhaps nowhere else—the place accorded to the Kshatriyas and consequently to action, while subordinate (as it should normally be), is nevertheless very far from negligible, since it comprises all that can be called the visible power. Besides, as we have already noted on another occasion,⁴ those who, under the influence of the false interpretations fashionable in the West, might doubt this very real though relative importance accorded to action by Hindu doctrine, as well as by all the other traditional doctrines, need only refer to the Bhagavad Gita to be convinced otherwise, for we must not forget that this work can only be rightly understood if we recall that it is one of those especially destined for the use of Kshatriyas.⁵ The Brahmins have only to exercise an as it were invisible authority which as such may be unknown to the vulgar but which is nonetheless the immediate principle of all visible power, being like the pivot around which all contingent things turn, the fixed axis around which the world accomplishes its revolution, the pole or the immutable center that directs and regulates the cosmic movement without participating therein.⁶

4. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 2.

5. *The Bhagavad Gita is strictly speaking only an episode in the Mahabharata, itself one of the two hirasas, the other being the Adanayana.* This character of the *Bhagavad Gita* explains the use it makes of a martial symbolism, comparable in certain respects to that of the 'holy war' among the Muslims. There is moreover an inner way of reading this book, which gives it its profound meaning, and it is then called the *Guna-Gita*.

6. The axis and the pole are above all symbols of the one principle of the two powers, as we have explained in the *King of the World*, but they can also be applied to spiritual authority in relation to temporal power, as we are doing here, because, by reason of its essential attribute of knowledge, this authority is effectively part of the immutability of the supreme principle, which is what these symbols fundamentally express, and also because, as we said above, it represents this principle directly in relation to the external world.

The dependence of the temporal power on the spiritual authority has its visible sign in the anointing of kings, who are not truly 'legitimized' until they have received investiture and consecration from the hands of the priesthood, implying the transmission of a 'spiritual influence' necessary for the regular exercise of their functions.⁷ This influence has at times manifested itself outwardly with distinctly perceptible effects, and we can cite as an example of this the healing power of the kings of France, which was indeed directly connected to their anointing, for the influence in question was not transmitted to the king by his predecessor but received only by virtue of this anointing, which shows clearly that this influence does not belong properly to the king but is conferred on him by a kind of delegation of the spiritual authority, in which, as we indicated above, the 'divine right' truly consists. The king, then, is merely a depository of this influence and consequently can lose it in certain circumstances, which explains why in the Christendom of the Middle Ages the pope could release subjects from their oath of allegiance to their sovereign.⁸ Moreover, in the Catholic tradition Saint Peter is depicted holding in his hands not only the golden key of sacerdotal power but also the silver key of royal power. For the ancient Romans these two keys were an attribute of Janus, signifying the keys to the 'greater mysteries' and the 'lesser mysteries' which, as we have explained, also correspond respectively to 'sacerdotal' and 'royal' initiation.⁹ Here it should be noted that Janus represents the common source of the two powers, whereas Saint Peter is properly the incarnation of the sacerdotal power, the two

7. *We have been translating as 'spiritual influence' the Hebrew and Arabic word barakah.* The rite of 'laying on of hands' is one of the most customary modes of transmitting the *barakah*, in particular of bringing about through it certain kinds of healing.

8. The Islamic tradition also teaches that the *barakah* can be lost, while in the tradition of the Far East the 'mandate of Heaven' is likewise revocable when the sovereign fails to carry out his functions in a regular way, that is in harmony with the cosmic order itself.

9. According to another symbolism they are also the keys to the gates of the 'Celestial Paradise' and the 'Terrestrial Paradise', as we shall later see in one of

keys being transferred to him because it is through his intermediation that the royal power is transmitted, whereas the sacerdotal power is itself received directly from the source.¹⁰

What has just been said defines the normal relationships between spiritual authority and temporal power, and if these relationships were everywhere and always observed, no conflict would ever arise between them, for each would occupy its own proper place in the hierarchy of functions and beings, a hierarchy that, we stress again, conforms strictly to the very nature of things. Unfortunately this is far from always being the case, and this normal relationship is only too often misunderstood and even inverted. Here it is first of all important to note that it is already a grave error simply to consider the spiritual and the temporal as two correlative or complementary terms, and to lose sight of the fact that the latter finds its principle in the former. This error can arise all the more easily since from a certain point of view, as we have already said, this consideration of their complementarism also has its *raison d'être*, at least when the two powers are considered in their state of division, where one is no longer the supreme and ultimate principle of the other, but only its immediate principle, which as such is still relative.

As we have explained elsewhere regarding knowledge and action,¹¹ this complementarity is not false but only insufficient, for

Duile's texts; but it would perhaps not be opportune, at least for the present, to give certain precise 'technical' details on the 'power of the keys', nor to explain various other things connected more or less directly with them. If we bring up this subject here it is only so that those who have some knowledge of these things may see that our reserve is deliberate and not due to any obligation.

10. As for the transmission of royal power there are however exceptional cases where for special reasons it is conferred directly by representatives of the supreme power, the source of the other two: thus kings Saul and David were not anointed by the high priest but by the prophet Samuel. This can be compared with what we said elsewhere (*The King of the World* chap. 4) on the threefold character of Christ as prophet, priest, and king in connection with the respective functions of the three Magi-Kings, who themselves correspond to the 'three worlds', as we recalled in a previous note, the 'prophetic' function here implying a direct inspiration and corresponding properly to the 'celestial world'.

11. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 2.

it corresponds to a still exterior point of view, as indeed does the very division of these two powers, made necessary by a state of the world in which the unique and supreme power is no longer within the reach of ordinary humanity. One could even say that when they are differentiated the two powers inevitably first appear in their normal relationship of subordination, and that they are seen as correlatives only in a later historical phase of the cycle's descent. It is to this new phase that certain symbolic expressions particularly emphasizing the aspect of complementarity correspond, although a correct interpretation could show that they also indicate the relationship of subordination. Such is the case of the well-known (but in the West little understood) parable of the blind man and the lame man, which in one of its principal meanings actually represents the relationship between the active life and the contemplative life: action left to itself is blind, and the essential immutability of knowledge is expressed outwardly by an immobility comparable to that of the lame man. The point of view of complementarity is represented by the mutual aid of the two men, each compensating by his own faculties for what is lacking in the other; and if the origin of this parable, or at least this particular application of it,¹² is to be related to Confucianism, it is easy to see that the latter must confine itself to this point of view by the very fact that it is itself confined exclusively to the human and social order. We must note apropos of this that in China the distinction between Taoism, which is a purely metaphysical doctrine, and Confucianism, which is a social doctrine (both

12. There is another application of the same parable, no longer social but cosmological, to be found in the doctrines of India, specifically in the Sankhya. The lame man is Purusha insofar as he is immutable or 'non-acting', and the blind man is Prakriti, the undifferentiated potentiality of which is likened to the darkness of chaos. These are in effect two complementary principles considered as poles of universal manifestation, both proceeding moreover from a single superior principle, which is pure Being, that is, Ishvara, consideration of which exceeds the limits of the special point of view of the Sankhya. In relating this interpretation to the one given above, it should be noted that an analogical correspondence can be established between contemplation or knowledge and Purusha, and between action and Prakriti; but we cannot enter into an explanation of these two principles here; instead we refer the interested reader to what we have written on this subject in *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*.

proceeding moreover from the same integral tradition, which represents their common principle) corresponds very exactly to the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal.¹³ And we should add that the importance of 'non-action' from the Taoist point of view particularly justifies the symbolism employed in the fable in question for whomever looks at it from the outside.¹⁴ We should, however, carefully note that it is the lame man who plays the leading role in the association of the two men, and that his very position – mounted on the blind man's shoulders—symbolizes the superiority of contemplation over action, a superiority that Confucius himself was far from disputing in principle, as is shown in an account of his meeting with Lao Tzu preserved by the historian Su-Ma-Chi'en, in which he admitted that he was not 'born to knowledge', that is that he had not attained knowledge par excellence, which is knowledge of the purely metaphysical order, and which, as we said above, by its very nature belongs exclusively to those who possess true spiritual authority.¹⁵

If then it is an error to envisage the spiritual and the temporal merely as correlatives, there is an even graver error which consists in claiming to subordinate the spiritual to the temporal, that is to say, knowledge to action. This error, which completely reverses the normal relationship, corresponds to the tendency that generally characterizes the modern West, and it can obviously occur only in a period of very advanced intellectual decadence. In our time, moreover,

13. This division of the Hat-Eastern tradition into two distinct branches was accomplished in the sixth century before the Christian era, an epoch the special character of which we have previously drawn attention to (*The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 1), and to which we shall return later on.

14. We say 'from the outside' because, from the inner point of view, 'nonaction' is in reality supreme activity in all its plenitude; but, precisely because of its total and absolute character, this activity does not appear outwardly like activities that are particular, determined, and relative.

15. It is clear from this that there is no opposition in principle between Taoism and Confucianism, which are not and cannot be rival schools, since each has its own sharply distinct domain. If there have nevertheless been disputes, at times even violent ones (as we noted above), these were due above all to the misunderstandings and the exclusivism of the Confucianists, who were forgetful of the example given by their own master.

some go yet further in this direction, even as far as to deny the very value of knowledge as such, and also, proceeding quite logically—to the negation pure and simple of all spiritual authority. This last degree of degeneration, which implies domination by the lowest castes, is one of the characteristics of the final phase of the *Kali-Yuga*. If we consider religion in particular, since this is the special form that the spiritual takes in the Western world, this reversal of relations can be expressed in the following way: instead of regarding the entire social order as deriving from religion, as being suspended from it so to speak and finding its principle therein (as was the case in medieval Christendom, and as it was equally in Islam, which is quite similar to it in this respect), today people see religion at most only as one element of the social order, one element among others of equal value. This is the enslavement of the spiritual to the temporal, even its absorption by it, pending the inevitable complete negation. To consider things in this way amounts perforce to ‘humanizing’ religion, that is, to treating religion as a purely human fact of the social order, or better still, of the ‘sociological’ or psychological order, depending on one’s preference. In truth, this is no longer religion, for religion essentially includes something ‘supra-human’ lacking which we are no longer in the spiritual domain, for the temporal and the human are essentially identical, as we explained earlier. Thus we have here a veritable implicit negation of religion and the spiritual, whatever the appearances may be, a negation such that the explicit and avowed negation will amount less to the establishment of a new order than simply to the recognition of a fait accompli. In this way the reversal of relations prepares directly for the suppression of the superior term – something it already implies, at least virtually—just as the revolt of the Kshatriyas against the authority of the Brahmins prepares for and summons as it were the ascendancy of the lowest castes, as we shall see. And those who have followed us this far will easily understand that there is something more in this parallel than a simple comparison.

6

THE REVOLT OF THE KSHATRIYAS

AMONG almost all peoples and throughout diverse epochs— and with mounting frequency as we approach our times— the wielders of temporal power have tried, as we have said, to free themselves of all superior authority, claiming to hold their power from themselves alone, and so to separate completely the spiritual from the temporal, or even to subordinate the first to the second. This ‘insubordination’, taken in the etymological sense, has proceeded to differing degrees, the most advanced also being the most recent, as we indicated in the preceding chapter. It has indeed never gone so far in this direction as in modern times, and above all it seems that the various ideas that went along with it in former times were never so integrated into the general mentality as they have become during the last centuries. In this connection, let us repeat what we have already said elsewhere on ‘individualism’ considered as a characteristic of the modern world:¹ the function of the spiritual authority is the only one that relates back to a supra-individual domain; and from the moment this authority goes unacknowledged, it is logical that individualism should immediately appear, at least as a tendency if not as a well-defined affirmation,² since all other social functions, beginning with the ‘governmental’ (which is that of the temporal power), are of a purely human order, individualism being precisely the reduction of the whole of civilization to

1. the Crisis of the Modern World, chap. 5.

2. Whatever form it may take, this affirmation is in reality a more or less dissimulated denial of all principles superior to the individuality.

human elements alone. It is the same with 'naturalism', as was mentioned earlier: since it is linked to metaphysical and transcendent knowledge, the spiritual authority alone has a truly 'supernatural' character, all the rest being of a natural or 'physical' order, as we pointed out regarding the kind of learning that in a traditional civilization is primarily the prerogative of the Kshatriyas. Moreover, individualism and naturalism are quite closely interdependent, for they are basically only two aspects of one and the same thing, looked at either with respect to man or to the world; and it may be said generally that 'naturalistic' or anti-metaphysical doctrines appear in a civilization when the element representing the temporal power becomes predominant over that representing the spiritual authority.³

This is what happened in India itself when the Kshatriyas, no longer content to occupy the second rank in the hierarchy of social functions (even though this second rank included the exercise of all external and visible power), revolted against the authority of the Brahmins and tried to free themselves of all dependence upon them. Here history offers a striking confirmation of what we said above, that the temporal power brings about its own ruin when it disregards its subordination to the spiritual authority, because, like everything belonging to the world of change, it is not sufficient unto itself since change is inconceivable and contradictory without reference to an immutable principle. Any conception that denies the immutable by placing the being entirely in the world of 'becoming' involves an element of contradiction; it will be eminently anti-

' metaphysical since the metaphysical domain is precisely that of the

3. Another curious fact, which we can only point to in passing, is the important role very often played by a feminine element, or one symbolically represented as such, in the doctrines of the Kshatriyas, whether in doctrines regularly constituted for their use, or in the heterodox ideas that they sometimes embrace. In this connection we may even point out that the existence among certain peoples of a feminine priesthood seems to be linked to the domination of the warrior caste, a fact that can be explained on one hand by the preponderance of the 'rajasic' and emotive element among Kshatriyas, and on the other, and above all, by the correspondence in the cosmic order of the feminine with *Prakriti* or 'primordial Nature', which is the principle of 'becoming' and of temporal mutation.

immutable, of what is beyond nature or 'becoming'; and it could also be called 'temporal', thereby indicating that its point of view is exclusively that of succession.

It should be noted moreover that the very use of the word 'temporal', when applied to the power so designated, has as its *raison d'être* to signify that this power does not extend beyond what is involved in succession, or what is subject to change. Modern 'evolutionist' theories in their various forms are not the only examples of this error that consists in placing all reality in 'becoming', although some have given it a special nuance by introducing the recent idea of 'progress': theories of this kind have existed since antiquity, notably among the Greeks, and also in certain schools of Buddhism,⁴ which should moreover be regarded as deviant or degenerate forms although in the West it has become customary to consider them as representing 'original Buddhism'. In reality, the more closely one investigates what is known of the latter, the more it appears to differ from the idea that orientalists generally have of it; in particular, it now seems well-established that it never in any way denied Atman or the 'Self', that is, the permanent and immutable principle of the being, which is precisely what we particularly have in view here. Whether the rebel Kshatriyas (or those under their inspiration) introduced this negation later in certain schools of Indian Buddhism or whether they only wished to use it for their own ends is a matter that we will not pursue, for it is after all of little importance since the consequences are in any event the same.⁵

There is then clearly a direct link between the negation of all immutable principles and the negation of spiritual authority,

•1. This is why the Buddhists of these schools were called *surva-aninashikas*, meaning 'those who uphold the dissolubility of all things'. This dissolubility is, in short, equivalent to the 'universal flux' taught by certain 'natural philosophers' of *pirecce*.

5. The fact that Shakyamuni himself was born a Kshatriya cannot be invoked as an argument against what we say here about the original Buddhism and a later deviation, for this fact can only legitimately be explained by the special conditions <>f a certain epoch, conditions resulting from cyclic laws. Moreover, it can be noted in this respect that Christ too is descended, not from the priestly tribe of Levi, but from the royal tribe of Judah.

between the reduction of all reality to 'becoming' and the affirmation of the supremacy of the Kshatriyas; and it must be added that in subordinating the being entirely' to change one thereby reduces it to what is individual, for what allows passage beyond individuality and is transcendent with respect to it can only be the immutable principle of the being. All this clearly shows the solidarity of naturalism and individualism that we just noted.⁶

But the revolt overshot its mark and the Kshatriyas were not able to stop it at the precise point where they could have reaped advantage from what they had set in motion. It was the lowest castes that really profited from it, and this can easily be understood since, once underway down such a slope, it is impossible not to descend all the way to the bottom. The denial of *Atman* was not the only one introduced by this deviated Buddhism; there was also the denial of caste distinctions, the basis of the traditional social order, and this denial, directed at the outset against the Brahmins, was not long in turning against the Kshatriyas themselves.⁷ In fact, as soon as hierarchy is denied in its very principle, it is impossible to see how any caste can maintain its supremacy over the others, or, for that matter, in the name of what they could claim to impose it. In such conditions anyone can consider that he has as much right to power as anyone else, provided that he in fact has sufficient force at his disposal to seize it and to wield it; and if it is merely a question of material force, is it not obvious that this must be found to the highest degree in those social elements that are both most numerous and, by their function, furthest from any preoccupation touching even indirectly upon spirituality? The denial of caste opened the door to every usurpation, and men of the lowest caste, the Shudras, were not long in taking advantage of it; some of them in fact were even able to seize hold

6. It is also worth noting that theories of 'becoming' tend quite naturally toward a certain 'phenomenalism', even though in its strictest sense this is an entirely modern concept.

7. One cannot say that the Buddha himself denied caste distinctions but only that he did not need to take them into account, for what he really had in view was the institution of a monastic order, within which this distinction did not apply. Only when there was an attempt to extend this absence of caste distinction to the society outside was it transformed into a real denial.

of royalty and, by a kind of 'repercussion' that lay in the logic of events, dispossess the Kshatriyas of the power that had at first belonged to them legitimately, but of which they themselves had destroyed the legitimacy.⁸

8. A government in which men of inferior caste arrogate to themselves the title and functions of royalty is what the ancient Greeks called 'tyranny', from which it can be seen that the original sense of this word is remote indeed from the modern understanding, where it is used rather as a synonym of 'despotism'.

7

THE USURPATIONS OF ROYALTY & THEIR CONSEQUENCES

It is sometimes said that history repeats itself, but this is false, for there cannot be in the universe two beings or two events strictly alike in all respects; if there were, they would no longer be two but, since they would coincide in everything, they would merge purely and simply in such a way that there would be but one and the same being or one and the same event.¹ Moreover, the repetition of identical possibilities implies the contradictory supposition of a limitation of universal and total possibility, and as we have explained in detail elsewhere with all the necessary elaborations,² it is this which allows us to refute such theories as those of 'reincarnation' and an 'eternal return'. But another no less false opinion, which is quite the opposite of this one, is the contention that historical facts are entirely dissimilar and that there is nothing common among them. The truth is that there are always dissimilarities in certain respects and similarities in others, and that, as there are different types of beings in nature, so there are also (in this domain as in all the others) different types of facts; in other words there are facts that are the manifestation or expression of one and the same law in

1. Leibnitz called this the 'principle of indiscernibles'. As we have already had occasion to point out, Leibnitz, in contrast to other modern philosophers, possessed some traditional information, which was however fragmentary and insufficient to permit him to free himself from certain limitations.

2. *The Spiritist Fallacy*, pt. 2, chap. 6.

diverse circumstances. This is why one sometimes encounters similar situations which, if one neglects their differences and focuses only on their similarities, can give the illusion of a repetition. In reality, there is never identity between different periods of history, but there is correspondence and analogy, just as there is between the cosmic cycles or the multiple stales of a being; and just as different beings can pass through similar phases—with the one reservation that there are modalities proper to the nature of each of them—so too can peoples and civilizations.

Despite very great differences, then, there is, as we have shown above, an incontestable analogy (perhaps never sufficiently remarked upon before) between the social organization of India and that of the Western Middle Ages; between the castes of the one and the classes of the other there is only a correspondence, not an identity, but this correspondence is nonetheless of the greatest importance because it serves to show with particular clarity that all institutions presenting a truly traditional character rest on the same natural foundations and in the final analysis differ from one another only by the adaptations required by varying circumstances of time and place. It should be clearly noted moreover that we do not in any way mean to suggest that Europe in this epoch borrowed this notion directly from India, for this seems quite unlikely; we say only that there are here two applications of one and the same principle and that fundamentally this is all that matters, at least from our present point of view. We shall therefore set aside the question of a common origin, which in any case could only be found by tracing it back to the most remote past, for this origin would go back to the filiation of the different traditional forms with the great primordial tradition and so, as should be readily apparent, would be complex indeed. If we nevertheless raise this possibility, it is because we do not in fact believe that such precise similarities can be satisfactorily explained outside of a regular and effective transmission, and also because we find in the Middle Ages many other concordant indications that show quite clearly that there still was in the West at that time a conscious link, at least for some, with the true 'center of the world', the unique source of all orthodox traditions, whereas in the modern epoch, on the contrary, we see no such thing.

We also find in Europe beginning with the Middle Ages an analogue to the revolt of the Kshatriyas, particularly in France where from the time of Philip the Fair, who must be considered one of the principal authors of the deviation characteristic of the modern epoch, royalty worked almost continually at becoming independent of the spiritual authority, while conserving however, by a singular illogicality, the outward sign of its original dependence since, as we have explained, the anointing of kings represented nothing else than this. Long before the 'humanists' of the Renaissance, the 'jurists' of Philip the Fair were already the real precursors of modern secularism; and it is to this period, that is, the beginning of the fourteenth century, that we must in reality trace the rupture of the Western world from its own tradition.

For reasons that would take too long to set forth here (and which we have in any case indicated in other studies),¹ we think that the starting-point of this rupture was marked very clearly by the destruction of the Order of the Temple. We shall only recall that this order was a kind of link between East and West and that in the West itself it was, because of its at once religious and martial character, such a link also between the spiritual and the temporal, even if this double character must not be interpreted as the sign of a more direct relation with the common source of the two powers.⁴ One may be tempted to object that even if this destruction was deliberately desired by the king of France, it was at least implemented with the agreement of the papacy; but the truth is that it was imposed upon the papacy, which is something altogether different. By thus reversing the normal relationship, the temporal power henceforth began to use the spiritual authority for its own ends of political domination.

One might doubtless object further that the fact that the spiritual authority let itself be subjugated in this way proves that it was

3. See in particular *The Esoterism of Dante*.

4. On this subject see our study 'Saint Bernard' [*Insights into Christian Esoterism*, chap. 10], where we showed that the characters of both the monk and the knight were united in the person of Saint Bernard, author of the rule of the Order of the Temple, which he later called 'God's militia'. This explains his continual role as peacemaker and arbitrator between the religious and political powers.

no longer what it should have been, and that its representatives were no longer fully conscious of its transcendent character. This is true, and it even explains and justifies Dante's sometimes violent invectives against the clergy of his time; but the fact remains that in relation to the temporal power they still represented spiritual authority, and that it was from this authority that the temporal power derived its legitimacy. The representatives of the temporal power are not, as such, qualified to recognize whether or not the spiritual authority corresponding to the traditional form from which they derive possesses the plenitude of its effective reality; they are even incapable of doing so by definition, since their competence is limited to a lower domain; but whatever this authority might be, if they disregard their subordination to it, they thereby compromise their legitimacy.

We must, then, take great care to distinguish between the question of what a spiritual authority may be in itself at a given time, and that of its relationship with the temporal power. The second question is independent of the first, which has to do solely with those who exercise the priestly functions, or who would normally be qualified to exercise them; and even if this authority had entirely lost the 'spirit' of its doctrine through the fault of its representatives, the mere conservation of the deposit of the 'letter' and of the outward forms in which this doctrine is in some way contained would still continue to ensure for it the necessary and sufficient power to validly exercise its supremacy over the temporal? For this supremacy is attached to the very essence of spiritual authority and belongs to it so long as it exists regularly; and no matter how 'diminished' it may be, the least portion of spirituality is still incomparably superior to anything of the temporal order. It follows from this that the spiritual authority can and must always control the temporal power, and

5. This case is comparable to that of a man who has inherited a treasure in a sealed box that he cannot open, and who thus knows nothing of its real nature. Such a man would nonetheless be the authentic possessor of the treasure, for the loss of the key would not deprive him of its ownership; and if certain outward prerogatives were attached to this ownership, he would still retain the right to exercise them, though in what concerns him personally it is obvious that under these conditions he could not enjoy his treasure fully.

that it cannot itself be controlled by anything else, at least outwardly.⁶ However shocking such a statement may seem in the eyes of most of our contemporaries, we do not hesitate to declare that this is but the expression of an undeniable truth.⁷

But to return to Philip the Fair, who for our present purpose furnishes an especially characteristic example. It is instructive that Dante attributes his actions to ‘cupidity’,⁸ which is a vice, not of a Kshatriya but of a Vaishya; we could say that when they enter a state of revolt the Kshatriyas as it were degrade themselves, losing their

6. This reservation concerns the supreme principle of the spiritual and the temporal, which is beyond all particular forms, and the direct representatives of which obviously have the right of control over both domains. But the action of this supreme principle in the present state of the world is not being exercised visibly, so that one may say that all spiritual authority appears outwardly as supreme, even if it is only what we have called a relative spiritual authority, and even if, as in this case, it has lost the key to the traditional form it is charged to conserve.

7. The same holds true for ‘papal infallibility’, the proclamation of which has raised so much protest simply because of modern incomprehension, an incomprehension moreover that rendered its explicit and solemn affirmation all the more indispensable. An authentic representative of a traditional doctrine is necessarily infallible when he speaks in the name of this doctrine; and it must be clearly understood that this infallibility is attached, not to the individual, but to the function. Thus, in Islam, every *mufti* is infallible insofar as he is an authorized interpreter of the *iuma*, *that is of the legislation based essentially on the religion, even though his competence may not extend to a more interior order*. Easterners would be astonished, not that the pope is infallible in his own domain—something that poses no difficulty for them—but rather that he should be the only one infallible in all the West.

8. This explains not only the destruction of the Order of the Temple but also, and even more visibly, what was called the debasement of the coinage, two facts that are perhaps more closely related than might at first glance seem apparent. In any case, if the contemporaries of Philip the Fair considered this debasement a crime on the part of the king, it must be concluded that by changing the standard of coinage on his own initiative he exceeded the acknowledged rights of the royal power. Here is an indication well worth holding in mind, for in antiquity and in the Middle Ages the question of coinage had certain aspects entirely unknown to the moderns, who confine themselves to a merely ‘economic’ point of view. Similarly, it has been noted that the symbols figuring on Celtic coins can only be explained in reference to the doctrinal knowledge that was reserved to the Druids, which implies their direct intervention in this domain. Such control by the spiritual authority must have lasted until nearly the end of the Middle Ages.

own character and taking on that of a lower caste. It may even be added that this degradation must inevitably accompany the loss of legitimacy: if by their own fault the Kshatriyas are deprived of their normal right to the exercise of temporal power, it is because they are not truly Kshatriyas, by which we mean that they are not of a nature any longer to fulfill what was their proper function. If the king is no longer content to be the first of the Kshatriyas, that is to say the head of the nobility, and to play the 'regulating' role to which he is entitled as such, he loses what essentially constitutes his *raison d'être*, and at the same time opposes himself to the nobility of which he is but an emanation and as it were the most complete expression. Thus we see royalty, in order to 'centralize' and to absorb in itself the powers that belong collectively to all the nobility, enter into a struggle with the nobility and work relentlessly toward the destruction of the very feudal system from which it had itself issued. It can do so, moreover, only by relying on the support of the third-estate, which corresponds to the Vaishyas; and this is why we also see, precisely from the time of Philip the Fair, the kings of France beginning to surround themselves almost continually with the bourgeoisie, especially such kings as Louis XI and Louis XIV, who pushed the work of 'centralization' the furthest, the bourgeoisie moreover later reaping the benefits of this when it seized power during the Revolution.

Let us add that temporal 'centralization' is generally the sign of an opposition to the spiritual authority, the influence of which governments try to neutralize in order to substitute their own. This is why the feudal form, the one in which the Kshatriyas can most completely exercise their normal functions, is at the same time the one that best seems to suit the regular organization of traditional civilizations such as that of the Middle Ages.

The modern epoch, which is that of rupture from tradition, could be characterized from a political point of view as the substitution of the national system for the feudal system; and it was in fact during the fourteenth century that 'nations' began to form through the agency of that 'centralization' we just spoke of. It is right to say that the formation of the 'French nation' in particular was the work of its kings, but in doing this they unwittingly prepared their own

ruin;⁹ and if France was the first European country where the monarchy was abolished, it is because 'nationalization' had started there. Besides, we scarcely need recall how fiercely 'nationalist' and 'centralist' the Revolution was and also what truly revolutionary use was made throughout the nineteenth century of the so-called 'principle of nations';¹⁰ there is therefore a rather singular contradiction in the 'nationalism' proclaimed today by certain avowed adversaries of the Revolution and its work. But the most interesting point for us at present is the following: the formation of 'nations' is essentially one episode in the struggle of the temporal against the spiritual; and if we want to get to the root of the matter, it may be said that this is precisely the reason why it proved fatal to the monarchy, which, even at the moment when it seemed to be realizing all its ambitions, was only rushing to ruin.¹¹

There is a kind of political (and therefore entirely external) unity that implies a disregard, if not the denial, of the spiritual principles that alone can establish the true and profound unity of a civilization, and 'nations' are an example of this. During the Middle Ages there existed throughout the West a real unity, based on properly traditional foundations, which we call 'Christendom', but when these secondary unities of a purely political—that is to say temporal and no longer spiritual—order were formed, this great unity of the West was irremediably broken and the effective existence of Christendom came to an end. Nations, merely the dispersed fragments of what was formerly Christendom, false unities substituted for the true one by the temporal power's will to dominate can, given the very conditions of their origin, survive only by opposing each other

9. To this struggle of royalty against the feudal nobility one can quite strictly apply the Gospel saying: 'And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.' [Mark 3:25].

10. It should be noted that this 'principle of nations' was exploited especially against the papacy and against Austria, which represented the last vestige of the heritage of the Holy Roman Empire.

11. Where the monarchy has maintained itself by becoming 'constitutional' it is no more than a shadow of itself and has hardly more than a nominal and 'representative' existence, as is expressed by the well-known formula, 'the king reigns, but does not rule.' This is truly nothing but a caricature of the former monarchy.

and ceaselessly contending among themselves in all fields.¹² Now spirit is unity, matter is multiplicity and division; and the more one removes oneself from spirituality, the more antagonisms are accentuated and amplified. No one can deny that the feudal wars, which were quite localized and subject moreover to restrictive regulation by the spiritual authority, were nothing compared to the national wars that have resulted, following the Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire, in 'armed nations',¹³ and we have seen in our own day new developments hardly reassuring for the future.

On the other hand, the establishment of 'nations' made possible actual attempts to subjugate the spiritual to the temporal, implying a complete reversal of the hierarchical relations between the two powers. This subjugation found its most definitive expression in the notion of a 'national' church, that is, one subordinated to the State and confined within its limits. The very phrase 'state religion' is a deliberate equivocation signifying fundamentally nothing else than that religion is used by the temporal government to ensure its own domination; it is religion reduced to no more than a mere factor of the social order.¹⁴

This idea of a national church first appeared in Protestant countries; or, to be more exact, it was perhaps above all to realize this idea that Protestantism was instigated, for it seems clear that Luther was hardly anything more, at least politically, than an instrument of the ambitions of certain German princes; and it is moreover quite likely that if the revolt against Rome had taken place without such

12. This is why the idea of a 'league of nations' can only be a utopian one with no real significance; the national form is essentially hostile to the recognition of any unity superior to its own. Besides, according to present-day conceptions, only a unity of an exclusively temporal and hence all the more ineffectual order would be involved, which could only be a parody of the true unity.

13. As we have noted elsewhere (*The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 5), by compelling all men indiscriminately to take part in modern wars, the essential distinctions among the social functions are entirely ignored, this being moreover a logical consequence of 'egalitarianism'.

14. Moreover, this conception can be realized in forms other than that of a 'national' church properly speaking. Of this we have a most striking example in such a regime as the Napoleonic 'Concordat', which transformed priests into civil servants—a true monstrosity.

support its consequences would have been quite as negligible as those of many other short-lived incidents of dissent.

The Reformation is the most visible symptom of the rupture of the spiritual unity of Christendom; but it is not what actually first began 'to rend the seamless robe,' as Joseph de Maistre puts it, for this rupture had long been a *fait accompli*, since, as we have already said, its beginnings can in fact be traced back two centuries earlier; and an analogous remark could be made about the Renaissance which, by a not altogether fortuitous coincidence, came about at almost the same time as the Reformation and only when the traditional knowledge of the Middle Ages had been almost entirely lost. Protestantism was in this respect rather more an outcome than a point of departure; but if in reality it was above all the work of 'princes and sovereigns, who first of all used it for political ends, its individualist tendencies were not long in turning back upon them, for they were directly preparing the way for the democratic and egalitarian conceptions characteristic of the present epoch.¹⁵

However, as regards the question of the subjugation of religion to the State in the way we have indicated, it would be wrong to believe that examples outside of Protestantism cannot be found:¹⁶ if the Anglican schism of Henry VIII represents the most complete success in the creation of a 'national' church, Gallicanism itself [the spirit of nationalism within the Roman Catholic church in France], as conceived by Louis XIV, was in reality nothing else; if this latter movement had succeeded, the link with Rome would no doubt have continued at least in theory, but in practice its effects would have been annulled by the interposition of the political power, and the situation in France would not have been appreciably different from

15. It is worth noting that Protestantism suppresses the clergy, and though it claims to uphold the authority of the Bible, it in fact ruins it by 'free inquiry'.

16. We are not considering here the case of Russia, which is somewhat special and would give rise to distinctions that would uselessly complicate the present exposition. While it is no less true that one also finds there a 'state religion' in the sense we have defined, the monastic orders have at least managed to escape to a certain degree the subordination of the spiritual to the temporal, whereas in the Protestant countries their suppression has rendered this subordination as complete as possible.

what it would be in England if the tendencies of the 'ritualist' faction of the Church of England were to prevail definitively.¹⁷

Under its various forms Protestantism pushed things to extremes, but it was not only in countries where Protestantism established itself that royalty destroyed its own 'divine right'—that is, the sole foundation of its legitimacy and at the same time the only guarantee of its stability—for according to what we have shown, the French monarchy, without going so far as a clean break with the spiritual authority, acted in exactly the same way (though by more roundabout means); and it even seems quite clear that it was the first to take this path. Those of its partisans who consider this a kind of distinction scarcely realize the consequences that this attitude brought about, consequences that were inevitable. The truth is that by virtue of this altitude the monarchy unconsciously opened the way for the Revolution; and this, by destroying it in turn, only went further in the direction of disorder to which the monarchy had begun to commit itself. Throughout the Western world in fact the bourgeoisie succeeded in grasping the power which the monarchy had first improperly shared with them; nor does it much matter whether the bourgeoisie subsequently abolished the monarchy, as in France, or allowed it to exist nominally, as in England and elsewhere, for both result in the triumph of the 'economic' and its openly proclaimed supremacy.

But as one sinks deeper into materiality, instability grows and changes take place more rapidly; thus the reign of the bourgeoisie will be relatively short-lived in comparison with the regime that preceded it. Furthermore, as usurpation calls forth usurpation, it is now the Shudras who follow the Vaishyas in aspiring for domination, such being precisely the significance of bolshevism. We do not wish to formulate any forecast here, but it would not be very difficult to predict from the preceding remarks certain consequences for the future. If the lowest social elements come to power in one way or another, their reign will probably be the briefest of all, and it will mark the last phase of a given historical cycle since it is not possible

17. There is moreover a close similarity between the terms 'Anglicanism' and 'Gallicanism', which do indeed correspond well to the reality.

to descend any lower; and even if such an event were not to have wider implications, one may suppose that this phase will be at the very least, for the West, the end of the modern period.

An historian conversant with the above-mentioned facts could no doubt develop these considerations almost indefinitely, searching out more particular details that would emphasize even more precisely what we principally wanted to show here:¹⁸ the too little known responsibility of the royal power for the origin of the whole modern disorder, this first deviation in the relations between the spiritual and the temporal which leads inevitably to all the others. But this cannot be our role; we wished only to give some examples in order to shed light on a wider synthesis, and so we must be content to consider only the main trends of history, and limit ourselves to the essential indications that stand out in the course of events.

18. It would be interesting for instance to study from this point of view the role of Richelieu, who was bent on destroying every last vestige of feudalism and who, while fighting the Protestants in France itself, forged an alliance with them abroad against what remained of the Holy Roman Empire, that is, against the vestiges of the former 'Christendom'.

8

THE TERRESTRIAL & CELESTIAL PARADISES

THE political constitution of medieval Christendom was, as we have said, essentially feudal; it found its consummation in a function that was truly supreme in the temporal order, that of the emperor, who was, with respect to the kings, what the kings were in turn to their vassals. It must be admitted however that this conception of the Holy Roman Empire remained somewhat theoretical and was never fully realized, doubtless through the fault of the emperors themselves, who, misled by the extent of the power conferred upon them, were the first to contest their subordination to the spiritual authority, from which however they held their power even more directly than did the other sovereigns.¹ This came to be known later as the feud of the priesthood and the empire, and its diverse vicissitudes are well enough known that we need not recall them even summarily here, all the more so as the details are of little importance to our present purpose. What is more interesting is to understand what the emperor ought truly to have been and also what could have provoked the error that led him to mistake his relative supremacy for an absolute supremacy.

The distinction between the papacy and the empire originated in a way from a division of powers that in ancient Rome were united

I. The Holy Roman Empire begins with Charlemagne, and it is well known that it was the pope who conferred on him his imperial dignity, his successors also being legitimized only in this way.

in a single person, since during that period the Emperor was at the same time Pontifex Maximus,² but we do not think that it is necessary in this special case to inquire how that union of the spiritual and the temporal is to be explained, for this would risk involving us in some rather complex considerations.³ The pope and the emperor were in any case certainly not the 'two halves of God' as Victor Hugo wrote but much more precisely the two halves of the Christ-Janus figure which certain representations depict holding a key in one hand and a scepter in the other, emblems respectively of the priestly and royal powers united in this figure as in their common principle. This symbolic assimilation of Christ with Janus as the supreme principle of the two powers is the very clear sign of a certain traditional continuity (too often ignored or deliberately denied) between ancient Rome and Christian Rome; and we must not forget that in the Middle Ages the empire was just as 'Roman' as the papacy. But this same figure also explains the error we just pointed out and which was to prove fatal for the empire: this error lies, in brief, in regarding as equivalent the two faces of Janus; these are indeed so in appearance but, when they represent both the spiritual and the

2. It is very remarkable that the pope has always retained this title of *Pontifex Maximus*, the origin of which is so obviously foreign to Christianity and moreover greatly anterior to it, this fact being among those that ought to illustrate, to anyone capable of reflection, that so-called 'paganism' had in reality an entirely different character from that usually attributed to it.

3. The Roman emperor appears in a way as a Kshatriya exercising, in addition to his own function, that of a Brahmin, which seems something of an anomaly; and so one ought to inquire whether the Roman tradition may not have a particular character that allows us to consider this as something other than a mere usurpation. On the other hand, it may be doubted that the emperors were for the most part really 'qualified' from the spiritual point of view, though a distinction must sometimes be made between the 'official' representative of the authority and its actual holders; it is enough that the latter should inspire the former—even if he is not one of them—for things to be as they ought to be.

4. See an article by I. Charbonneau-Lassay entitled 'Un ancien embleme du mois de Janvier', published in the review *Reclaim*, March 1925. The key and the scepter are equivalent here to the more customary figure of the two keys, one of gold and the other of silver. These two symbols have moreover a direct relationship to Christ, according to this liturgical formula: 'O Key of David, and scepter of the house of Israel' (Roman breviary, service of 20 December).

temporal, cannot be so in reality. In other words, it is again the error of mistaking the relationship of the two powers for one of coordination, whereas it is really one of subordination, because once they are separated the one proceeds directly from the supreme principle while the other does so only indirectly, a point which, since it has been dealt with sufficiently above, we will not insist upon further here.

At the end of his treatise *De Monarchia*, Dante very clearly defines the respective powers of the pope and the emperor. The key passage is this:

Twofold, therefore, are the ends which unerring Providence has ordained for man: the bliss of this life, which consists in the functioning of his own powers, and which is typified by the earthly Paradise; and the bliss of eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of that divine vision to which he cannot attain by his own powers, except they be aided by the divine light, and this state is made intelligible by the Celestial Paradise. These two states of bliss, like two different goals, man must reach by different ways. For we come to the first as we follow the philosophical teachings, applying them according to our moral and intellectual capacities [virtues]; and we come to the second as we follow the spiritual teachings which transcend human reason according to our theological capacities [virtues], Faith, Hope, and Charity. Though these two goals and their ways are made plain to us, the one by human reason, which as it is used by the philosophers makes all these things known to us, the other by the Holy Spirit, which through the prophets, through the holy writers, through Jesus Christ the Son of God co-eternal with the Spirit, and through his disciples, has revealed to us whatever supernatural truths we need, yet man's greed would keep them from us were not men like horses in their animal vagaries kept on the road by bit and rein. Thus the reins of man are held by a double driver according to man's twofold end; one is the supreme pontiff, who guides mankind with revelations to life eternal, and the other is the emperor, who guides mankind with philosophical instructions to temporal happiness. And since none or very few (and

these with difficulty) can reach this goal, unless a free mankind enjoys the tranquility of peace and the waves of distracting greed are stilled, this must be the constant aim of him who guides the globe and whom we call Roman Prince, in order that on this threshing floor of life mortals may exist free and in peace.⁵

This text calls for a number of explanations in order to be perfectly understood, for we cannot doubt that beneath a language purely theological in appearance are concealed much deeper truths, conforming moreover to the habits of its author and of the initiatic organizations to which he belonged.⁶

On the other hand—let us note in passing—it is quite astonishing that the one who wrote these lines has sometimes been represented as an enemy of the papacy; he no doubt did, as we have already said, denounce the insufficiencies and imperfections he saw in the papacy of his day, and particularly the consequent, too ready recourse to purely temporal means of action, which hardly befitted the exercise of spiritual authority. But he knew enough not to impute to the institution itself the defects of the men who represented it temporally, something that modern individualism does not always know enough to do.⁷

5. *De Monorchia*, in, 16. [Taken from *On World Government or De Monorchia*, tr. Herbert VV. Schneider (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1949), p60.]

6. *On this subject see in particular our study The Esoterism of Dante and also Luigi Valli's work Il Linguaggio segreto di Dante e dei 'Fedeli d'Amore'*. Unfortunately the author died before he was able to complete his research and at the very moment when it seemed to be leading him to envisage things in a spirit closer to traditional esoterism.

7. When speaking of Catholicism the utmost care must always be taken to distinguish between what concerns Catholicism itself as a doctrine and what relates only to the present organizational state of the Catholic church. Whatever one may think about the second, it cannot affect the first. What we are saying here of Catholicism, because this example immediately presents itself apropos of Dante, could moreover find many more applications; but there are very few today who are able, when such a need arises, to free themselves from historical contingencies, to the extent that—to continue with the same example—certain defenders of Catholicism, and not only its adversaries, believe that everything can be reduced to a simple question of 'historicity', which is one form of the modern 'superstition of fact'.

In light of our previous explanations it should not be difficult to see that the distinction Dante draws between the two ends of man corresponds very exactly to that between the 'lesser mysteries' and the 'greater mysteries', and consequently also to that between 'royal initiation' and 'sacerdotal initiation'. The emperor presides over the 'lesser mysteries', which correspond to the 'Terrestrial Paradise', that is to say the realization of the perfection of the human state;⁸ the sovereign pontiff presides over the 'greater mysteries', which concern the 'Celestial Paradise', that is, the realization of supra-human states, joined thus to the human state by the 'pontifical' function, understood in its strictly etymological sense.⁹

Man as man can himself obviously gain only the first of these two ends, which can be called 'natural', whereas the second is properly speaking 'supernatural' since it lies beyond the manifested world; and so this distinction is indeed that between the 'physical' and the 'metaphysical' orders. Here we see as clearly as possible how all the traditions are in agreement, whether of the East or the West. By defining the respective attributes of the Kshatriyas and the Brahmins as we did, we were quite justified not to see in them something applicable only to a certain form of civilization — that of India — since we find them again, defined in a rigorously identical form, in what was before the modern deviation the traditional civilization of the Western world.

Dante thus assigns to the emperor and to the pope, respectively, the functions of leading mankind to the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and to the 'Celestial Paradise', the first of these two functions being accomplished 'according to philosophy' ['with philosophical instructions to temporal happiness'] and the second 'according to revelation' ['with revelations to life eternal'], expressions that demand careful

8. This realization is in fact that same restoration of the 'primordial state' to be found in all the traditions, as we have already explained on many occasions.

9. In the symbolism of the cross, the first of these two realizations is represented by the indefinite development of the horizontal line, and the second by that of the vertical line, these being, according to the language of Islamic esoterism, the two senses of 'amplitude' and 'exaltation', the full blossoming of which is realized in 'Universal Man', who is the mystical Christ, the 'second Adam' of Saint Paul.

explanation. It goes without saying, of course, that 'philosophy' cannot be understood here in its ordinary and profane sense, for if it were it would be all too obviously incapable of playing the role assigned to it. To understand what is really involved we must restore to the word 'philosophy' its original significance as understood by the Pythagoreans, who were the first to use it.

As we have indicated elsewhere,¹⁰ this word, which etymologically signifies 'love of wisdom', designates first of all a prior disposition required for attaining wisdom, and by a natural enough extension of its meaning it can also designate the search, arising from this disposition, that will lead to true knowledge, so that philosophy is thus only a preliminary and preparatory stage, a step toward wisdom, just as the 'Terrestrial Paradise' is a stage on the way to the 'Celestial Paradise'. Understood thus, 'philosophy' could be called 'human wisdom' because it comprises the sum of all knowledge that can be attained by the faculties of the human individual alone, faculties that Dante synthesizes as reason, for it is this that truly defines man as such; but this 'human wisdom', precisely because it is only human, is not true wisdom, which, identified with metaphysical knowledge, is essentially supra-rational and thus also supra-human. And just as the path to the 'Celestial Paradise' departs earth from the 'Terrestrial Paradise' in order to satire alle Estelle, as Dante puts it,¹¹ that is, to ascend to the superior states (represented in astrological language by the planetary and stellar spheres, and in theological language by the angelical hierarchies), so in the case of all knowledge that surpasses the human state do the individual faculties become powerless and other means become necessary; and it is precisely here that 'revelation' intervenes, that is, a direct communication from the superior states, which is, as we have said, effectively established by the 'pontificate'. This 'revelation' is possible because of the existence of faculties transcendent with respect to the individual, and whatever may be the name one gives to them, whether one speaks for example of 'intellectual intuition' or of 'inspiration', it is always essentially the same thing. The first of these

10. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. i.

11. *Purgatorio*, xxxin, 145. See *The Esoterism of Dante*, chap. 8.

two terms may prompt us to think in one sense of the 'angelic' states, which in effect are identical with the supra-individual states of the being, and the second may evoke above all that action of the Holy Spirit to which Dante expressly alludes.¹²

One might also say that what is inward inspiration to the one who receives it directly becomes outward revelation to the human collectivity for which it serves as the medium of transmission insofar as this is possible, that is to say within the limits of the expressible. We are, naturally, only summing up concisely and thus in perhaps too simplified a way matters that would be quite complex if they were fully developed, and that would moreover lead us far from our subject; in any case, what has been said suffices for our present purpose.

Understood in this way, 'revelation' and 'philosophy' correspond respectively to what Hindu doctrine calls *shruti* and *smriti*.¹³ Here again it should be noted that we speak of correspondence and not of identity, the difference of traditional forms implying a real distinction between the points of view from which things are here envisaged. *Shruti*, which includes all the Vedic texts, is the fruit of direct inspiration, while *smriti* includes all the consequences and diverse applications to be drawn from them by reflection; their relationship is in certain respects that of intuitive knowledge to discursive knowledge; and indeed, of these two modes of knowledge the first is supra-human and the second strictly human. Just as the domain of revelation is attributed to the papacy and that of philosophy to the empire, so also *shruti* concerns the Brahmins more directly (the study of the Veda being their principal occupation) whereas *smriti* (including the *Dhanua-Shastra* or the 'Book of Law',¹⁴ that is to say the social application of the doctrine) concerns the *Kshatriyas*, for

12. Pure intellect, which is of a universal and not an individual order, and which links all the states of the being together, is the principle Hindu doctrine calls *buddhi*, a name of which the root expresses essentially the idea of 'wisdom'.

13. See *Man and His Becoming* according to the Vedanta, chap. 1.

I t. In this regard one might draw certain conclusions from the fact that in the Jewish tradition, which is the source and starting-point of all that can be called 'religion' in its most precise sense (since Islam as well as Christianity have a direct link with it), the designation *torah* or 'Law' is applied to the whole of the sacred

whom most of the books dealing with this application are especially intended. *Shruti* is the principle from which all the rest of the doctrine derives, and knowledge of it, implying that of the superior states, constitutes the 'greater mysteries'; knowledge of *smṛiti* on the other hand—that is, of applications to the "world of man" (understanding by this the integral human state considered in the full amplitude of its possibilities)—constitutes the 'lesser mysteries'.¹⁵ *Shruti* is direct light which, like pure intelligence (here equivalent to pure spirituality), corresponds to the sun; and *smṛiti* is reflected light which, like memory, the name of which it bears (and which is the 'temporal' faculty by very definition), corresponds to the moon.¹⁶ This is why the key to the 'greater mysteries' is made of gold and that to the 'lesser mysteries' of silver, for gold and silver are alchemically exact equivalents to what the sun and the moon represent in the astrological order.

These two keys—those of Janus in ancient Rome—were one of the attributes of the sovereign pontiff, to whom the function of 'hierophant' or 'master of the mysteries' essentially belonged. Along with the very title Pontifex Maximus they have remained among the principal emblems of the papacy; and the words of the Gospel concerning the 'power of the keys' (as moreover for many other points) fully confirm the primordial tradition.

We can now understand even more completely than before why these two keys are at the same time those of spiritual and temporal

books. We see this to be evidence of the special aptness of the religious form to peoples in whom the nature of the Kshatriya predominates, and also of the particular importance the social point of view assumes in that form, these two considerations moreover being quite closely linked.

15. It must be clearly understood that in all that we say it is always a question of knowledge that is not only theoretical, but effective, and that in consequence it essentially includes the corresponding realization.

16. In this respect it should be noted that the 'Celestial Paradise' is essentially the *brahma-loka*, identified with the 'spiritual sun' (Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta, chaps, it and 22), and that, on the other hand, the 'Terrestrial Paradise' is described as touching the 'sphere of the moon' (The King of the World, chap. 6): in the symbolism of the Divine Comedy the summit of the mountain of Purgatory is the boundary of the human or earthly individual state and the point of communication with the celestial, supra-individual states.

power. The relationship between these two powers may be expressed by saying that the pope must keep for himself the golden key to the 'Celestial Paradise' and entrust to the emperor the silver key to the 'Terrestrial Paradise', and as we just saw, the symbolism of this second key is sometimes replaced by that of the scepter, the insignia belonging more particularly to royalty.¹⁷

In the preceding reflections there is one point to which we must draw further attention in order to avoid even the appearance of a contradiction. We said on the one hand that metaphysical knowledge, which is true wisdom, is the principle from which all other knowledge derives as by application to contingent orders, and on the other hand that philosophy (in its original sense, designating the entire sum of contingent knowledge) must be considered as a preparation for wisdom; so then how can these two things be reconciled? We have already explained this in another study, in connection with the double role of the 'traditional sciences':¹⁸ it is a matter of points of view, one descending and the other ascending, the first corresponding to a development of knowledge starting from principles and leading to applications increasingly remote from them, and the second corresponding to a gradual acquisition of that same knowledge by proceeding from the inferior to the superior, or, if one prefers, from the exterior to the interior. This latter point of view corresponds, then, to the path by which men can be led to knowledge in a gradual manner proportioned to their intellectual capacities; and it is thus that they are led first to the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and then to the 'Celestial Paradise'. But this order of teaching or of communicating the 'sacred science' inverts that of its hierarchical constitution. Indeed, all knowledge that truly has the character of 'sacred science', of whatever order it may be, can only be validly established by those who fully possess principal knowledge and who by this very fact are alone qualified to realize, in conformity with the strictest traditional orthodoxy, all the adaptations

17. The scepter, like the key, is related symbolically to the 'World Axis'; but this is a point to which we can only make passing reference, reserving the privilege of developing it suitably to other studies.

18. *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 4.

required by circumstances of time and place. This is why these adaptations, if accomplished in a regular fashion, are necessarily the work of the priesthood, to whom principal knowledge belongs by definition; and this is also why the priesthood alone can legitimately

confer 'royal initiation', by communicating the knowledge that constitutes it.

One sees also that the two keys, considered as those of knowledge of the 'metaphysical' and of the 'physical' orders, really both belong to the sacerdotal authority, and that it is only by delegation so to speak that the second is entrusted to the holders of the royal power. In fact, when 'physical' knowledge is separated from its transcendent principle, it loses its primary *raison d'être* and is not long in becoming heterodox; and so it is then, as we have explained, that 'naturalist' doctrines appear, a result of the adulteration of 'traditional sciences' by the rebel Kshatriyas. This is already a step on the way to 'profane science', which will be the special work of inferior castes and the sign of their domination in the intellectual order—if in such a case one can still speak of intellectuality at all. Here again, as in the political order, the revolt of the Kshatriyas prepares the way for that of the Vaishyas and the Shudras; and so, from one stage to another, we descend at last to the lowest kind of utilitarianism, the negation of all disinterested knowledge (even of the lowest rank) and of all reality beyond the perceptible domain. This is precisely what one witnesses in our own time, where the Western world has nearly arrived at the final stage of this descent which, like the fall of heavy bodies, keeps accelerating.

There is another point in the text of *De Monarchia* that we have not yet elucidated and which is no less worthy of our attention than what we have thus far considered. It is the allusion to navigation made in the last sentence, using a symbolism that Dante moreover frequently employs.¹⁹ Among the emblems formerly attributed to Janus, the papacy has preserved not only the keys but also the barque—likewise attributed to Saint Peter—which has become the

19. On this subject see Arturo Reghini, *L'Allegoria esoterica di Dante*, in *Il Nuovo Patto*, September-November 1921, pp 546-8.

symbol of the Church.²⁰ The 'Roman' character of the papacy necessitated this transmission of symbols, without which it would have represented a mere geographical fact that conveyed nothing

real. Those who would see in this nothing but 'borrowings' for

which to reproach Catholicism only display thereby a totally profane mentality; but we on the contrary see in this a proof of that traditional regularity without which no doctrine could be valid and which can be traced back step by step to the great primordial tradition; and we are certain that none of those who understand the profound meaning of these symbols would contradict us.

The figure of navigation was often used in Greco-Latin antiquity; one could cite in particular the expedition of the Argonauts in quest of the 'golden fleece',²² the voyages of Ulysses, and also episodes from the works of Virgil and Ovid. One also encounters this image in India, sometimes framed by expressions strangely resembling those used by Dante, as in this passage from Shankaracharya: 'The Yogi, having crossed the sea of passions, is united with tranquility and possesses the "Self" in plenitude.'²³ The 'sea of passions' is obviously the same as the 'waves of distracting greed', and in both texts it is similarly a question of 'tranquility', the symbolic voyage indeed representing the acquisition of the 'great peace'.²⁴ Moreover, this

20. The symbolic barque of Janus could move in both directions, forward and backward, which corresponds to the two faces of Janus himself.

21. We should moreover note well that if there are in the Gospels words and deeds that enable us to attribute the keys and the barque directly to Saint Peter, it is because from its origin the papacy was predestined to be 'Roman' by reason of the situation of Rome as the capital of the West.

22. Dante indeed makes a distinct allusion to this in one of the passages of the *Divine Comedy* most characteristic as regards the use of this symbolism (*Paradiso*, 11,1-18), and it is not unintentionally that he recalls this allusion in the last canto of the poem (*Paradiso*, xxxiu, 96). Moreover, the Hermetic significance of the 'golden fleece' was well known in the Middle Ages.

23. *Ainu-budha*, see *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, chap. 23 and *the King of the Wot Id*, chap. to.

24. It is this same conquest that is sometimes represented under the figure of a war. We have pointed out earlier the use of this symbolism in the Bhagavad-Gita as well as among the Muslims, and it can be added that a symbolism of the same kind can be found in the chivalric romances of the Middle Ages.

'great peace' can be understood in two ways according to whether it refers to the 'Terrestrial Paradise' or to the 'Celestial Paradise', in the latter case being identified with the 'light of glory' and the 'beatific vision'²⁵ while in the former case it represents 'peace' properly speaking, which has a more restricted sense but one still very different from the profane meaning. And it is noteworthy that Dante applies the same word 'bliss' to the two ends of man. The barque of Saint Peter is to convey men to the 'Celestial Paradise'; but if the role of the 'Roman Prince', that is the emperor, is to lead them to the 'Terrestrial Paradise', then this also implies a voyage.²⁶ This is why the 'Holy Land' of the various traditions, which is none other than that 'Terrestrial Paradise', is often represented by an island: the goal assigned by Dante to 'him who guides the globe' is the realization of 'peace',²⁷ and the port toward which he must direct mankind is the 'sacred island' that remains fixed in the midst of the incessant agitation of the waves, and that is the 'Mount of Salvation', the 'Sanctuary of Peace'.²⁸

We now bring our explanations of this symbolism to a close, feeling that its comprehension should no longer present any difficulties, at least insofar as it is necessary to understand the respective roles of the empire and the papacy; moreover, we could scarcely say any more on this subject without raising issues that we do not wish to

25. This is what the different meanings of the Hebrew word Shekinah indicate very clearly; besides, the two aspects we mention here are those designated by the words Gloria and Pax in the formula Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis [Luke 2:14], as we have explained in our study *The King of the World*.

26. This is related to the symbolism of the two oceans, that of the 'upper waters' and that of the 'lower waters', which is common to all traditional doctrines.

27. On this point a parallel could be drawn with the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas mentioned earlier, as well as with the text of Confucius that we cited.

28. We have said elsewhere that 'peace' is one of the fundamental attributes of the 'King of the World', one of whose aspects is presented by the emperor. A second aspect finds its correspondence in the pope, but there is a third, the principle of the two others, which has no visible representation in this organization of 'Christendom' (on these three aspects, see *The King of the World*, chap. 4). It is easy to understand in the light of all these considerations that Rome was for the West an image of the true 'Center of the World', of the mysterious *Salem of Melehzicdek*.

broach just now.²⁹ In its deliberate conciseness this passage from *De Monarchia* represents, as far as we know, the clearest and the most complete exposition of the constitution of Christendom and of the way in which the relationships between the two powers were to be envisioned therein.

One might doubtless wonder why such a conception has remained an ideal that was never to be realized; and it is strange that at the very time Dante formulated it events current in Europe were precisely such as to forever preclude its realization. Dante's corpus as a whole is in certain respects like a testament to the closing medieval age; it shows what the Western world would have been had it not broken from its tradition. But that the modern deviation did take place shows that this world really did not contain such possibilities, or at least that they were no more than the privilege of an already restricted elite that doubtless realized them to its own benefit, though without being able to pass them on to be reflected in the social organization.

At this point we reach the moment in history when the darkest period of the 'dark age' was to begin,³⁰ characterized in all orders by the development of the most inferior possibilities; and this development, ever advancing in the direction of change and multiplicity, was inevitably to result in what we see around us today. From the social point of view as from all others, instability is as it were at its maximum, disorder and confusion are everywhere, and humanity has surely never been further from the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and

29. this is the domain of Catholic esoterism of the Middle Ages, envisaged more particularly in its connections with Hermeticism; failing knowledge of this order, the powers of the pope and the emperor, such as they have been defined above, could not have been effectively realized, and this is precisely the knowledge that seems most lost to the modern world. And we have left aside certain secondary points since they were not important for the purpose of this study; thus, the allusion Dante makes to the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity, should be compared to the role that he attributes to them in the *Divine Comedy* (see the *Esoterism of Dante*, chap. 3). On the other hand, one could also compare the respective roles of Dante's three guides, Virgil, Beatrice, and Saint Bernard, to those of the temporal power, the spiritual authority, and their common principle. As regards Saint Bernard, this last point should be related to what we said earlier.

30. See *The Crisis of the Modern World*, chap. 1.

from primordial spirituality. Must we conclude that this alienation is final, that no stable and legitimate temporal power will ever again rule the earth, that all spiritual authority will disappear from this world, and that darkness, spreading from West to East, will forever hide the light of truth from men's eyes? If such were our conclusion, we would certainly not have written these pages, any more than we would have written any of our other works, for on such an hypothesis the effort entailed would have been futile. Our remaining task is to say why we do not think this is so.

9

THE IMMUTABLE LAW

THE teachings of all traditional doctrines are, as we have seen, unanimous in affirming the supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal and in considering as normal and legitimate only that social organization in which this supremacy is recognized and expressed in the relations between the two powers corresponding to these two domains. Moreover, history clearly shows that misunderstanding of this hierarchical order always and everywhere brings about the same consequences: social imbalance, confusion of functions, domination by progressively more inferior elements, and also intellectual degeneration—forgetfulness of the transcendent principles coming first, followed, as one descent follows another, by the negation of all true knowledge. It should be noted however that this doctrine, which allows us to foresee that things must inevitably happen this way, does not in and of itself need such *a posteriori* confirmation; nonetheless we feel it necessary to stress the point because, as our contemporaries are particularly sensitive to facts because of their own tendencies and mental habits, there is enough here to stimulate them to reflect seriously and perhaps above all to lead them to recognize the truth of this doctrine. If that truth were recognized even by a small number it would still be a result of considerable importance, for it is only in this way that a change of orientation leading to a restoration of the normal order can begin; and that restoration, whatever may be its means and modalities, will necessarily take place sooner or later—a point to which we now turn.

We have said that the temporal power concerns the world of action and change; now change, not having in itself its sufficient

reason,¹ must receive its law from a superior principle, by which alone it is integrated within the universal order. If on the contrary it tries to be independent of all superior principles, it is no longer anything but disorder pure and simple. Disorder is fundamentally the same thing as disequilibrium, and in the human domain it manifests itself through what is called injustice, for there is an identity between the notions of justice, order, equilibrium, and harmony, or, to be more precise, these are only diverse aspects of one and the same thing envisaged in different and multiple ways according to the domains to which they apply.² Now, according to Far-Eastern doctrine, justice is composed of the sum of all injustices, and in the total order all disorders are compensated by other disorders; this is why the revolution that overthrows the monarchy is both the logical result and the punishment, that is to say the balancing compensation, of the prior revolt of that same monarchy against the spiritual authority. Law is repudiated from the moment one denies the very principle from which it emanates; but the deniers could not really suppress it, and so it recoils upon them; thus does disorder finally return again to order, against which nothing can stand except in appearance and in an altogether illusory way.

Some will no doubt object that the revolution by which the power of the inferior castes was substituted for that of the Kshatriyas was only a worsening of that disorder, and this is certainly true if one considers only the immediate results; but it is precisely that worsening which prevents disorder from continuing indefinitely. If the temporal power did not lose its stability by the very fact that it ignored its subordination to the spiritual authority, there would be no reason for disorder to cease once it is introduced into the social

1. This is, properly speaking, the very definition of contingency.

2. All these senses, as well as that of 'law', are included in what Hindu doctrine designates by the word *dharma*, the accomplishment by each being of the function suitable to its own nature, on which caste distinction is based, is called *svadharma*, which could be compared with what Haute designates as the 'functioning of his own powers' in the text we mentioned and commented on in the preceding chapter. On this point, one may also refer to what we have said elsewhere about 'justice' considered as one of the fundamental attributes of the 'King of the World' and about his connection with 'peace'.

organization. But to speak of the stability of disorder amounts to a contradiction in terms, for disorder is nothing but change reduced to itself so to speak, and this would be tantamount to asserting immobility in movement. When disorder is accentuated movement is accelerated, for one more step is taken in the direction of pure change and of 'instantaneity'; this is why, as we were saying earlier, the more inferior are the prevailing social elements, the less durable is their domination, for like everything that has only a negative existence disorder destroys itself. It is in its very excess that the remedy for the most desperate cases is found, for the increasing rapidity of change will necessarily have a limit, and today are not many beginning to feel more or less confusedly that things cannot continue on their present course indefinitely? Even if in the present state of the world a rectification is no longer possible without a catastrophe, is that sufficient reason not to envisage it despite everything? And if we refused to do so, would that not again be a way of forgetting the immutable principles, which are beyond all the vicissitudes of the 'temporal' and which consequently nothing could affect?

We said earlier that humanity has never been so removed from the 'Terrestrial Paradise' as it is at present; one must not forget however that the end of a cycle coincides with the beginning of another cycle. One need only refer to the Apocalypse to see that the extreme limit of disorder, proceeding toward an apparent annihilation of the 'external world', must bring about the advent of the 'Heavenly Jerusalem' that will be, for a new period of the history of mankind, the analogue of what the 'Terrestrial Paradise' had been to the one that will have ended at that very moment.⁵ The identity of the characteristics of the modern epoch with those indicated in the traditional doctrines for the final phases of the Kali-Yuga allow us to imagine without too much implausibility that this eventuality may not lie very far off; and this would most assuredly be the complete triumph of the spiritual after the present period of 'obscuration.'¹

3. On the connections between the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and the 'Heavenly Jerusalem', see *The Esoterism of Dante*, chap. 8.

4. According to certain traditions of Western esoterism, this could also be connected with the current to which Dante belonged, the veritable realization of the 'Holy Roman Empire'; and indeed, humanity would then have really recovered the

If such predictions seem too daring, as they may indeed be to those who do not possess sufficient traditional data to support them, one can at least call to mind the examples of the past, which clearly show that all things depending only on the contingent and transitory inevitably pass away and that disorder always disappears and order is finally restored, so that, even if disorder sometimes seems to prevail, its triumph can only be a passing one; and the greater the disorder has been, the more ephemeral will the triumph be. Such will doubtless be the case sooner or later (and perhaps sooner than one might expect) in the Western world, where in all domains disorder has gone further than anywhere else before; but here also it is better to await the end, and even if this disorder were to spread for a time over all the earth—as there are some grounds to fear—we would not modify our conclusions, for it would only confirm the predictions we have just made regarding the end of an historical cycle, although in this case the restoration of order would have to operate on a much vaster scale than in all the known examples; but then it would also be incomparably more profound and more integral since it would go as far as that return to the ‘primordial state’ of which all traditions speak.”

Besides, when we place ourselves, as we are now doing, at the point of view of spiritual realities, we can wait without anxiety as long as necessary, for as we have said, this is the domain of the immutable and the eternal. The feverish haste so characteristic of our times proves that our contemporaries really still hold to the temporal point of view even when they believe they have left it behind, and that, despite the claims of some in this respect, they scarcely know what pure spirituality is; moreover, even among those who try to react against modern ‘materialism’, how many are actually capable of conceiving a spirituality free from all special forms— and more particularly from a religious form —and of separating

4. Terrestrial Paradise’, which would moreover imply the reunion of the spiritual and the temporal powers in their principle, this being again visibly manifested as it was in the beginning.

5. It should be understood that the restoration of the ‘primordial state’ is always possible for certain people, not that they represent exceptional cases. Here this restoration is envisaged for humanity taken collectively and in its totality.

principles from every application to contingent circumstances? Among those who pose as defenders of spiritual authority, how many have even an inkling of what this spiritual authority can be in its pure state? How many truly realize what its essential functions are, and do not stop short at outward appearances, where everything is reduced to mere questions of rites (the profound reasons for which remain moreover totally misunderstood) and even of 'jurisprudence', which is quite a temporal thing? Among those who would attempt to restore intellectuality, how many do not debase it to the level of a simple philosophy, understood this time in the usual and profane sense of the word? And who understands that, in their essence and in their profound reality, intellectuality and spirituality are absolutely one and the same thing under two different names? Among those who in spite of all have kept something of the traditional spirit (and we address them because they are the only ones whose thought could have any value in our eyes), how many envisage the truth for its own sake, in a totally disinterested way, independent of every sentimental preoccupation, of every party or ideological passion, of all concern for domination or proselytism?

Among those who understand that it is necessary above all to denounce the vanity of 'democratic' and 'egalitarian' illusions in order to escape the social chaos in which the Western world is foundering, how many have a notion of true hierarchy based essentially on the differences inherent in the very nature of human beings and on the degrees of knowledge to which they have effectively attained? Among those who declare themselves adversaries of 'individualism', how many are conscious of a reality that transcends the individual? If we ask such questions as these it is because they will permit all those who truly wish to reflect on them to find the explanation for the futility of certain efforts (despite the undoubtedly excellent intentions animating (those who undertake them) and also for all the confusions and misunderstandings we referred to in the first pages of this book.

However, as long as a regularly constituted spiritual authority continues to subsist, even though it be unacknowledged by almost all (including its own representatives) and reduced to no more than a shadow of itself, this authority will always prove the better part,

and this can never be taken away from it because it contains something higher than purely human possibilities; even weakened or dormant, this part still incarnates 'the one thing needful', the only thing that does not pass away.⁶ *Patiens quia aeterna* [patient because eternal] is sometimes said of spiritual authority, and rightly so; not of course that any of the external forms it may assume will be eternal, for every form is only contingent and transitory, but because in itself, in its true essence, it partakes of the eternity and the immutability of the principles; and this is why, in all conflicts that pit temporal power against spiritual authority, one can rest assured that, whatever the appearances may be, it is always the latter that will have the last word.

6. We are thinking here of the well-known narrative from the Gospel in which Mary and Martha may be considered to symbolize the spiritual and the temporal respectively, insofar as they correspond to the contemplative life and the active life. According to Saint Augustine (*Contra Faustian*, XX, 52-58) one finds the same symbolism in the two wives of Jacob, Leah (*laborans*) representing active life and Rachel (*visum principium*) representing the contemplative life. Moreover, in 'Justice' are summed up all the virtues of active life whereas in 'Peace' the perfection of the contemplative life is realized; and here we find the two fundamental attributes of Melchizedek, that is of the common principle of the spiritual and temporal powers which govern the domains of the active life and the contemplative life respectively. Furthermore, also according to Saint Augustine (Sermon xiii on the Words of Isaiah, chap. 2), reason is at the summit of the inferior part of the soul (senses, memory, and reflection) and the intellect is at the summit of its superior part (which knows the eternal ideas that are the immutable reasons of things); to the first belongs science (of earthly and transitory things) and to the second Wisdom (knowledge of the absolute and the immutable), the first being related to active life and the second to contemplative life. This distinction is equivalent to that between the individual and the supra-individual faculties, and between the two orders of knowledge that correspond respectively thereto; and we can also compare this with the following text of Saint Thomas Aquinas: *Dicendum ipiod sicut RATIONAIUI.ITI-R procedere attribuitur NATURALI PHILOSOPHIAE, quia in ipse observatur inaxinte modus rationis, ila INTELLECTUALITER procedere attribuitur DIVINAE SCIENTIAL, eo quod in ipse observatur maxime modus intellectus.* ('It must be said that just as to proceed *rationaly* is attributed to *natural philosophy*, because in it there is observed most greatly the mode of reason, so to proceed *intellectually* is attributed to *divine science*, because in it there is observed most of all the mode of the intellect' [*In Hoelimm de Trinitate*, q.6, art.t, ad]). We have seen earlier that, according to Dante, temporal power is exercised according to 'philosophy' or rational 'science' and spiritual power according to 'revelation' or supra-rational 'Wisdom', which corresponds most exactly to the distinction between the two parts of the soul, the inferior and the superior.

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1

CONCERNING SACRED LANGUAGES

WE have had previous occasion¹ to point out that the Western world has at its disposal no other sacred language than Hebrew, which is certainly quite a strange fact, and one that invites certain observations; for even if we cannot claim to resolve the diverse questions that arise on this subject, it is not devoid of interest. It is evident that if Hebrew can play this role in the West, it is because of the direct filiation that exists between the Judaic and Christian traditions and the incorporation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the sacred books of Christianity itself; but one may wonder how it happens that Christianity possesses no sacred language of its own, a truly exceptional fact that sets it apart from other traditions.

Here it is especially important not to confuse sacred languages with those that are simply liturgical:² for a language to fulfill this latter role, it is enough that it be 'fixed', exempt from the continual variations that vernacular languages necessarily undergo,³ whereas sacred languages are exclusively those in which the scriptures of the

1. 'the Roots of Plants', *Symbols of Sacred Science* (first published in English as *Fundamental Symbols: The Universal Language of Sacred Science*), chap. 62.

2. This is all the more important in that we have seen an orientalist qualify Arabic as a 'liturgical language', whereas it is really a sacred language, apparently with the hidden intention (clear enough to anyone with understanding) of disparaging the Islamic tradition; and this is not unrelated to the fact that this same orientalist has conducted a veritable campaign for the adoption of Latin script in Arabic speaking countries.

3. We prefer to say 'fixed' language rather than the more customary 'dead' language because, from the traditional point of view, as long as a language is used in rituals, one cannot say that it is really dead.

different traditions are expressed. It is evident from this that every sacred language is at the same time, and with all the more reason, the liturgical or ritual language of the tradition to which it belongs,⁴ but the inverse is not true. Thus, Greek and Latin, along with certain other ancient languages,⁵ may perfectly well play the role of liturgical language for Christianity,⁶ but they are in no way sacred languages in themselves; even were we to suppose that they may once have had such a character,⁷ it would have been in traditions that are now lost and with which Christianity obviously has no affiliation.

The absence of a sacred language in Christianity becomes even more striking when we observe that the original text of the Hebrew Scriptures, which still exists, serves 'officially' only as a basis for the Greek and Latin translations.⁸ As for the New Testament, only the Greek text is known, and it is from this that all versions in other languages, even the Hebrew and the Syriac, were made; now it is surely impossible to maintain, at least with regard to the Gospels, that this is their true language—that is to say, the language in which Christ's own words were spoken. Nevertheless it is possible that they were only written in Greek after having been previously transmitted orally in the original language;⁹ but one may then ask why, when they came to be fixed in writing, this could not just as well have

4. We say 'liturgical or ritual' because the first of these two words strictly applies only to religious forms, whereas the second has an altogether general significance that is applicable equally to all traditions.

5. Notably Syrian, Coptic, and Old Slavonic, currently in use in various Eastern Churches.

6. It should be clear that we have in mind only the regular and orthodox branches of Christianity; Protestantism in all its forms makes use only of vernacular languages and so has no liturgy strictly speaking.

7. The fact that we know of no sacred books written in these languages does not entitle us to reject this supposition absolutely, for much from antiquity has certainly not survived. There are questions that would certainly be very difficult to resolve at present, for instance regarding the Roman tradition, the true character of the Sybilline Books, and the language in which they were written.

8. The Septuagint and the Vulgate.

9. This simple remark on the subject of oral transmission should suffice to nullify all the discussions of the 'critics' on the alleged dating of the Gospels, and this would be a sufficient refutation if the defenders of Christianity were not themselves more or less affected by the anti-traditional spirit of the modern world.

been done in the original language, a question in fact difficult to answer. Whatever the reasons for this it all presents several difficulties, for only a sacred language can ensure the rigorous invariability of the scriptural texts since translations necessarily vary from one language to another, and are in any case never more than approximate since each language has its own modes of expression, which do not correspond exactly with those of any other.¹⁰ Even when the exterior and literal sense is rendered as clearly as possible, there are still many obstacles to penetrating into the other, deeper meanings.¹¹ From this we can appreciate some of the special difficulties that the study of the Christian tradition presents to anyone who does not wish to restrict himself simply to more or less superficial appearances.

Of course this is not at all to say that there are no reasons why Christianity has this exceptional characteristic of being a tradition without a sacred language; on the contrary, there certainly must be reasons; but we need to recognize that they are not at first apparent, and it would doubtless entail a very considerable labor—which we cannot think of undertaking here —to bring them to light. Moreover, almost everything touching upon the origins and earliest years of Christianity is unfortunately shrouded in obscurity. We might also ask if there is not a connection between this characteristic and another that is hardly less singular: that Christianity possesses no equivalent to the properly 'legal' aspect of other traditions, so much so that to supply one it was forced to adapt ancient Roman law for its own use, making additions which, though proper to it, are nonetheless not based on the Gospels.¹² If on the one hand we bring

10. This state of affairs is not unfavorable to the attacks of the modernist 'exegetes'; even if texts in a sacred language existed, that would doubtless not prevent such 'exegetes' from discussing them in their profane way, but at least it would then be easier for all those who still retain something of the traditional spirit not to feel obliged to take their claims into account.

11. This is particularly evident in sacred languages, where the characters have a numerical or properly hieroglyphic value that often has a great importance from this point of view, and of which an ordinary translation can obviously convey nothing.

12. One could use a term borrowed from the Islamic tradition and say that Christianity has no *shahah*. This is all the more remarkable because in what could be called the 'Abrahamic' filiation it is situated between Judaism and Islam, both of which on the contrary have a highly elaborated *sharVah*.

these two facts together, and if on the other we bear in mind that, as we have frequently pointed out, certain Christian rites seem in some degree to be 'exteriorizations' of initiatic rites, we could even ask whether the original Christianity was not in reality something very different from what it seems to be at present — if not in respect of the doctrine itself,¹³ at least as to the ends in view of which it was established.¹⁴ For our part, our only wish has been to pose these questions, to which we certainly do not attempt to offer an answer; but given their obvious interest in more than one connection, it is much to be hoped that those with the time and means for the necessary research may one day throw some light on the subject.

13. Or perhaps we should rather say, of that part of the doctrine that has remained generally known up to our time; this has certainly not changed, but it is also possible that there may have been other teachings, for certain allusions made by the Church Fathers seem scarcely comprehensible otherwise. The efforts made by the moderns to minimize the significance of these allusions ultimately only prove the limitations of their own mentality.

14. The study of these questions would also raise the question of links between primitive Christianity and the Essenes, about whom, moreover, very little is known, but it is at least established that they formed an esoteric organization attached to Judaism; many fanciful things have been said on this subject, but it is still a point meriting serious examination.

2

CHRISTIANITY & INITIATION

WE did not mean to return here to questions concerning the character of Christianity itself, for we thought that what we had said of this on other occasions, however incidentally, was more or less sufficient to preclude any ambiguity on the subject.¹ Unfortunately, we have lately had to note that this is not at all the case and that certain rather troublesome confusions have arisen in the minds of many of our readers, making clear the need to further elucidate certain points. It is furthermore only with regret that we do this, for we must confess that we have never felt any inclination to give this subject special treatment. There are several reasons for this, the first being the almost impenetrable obscurity that surrounds everything relating to the origins and early stages of Christianity, an obscurity so profound that, upon reflection, it seems impossible that it should simply have been accidental, but more likely was expressly intended—an observation to be kept in mind in connection with what we shall have to say later.

1. We could not help being somewhat surprised upon learning that some readers think that our *Perspectives on Initiation* deals more directly and extensively with (Christianity than our other works do; we can assure them that there as elsewhere we meant to speak of it only to the extent necessary to make our exposition comprehensible, and, one might say, as a function of the various questions we had to treat. Scarcely less astonishing is the fact that some readers who assure us they have attentively followed all we have written should nevertheless think this book contains something new on that score, whereas on all the points they have brought to our attention in this respect we were on the contrary only reiterating considerations we had already developed in some of our earlier articles in *Le Voile d'Isis* and *Etudes Traditionnelles*.

Despite all the difficulties resulting from such a state of affairs, there is nevertheless at least one point that does not seem to be in doubt, one that has in any event not been contested by any who have shared their observations with us, but that has, quite to the contrary, provided a support for certain of their objections. This point is that, far from being merely the religion or esoteric tradition known today, Christianity originally had both in its rites and doctrine an essentially esoteric and thus 'initiatic' character. We find confirmation of this in the fact that the Islamic tradition considers primitive Christianity to have been a *tanqah*, that is, essentially an initiatic 'way', and not a *shart'ah* or social legislation addressed to all; and this was so true that subsequently this latter had to be supplied by instituting a 'canon' law² that was really only an adaptation of ancient Roman law, thus something coming entirely from the outside, and not at all a development of something originally contained in Christianity itself. Moreover, it is evident that no prescription can be found in the Gospels that might be regarded as having a truly legal character in the proper sense of the word. The well-known saying, 'Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's,' seems to us particularly significant in this respect because, regarding everything of an exterior order, it formally implies the acceptance of a legislation wholly foreign to Christianity. This legislation was simply that existing in the milieu into which Christianity was born, given that it was at that time incorporated into the Roman Empire. This would surely have been a most serious lacuna if Christianity had been then what it later became, for the very existence of such a lacuna would have been not just inexplicable but truly inconceivable for a regular and orthodox tradition if Christianity had really included an exoterism as well as an esoterism, and if it was even to have applied above all, one might say—to the exoteric domain. If, on the contrary, Christianity had the character we have just attributed to it, the thing is easily explained because there is no question of a defect but

2. Apropos of this it is perhaps not without interest to note that in Arabic the word *Hanun*, derived from the Greek, is used to designate any law adopted for purely contingent reasons and not forming an integral part of the *shafi'ah*, or traditional legislation.

rather an intention to abstain from intervening in a domain that by definition could not concern it under these conditions.

For that to have been possible, the earliest Christian church would have had to be a closed or reserved organization to which admission would not have been granted indiscriminately, being reserved for those who possessed the qualifications necessary to receive initiation validly in what we might call a 'Christie' form; and we could doubtless find many more indications that such was indeed the case, although they would generally be misunderstood in our day, when the modern tendency to deny esoterism prompts many more or less consciously to deny these indications of their true significance.³ In short, then, the Church would have been comparable to the Buddhist *Sangha*, admission to which also had the characteristics of a true initiation,⁴ and which is commonly compared to a 'monastic order', an apt comparison at least in that its particular statutes, just as those of a monastic order in the Christian sense, were not made to extend to the whole of the society at the heart of which it was established.³ From this point of view the case of Christianity is therefore not unique among the various known traditional forms, and it seems to us that this fact should diminish the astonishment that some may feel about it; it would perhaps be more difficult to explain how it could have undergone the complete change in character shown by everything we see around us; but this is not the moment to examine that question.

3. We have often had occasion to draw attention to this type of procedure in the current interpretations of the Church Fathers and more particularly of the Greek Fathers: every effort is made to maintain that it is a mistake to see esoteric allusions in their writings, and when that becomes altogether impossible there is no hesitation in holding it against them and declaring that there has been a regrettable lapse on their part!

4. See A.K. Coomaraswamy, 'L'ordination bouddhique est-elle une Initiation?', in the July 1939 issue of *Etudes Traditionnelles*.

5. It was this illegitimate extrapolation that later provoked certain deviations in Indian Buddhism, such as the negation of the castes; the Buddha did not have to take these into account within a closed organization whose members were bound, at least in principle, to be beyond caste distinction; but to wish to suppress that same distinction in the entire social milieu constituted a formal heresy from the Hindu point of view.

Here then is the objection that was addressed to us and to which we alluded above: since the Christian rites, and the sacraments in particular, had an initiatic character, how could they have lost this and become simply exoteric rites? This is impossible, even contradictory they tell us, because the initiatic character is permanent and immutable and could never be effaced, so that it need only be admitted that as a result of circumstances and of the admission of a great majority of unqualified individuals, what was originally an effective initiation was reduced to no more than a virtual one. Here there is a misapprehension that seems quite evident: initiation, as we have repeatedly explained, does indeed confer upon those who receive it a character that is acquired once and for all and is truly ineradicable; but this idea of the permanence of the initiatic character applies to the human beings who possess it and not to the action of the spiritual influence or to the rites that are intended to serve as its vehicle; it is absolutely unjustified to transfer this notion from one to the other, which amounts in the end to attributing to it an altogether different significance, and we are certain that we have never ourselves said anything that could provoke such a confusion. In support of their position, however, our opponents assert that the spiritual action is effected through the Christian sacraments by the Holy Spirit, which is perfectly true though totally beside the point; moreover, whether the spiritual influence is named according to Christian terminology or according to the terminology of some other tradition, it remains true that it is essentially transcendent and supra-individual, for were it not so we would no longer be dealing with a spiritual influence at all but merely a psychic one. Even admitting this, however, what could prevent the same influence, or one similar, from acting according to different modalities and in different domains as well? Furthermore, even if this influence belongs to the transcendent order, must its effects be such in every case?⁶ We do not at all see why this should be so, and we are even certain of the contrary; indeed, we have always taken the greatest care to point

6. Let us note in passing that a particular consequence of this would be to preclude spiritual influences from producing effects relating simply to the corporeal order, such as miraculous cures, for example.

out that a spiritual influence intervenes as much in exoteric rites as in initiatic rites, but it goes without saying that the effects it produces could never be of the same order in the two cases, for otherwise the very distinction between the two corresponding domains would no longer exist.⁷ Neither do we understand why it is inadmissible that the spiritual influence that works through the Christian sacraments, after having first acted in the initiatic order, should not in other conditions and for reasons contingent on these very conditions, then lower its action to the merely religious and exoteric domain, so that its effects were thenceforth limited to certain exclusively individual possibilities with the goal of 'salvation' while nevertheless preserving these same ritual supports as far as external appearances are concerned, because they were instituted by Christ and without them there would no longer have been any properly Christian tradition. That this may really have been the case, and that consequently in our present state of affairs (and indeed for quite a long time now) we can no longer in any way consider Christian rites to have an initiatic character, is something we will have to stress with greater precision; but we must also point out that there is a certain linguistic impropriety in saying that they 'lost' that character, as if that fact were purely accidental, for we think on the contrary that there must have been an adaptation that, despite the regrettable consequences it entailed in some respects, was fully justified, and even necessitated, by the circumstances of time and place.

If we consider the state of the Western world in the age in question (that is, of the territories comprised in the Roman Empire), it is easy to see that, had Christianity not 'descended' into the exoteric domain, this world would soon have been deprived of all tradition, for the traditions that had existed until that time, especially the Greco-Roman tradition, which naturally was predominant, had reached an advanced state of degeneration heralding the imminent

7. If the action of the Holy Spirit were exercised only in the esoteric domain, because this alone is truly transcendent, we would also ask our opponents, who are Catholics, what one should think of the doctrine stating that this influence operates in the formulation of the most clearly exoteric dogmas?

end of their cycle of existence.⁸ This 'descent' therefore, let us insist again, was neither an accident nor a deviation but should on the contrary be regarded as having a truly 'providential' character since it prevented the West from falling at that time into a state comparable to that in which it now finds itself. The moment had not yet arrived for a general loss of tradition such as characterizes modern times; a 'rectification' was therefore necessary, and Christianity alone could accomplish it, but on the condition that it renounce the esoteric and 'restricted' character it originally possessed;⁹ and thus the 'rectification' was not only beneficial for Western humanity—which is too obvious to require emphasis—but at the same time conformed perfectly with the cyclical laws themselves, as all 'providential' action intervening in the course of history necessarily does.

It would in all likelihood be impossible to assign a precise date to this change that made of Christianity a religion in the proper sense of the word, that is to say a traditional form addressing itself to all without distinction; but what is certain in any case is that it was already an established fact at the time of Constantine and the Council of Nicaea, so that the latter had only to 'sanction' it, so to speak, by inaugurating the era of 'dogmatic' formulations intended as a purely exoteric presentation of the doctrine.¹⁰ This change could not but occasion certain drawbacks, for the enclosing of doctrine in

8. It should be understood that in speaking of the Western world in its entirety we make an exception for an elite that not only still understood its own tradition from the exterior point of view, but that continued to receive initiation into the mysteries; the tradition could thus have maintained itself for quite some time in an increasingly restricted setting; but this goes beyond the scope of our present topic 'since we are concerned with Westerners in general, for whom Christianity had to come to replace the old traditional forms at a time when they were being reduced to nothing more than 'superstitions' in the etymological sense of the word.

9. One might say in this regard that the transition from esoterism to exoterism constituted a veritable 'sacrifice', which is moreover true of every descent of the spirit.

10. At the same time the 'conversion' of (Constantine implied, by a sort of official act of imperial authority, a recognition of the fact that the Greco-Roman tradition had thenceforth to be considered extinct, although naturally some remnants may have survived for a fairly long time—remnants that could only degenerate further and further until they finally disappeared and were later designated by the contemptuous term of 'paganism'.

clearly defined and limited formulas made it much more difficult, even for those who were capable of so doing, to penetrate its deeper meaning. Furthermore, truths of a more properly esoteric order, by their very nature beyond the reach of the vast majority, could then only be presented as 'mysteries' in the popular meaning this word has acquired, which is to say that before long they had to appear to the generality of men as things impossible to understand, indeed as things one was forbidden even to try and fathom. These drawbacks, however, were not such as could go against the establishment of Christianity in traditional exoteric form or put its legitimacy into question, given the immense advantage that would result for the Western world, as we have already said. Moreover, if Christianity as such ceased thenceforth to be initiatic, the possibility still remained that a specifically Christian initiation might subsist at its core for an elite that could not restrict itself to the narrowly exoteric point of view or enclose itself in such inherent limitations; but this is yet another question that we shall have to examine later.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that this change in the essential character—one might even say the very nature—of Christianity, explains perfectly what we mentioned at the outset: that everything preceding it was intentionally enveloped in obscurity, and even that it could not have been otherwise. Indeed, it is evident that insofar as it was essentially esoteric and initiatic, the nature of original Christianity would thus remain entirely hidden to those now admitted into a Christianity that had become exoteric; consequently, anything that might lead to a knowledge or even a suspicion of what Christianity was at its beginning had to be concealed by an impenetrable veil. We need not inquire as to the means by which such a result was obtained, which would rather be the business of historians if ever it occurred to them to ask such a question, a question that would in any case seem to them virtually insoluble since it is not one to which they could apply their habitual methodological reliance on 'documents' (which obviously could not exist in such a case); but what interests us here is only to establish the fact and to understand its true reason. We will add in this connection, however, that contrary to what those who are devotees of superficial and 'simplistic' rational explanations might think, this 'obscuration' can in no way

be attributed to ignorance, for it is all too evident that such ignorance could not have existed among those who must have been all the more conscious of the transformation for having been more or less directly involved in it. Neither can we claim, in accordance with a prejudice widespread among those moderns who are only too willing to lend their own mentality to others, that selfish and 'political' manoeuvres must have been involved, from which, in any case, we cannot see what benefit could have accrued. On the contrary, the truth is that this was strictly required by the very nature of things in order to maintain the profound distinction between the exoteric and esoteric domains, in conformity with traditional orthodoxy.¹¹

Some may perhaps ask what happened to the teachings of Christ in consequence of such a change, since these teachings constitute by definition the foundation of Christianity, from which foundation it could not stray without ceasing to merit its name, not to mention the difficulty of seeing what could be substituted for these teachings without compromising the 'non-human' character without which there is no longer any authentic tradition. In reality, these teachings have been in no way touched or modified in their 'literalness' by these events, and the permanence of the Gospel texts and other writings of the New Testament, which obviously date from the earliest period of Christianity, provide sufficient proof of this.¹² What changed was only the way they were understood, or, if one prefers, the perspective from which they were envisaged and the resulting significance that was accorded them. This is not to suggest, however,

11. We have pointed out elsewhere that the confusion between exoterism and esoterism is one of the causes that most frequently gives rise to heterodox 'sects', and there is in fact no doubt that this was the sole origin of some of the ancient Christian heresies. This explains all the better the precautions taken to avoid this confusion as much as possible, and their efficacy cannot be doubted in this regard even though, from a different point of view, one is tempted to regret that their secondary effect was to bring almost insurmountable difficulties to any profound and complete study of Christianity.

12. Even if one accepted—which we do not—the alleged conclusions of modern 'criticism', when the latter, with intentions only too manifestly anti-traditional, seeks to assign these writings the most recent possible dates, these dates would certainly still be anterior to the transformation of which we are speaking.

that there was anything false or illegitimate in this new understanding, for it goes without saying that the same truths are susceptible of application in different domains by virtue of the correspondences obtaining between all orders of reality. It is only to say that there are some precepts of special concern to those following an initiatic way and that are consequently applicable in a restricted and in some ways qualitatively homogeneous milieu, but which become impracticable in fact if they are extended to human society in general. This is recognized quite explicitly when they are considered to be only 'counsels of perfection' to which no obligation attaches,¹³ which amounts to saying that each is to follow the evangelical way not only in the measure of his personal capacity, which is self-evident, but also according to what is permitted by the contingent circumstances in which he finds himself; and this is indeed all that can reasonably be demanded of those who do not aim to surpass simple exoteric practice.¹⁴ On the other hand, as to doctrine strictly speaking, if there are truths that can be understood both exoterically and esoterically according to their reference to different degrees of reality, there are others that pertain exclusively to esoterism and have no correspondence outside it, becoming, as we have already said, wholly incomprehensible when one tries to transfer them to the exoteric domain, and one must then confine oneself to expressing them purely and simply as 'dogmatic' pronouncements to which the least explanation can never be attached. It is these that properly constitute what are generally called the 'mysteries' of Christianity. Indeed, the very existence of these 'mysteries' would be altogether unjustifiable if the esoteric character of early Christianity were denied; if, however, we take it into account, they appear on the contrary as a normal and inevitable consequence of the 'exteriorization' by which

13. We do not intend to speak of the abuses to which this sort of restriction or 'minimization' has sometimes given rise, but rather of the real need to adapt these precepts to a society composed of individuals as different and unequal as can be in respect of their spiritual level, but who must nevertheless be addressed by an exoterism in the same way and without exception.

14. This exoteric practice could be defined as the minimum necessary and sufficient to assure 'salvation', for that is indeed the sole aim it is in fact meant to achieve.

Christianity became the exoteric and specifically religious tradition we know today, even while preserving in appearance the same form in its doctrine and rites.

AMONG the Christian rites, or more precisely among the sacraments that constitute their most essential part, those which present the greatest similarity to the rites of initiation and which consequently must be regarded as 'exteriorizations' of these latter—if in fact these had such a character in the beginning¹⁵—are as we have noted elsewhere naturally those that can be received only once, especially baptism. As long as the Christian community remained an initiatic organization, baptism, by which the neophyte was admitted into that community and in a sense 'incorporated' into it, evidently constituted the first initiation, which is to say the beginning of the 'lesser mysteries'. Moreover, this is clearly what is indicated by the character of 'second birth', which baptism preserved, although with a different application, even as it descended into the exoteric domain. So as not to have to come back to it let us immediately add that the rite of confirmation seems to have marked an accession to a higher degree, and it is most probable that this corresponded in principle to the completion of the 'lesser mysteries'. As for ordination, which now confers only the possibility of exercising certain functions, it can only be the 'exteriorization' of a sacerdotal initiation, pertaining as such to the 'greater mysteries'.

In order to realize that in what might be called the second state of Christianity the sacraments no longer retain any initiatic character and are really only exoteric rites, one need only consider the case of

15. In speaking here of 'rites of initiation' we mean those rites of which the actual aim is to communicate the initiatic influence; it goes without saying that apart from these there may exist other initiatic rites reserved for an elite that has already received initiation: one might suppose for example that the Eucharist was originally an initiatic rite in this sense, but not a rite of initiation.

baptism, since all the rest depend directly upon it. Despite the 'obscurantist' of which we have spoken, we do at least know that at the very beginning rigorous precautions surrounded the conferring of baptism, and that those who were to receive it were subject to a long preparation. Today quite the reverse is the case, and it seems that everything possible has been done to facilitate to an extreme the reception of this sacrament, since not only is it conferred indiscriminately on one and all without question of qualification and preparation, but it can even be conferred validly by anyone at all, whereas the other sacraments may only be administered by priests or bishops, who exercise a definite ritual function. This easy attitude, coupled with the fact that infants are baptized as soon as possible after birth (which obviously excludes the idea of any sort of preparation whatsoever) can only be explained by a radical change in the very concept of baptism, a change following which it was considered to be an indispensable condition of 'salvation' and had consequently to be made available to the greatest possible number of individuals, whereas originally it was something altogether different. This way of envisaging things, by which 'salvation', the ultimate goal of all exoteric rites, is necessarily bound up with admission into the Christian church, is in short merely a result of the sort of 'exclusivism' that inevitably inheres in any exoterism as such. We do not think it useful to insist further on this, for it is only too clear that a rite conferred upon new-born infants, without any means being employed to determine their qualifications, could not have the character and value of an initiation, even if this were to be reduced to a mere virtuality. We shall, however, return in due course to the question whether a virtual initiation through the Christian sacraments remains possible.

We should make one additional point which is not without importance: in Christianity as it exists today, that is, in contrast to its original state, all rites without exception are public; everyone may be present at these rites, even at those which would have seemed to demand 'restriction', such as the ordination of a priest, the consecration of a bishop, or, with all the more reason, baptism or confirmation. Now this would be inadmissible in the case of rites

of initiation, which normally can only be accomplished in the presence of those who have received the same initiation;¹⁶ there is an obvious incompatibility between what is public, on the one hand, and the esoteric or initiatic on the other. If, however, we regard this argument as merely secondary, it is because one could claim that in the absence of other arguments it might imply no more than an abuse due to a certain degeneration that can appear from time to time in initiatic organizations without thereby depriving them of their intrinsic character. But we have seen quite clearly that the descent of Christianity into the exoteric order must not be considered a degeneration, and besides, the other reasons we give suffice to show that in this case there can really no longer be any question of initiation.

If Christianity still possessed a virtual initiation, as some have envisaged in their objections, and if in consequence those receiving the Christian sacraments, even baptism alone, no longer needed to seek any other form of initiation whatsoever,¹⁷ how could one explain the specifically Christian initiatic organizations that incontestably existed throughout the Middle Ages, and what could have been their *raison d'être* if their particular rites were in a sense useless repetitions of the ordinary Christian rites? It will be said that these were only initiations into the 'lesser mysteries', so that those who wished to go further and gain access to the 'greater mysteries' would have had to seek another initiation; but apart from the fact that it is very unlikely, to say the least, that all who entered these organizations were prepared to approach that domain, there stands

16. Following the article on Buddhist ordination mentioned earlier, we asked A.K. Coomaraswamy a question on this subject; he confirmed that this ordination was never conferred save in the presence of members of the *Sangha*, composed solely of those who had received it themselves, and excluding not only non-Buddhists, but also 'lay' adherents, who were basically only associates 'from outside'.

17. We are very much afraid that for many this may be the principal motive that persuades them that the Christian rites have preserved an initiatic value; they would in truth wish to dispense with all regular initiatic ties and yet be in a position to claim results in this order, and even if they admit that these results can only be exceptional under present conditions, each readily believes himself destined to be among the exceptions. It goes without saying that this is nothing more than a deplorable illusion.

as a decisive fact against such a supposition the existence of Christian Hermeticism, for by definition Hermeticism depends precisely on the 'lesser mysteries'—not to mention the craft initiations, which also belong to this same domain and which even in cases that cannot be called specifically Christian still required of their members in the Christian milieu the practice of the corresponding exoterism.

We must now anticipate another equivocation, for some may be tempted to draw from this an erroneous conclusion, thinking that if the sacraments no longer possess any initiatic quality they can have no initiatic effect, against which they would undoubtedly not fail to cite certain cases where the contrary seems to hold. The truth is that the sacraments cannot indeed have such effects by themselves, since their own efficacy is limited to the exoteric domain; but there is another thing to consider in this regard. Wherever there exist initiations that depend on one particular traditional form and that take its very exoterism as foundation, the exoteric rites can, in a certain way, be transposed into another order in the sense that they will serve as a support for the initiatic work itself and that consequently their effects will no longer be limited to the exoteric order, as is the case for the generality of the adherents of the same traditional form. In this respect Christianity is no different from other traditions, since there is, or was, a properly Christian initiation; only it must be understood that this initiatic use of the exoteric rites, far from dispensing with the need for regular initiation or taking its place, essentially presupposes it as the one necessary condition, a condition that could not be replaced even by the most exceptional qualifications, and without which everything that surpasses the ordinary level can at most only lead to mysticism, that is, to something that in reality still belongs to religious exoterism.

From what we have just said, it is easy to understand how it really was with those individuals in the Middle Ages who left writings manifestly initiatic in inspiration, and who today are wrongly taken for 'mystics' simply because nothing else is now known, but who were certainly something entirely different. It is not to be supposed that these were cases of 'spontaneous' initiation, or exceptional cases in which a virtual initiation that had remained attached to the sacraments might have become effective, at least not while there was

still every possibility of a normal connection with one of the regular initiatic organizations that existed at that time, often under the cover of religious orders and even within them although not in any way a part of them. We cannot elaborate further on this since it would prolong the exposition indefinitely, but we will point out that it was precisely when these initiations ceased to exist, or at least ceased to be sufficiently accessible to offer real possibilities of an initiatic attachment, that mysticism properly speaking was born, so that the two things appear closely linked.¹⁸ What we are saying here applies moreover only to the Roman Catholic church, and what is very remarkable too is that in the Eastern churches there has never been a 'mysticism' as understood in Western Christianity since the sixteenth century. This fact might lead us to think that a certain initiation of the kind we have just mentioned must have been maintained in those churches; and this is indeed what we find in hesychasm, of which the truly initiatic character seems indisputable, even if, as in so many other cases, it has been more or less diminished in modern times as a natural consequence of the general conditions of the age, conditions from which initiations can only escape by being very little known, either because they have always been so or because they have simply decided to 'close' themselves more than ever in order to avoid degeneration. In hesychasm, initiation in the strict sense consists essentially in the regular transmission of certain formulas, exactly comparable to the transmission of mantras in the Hindu tradition and of the word in the Islamic *turuq*. It also contains a complete 'technique' of invocation as a true method of interior work,¹⁹ a method quite distinct from the exoteric Christian rites, although such a practice can nonetheless find a support in them as we explained, once the required formulas and the influence for

18. We do not wish to suggest that no forms of Christian initiation persisted after this, for we have reason to believe that something still remains of them even today, though in circumstances so restricted that they must in fact be considered as practically inaccessible, or else, as we shall see, in branches of Christianity other than the Roman Catholic church.

19. *An interesting point in this regard is that such invocation is designated in Greek by the term mneme, 'memory' or 'remembrance', which is here the exact equivalent of the Arabic alitkr.*

which they are a vehicle have been validly transmitted, something that naturally implies the existence of an uninterrupted initiatic chain since it is obvious that one can only transmit what one has oneself received.²⁰ These again are questions which we can only note summarily, but given that hesychasm still survives in our time, it seems to us that it would be possible to find in that direction some clarification about the nature and methods of other Christian initiations that belong, unfortunately, to the past.

In conclusion, we can say that despite its initiatic origins Christianity in its present state is certainly nothing more than a religion, that is, an exclusively exoteric tradition, and that it contains no possibilities other than those possessed by any other exoterism. Moreover, it makes no claim to more, because there is never a question of anything else but gaining 'salvation'. An initiation can naturally be superimposed upon it, and normally would even have to be, in order for the tradition to be truly complete, possessing effectively both esoteric and exoteric aspects; but this initiation does not currently exist in Christianity, at least in its Western form. It is in any case clear that observance of exoteric rites is fully sufficient for attaining 'salvation', and today more than ever that is all to which the great majority of human beings can legitimately aspire. But in such conditions, what are those individuals to do for whom, according to certain traditions in Paradise is still nothing but a prison'?

20. It should be noted that among modern interpreters of hesychasm there are many who try to 'minimize' the importance of its properly 'technical' side, whether because that truly answers their tendencies, or because they think thus to free themselves from certain criticisms stemming from a total ignorance of initiatic matters; in either case we have here an example of the minimization we were speaking of earlier.

3

THE GUARDIANS OF THE HOLY LAND

AMONG the functions of the Orders of Chivalry, particularly the Templars, one of the best known, though in general not the best understood, is that of 'Guardian of the Holy Land'. Certainly, if we restrict ourselves to the most outward meaning, we can find an immediate explanation of this fact in the connection between the origin of these orders and the Crusades, because, for Christians as for Jews, it does seem that the 'Holy Land' designates nothing other than Palestine. The question becomes more complicated, however, when we notice that various Eastern organizations of which the initiatic character cannot be doubted, such as the Assassins and the Druse, also took this same title of 'Guardians of the Holy Land'. In such cases it can certainly no longer be only a question of Palestine; and it is moreover remarkable that these organizations share a fairly large number of features with the Western Orders of Chivalry and that in certain cases there was even communication between them historically. What then ought we really to understand by the 'Holy Land', and to what exactly corresponds this role of 'guardian', which seems to be attached to a specific kind of initiation that might be called 'chivalric', giving the term a wider sense than usual but which the analogies that exist between the different forms in question will fully justify?

We have shown elsewhere, particularly in *The King of the World*, that the expression 'Holy Land' has several synonyms ('Pure Land', 'Land of the Saints', 'Land of the Blessed', 'Land of the Living', 'Land of Immortality'), and that these equivalent designations are found in the traditions of all peoples and always apply essentially to a spiritual center whose location in a given region may be understood

either literally or symbolically, or sometimes in both senses at once. Every 'Holy Land' can be further designated by such expressions as 'Center of the World' or 'Heart of the World', something that calls for explanation since even such uniform terminology, when used in such different senses, could easily lead to confusion.

If, for example, we consider the Hebraic tradition, we see that the *Sepher Yetsirah* speaks of the 'Holy Palace' or 'Interior Palace', which is the true 'Center of the World' in the cosmogonic sense of the term; and we see also that this 'Holy Palace' has its image in the human world in that the *Shekinah* —the 'real presence' of the Divinity—abides in a specific place.¹ For the Israelites, this abode of the *Shekinah* was the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*), which in consequence they considered to be the 'Heart of the World', for it was indeed the spiritual center of their own tradition. This center, moreover, did not at first have a fixed location, since the spiritual center of a nomadic people, as they were, must necessarily move with them while nevertheless always remaining the same. 'The abode of the *Shekinah*,' says Paul Vulliaud, 'was not fixed until the completion of the Temple, for which David had provided Solomon the gold and silver and everything else necessary to perfect the work.'² The Tabernacle of the Holiness of *Jehovah*, the abode of the *Shekinah*, is the Holy of Holies that forms the heart of the Temple, which is itself the center of Zion (Jerusalem), just as Holy Zion is the center of the Land of Israel, and the Land of Israel is the Center of the World.³ In these successive applications we notice a gradual extension of the idea of the center, so that the appellation 'Center of the World' or 'Heart of the World' is finally extended to the entire land of Israel insofar as this is regarded as the 'Holy Land'; and it should be added in this connection that it has still other designations, among them 'Land of the Living'. One speaks of the 'Land of the Living comprising seven lands', and Vulliaud observes that 'this land is Canaan, in

1. See our articles 'Le Coeur du Monde dans la Kabbale hibrannique' and 'La Terre Sainte et le Coeur du Monde' in the journal *Regnabit*, July-August and September-October 1926. Cf. also chap. 4 of *The Symbolism of the Cross*.

2. It is fitting to note that the expressions used here evoke the assimilation often made between the construction of the Temple, envisaged in terms of its ideal meaning, and the 'Great Work' of the Hermeticists.

3. *La Kabbale juive*, Paris, 1923, P509.

which there were seven nations,"¹ which is correct in its literal sense although a symbolic interpretation is equally possible. This expression 'Land of the Living' is exactly synonymous with 'abode of immortality', and Catholic liturgy applies it to the celestial abode of the elect, which the Promised Land in fact symbolized, since upon entering it Israel was to reach the end of all its tribulations. From yet another point of view, the land of Israel, as a spiritual center, was an image of heaven, for according to Judaic tradition 'all that the Israelites accomplish on earth is in accord with the patterns that unfold in the celestial world.'⁵

What has been said here of the Israelites may equally well be said of all peoples possessing a truly orthodox tradition; and in fact the nation of Israel is not the only one to have likened its country to the 'Heart of the World' and to have regarded it as an image of heaven, two ideas that are, after all, really one. This same symbolism is encountered among other peoples who also possessed a 'Holy Land', that is, a country where a spiritual center played a role comparable to that played by the Temple in Jerusalem for the Hebrews. In this respect the 'Holy Land' is like the *Omphalos*, which was always the visible image of the 'Center of the World' for the people inhabiting the region where it was situated.⁶

This symbolism is found especially among the ancient Egyptians. According to Plutarch, 'Egypt ... which has the blackest of soils, they call by the same name as the black portion of the eye, "Chemia",⁷ and compare it to the heart.' The rather strange reason given by the author is that 'it is warm and moist and is enclosed by the southern portions of the inhabited world and adjoins them, like the heart in a man's left side,'⁸ for 'the Egyptians believe the eastern regions are the face of the world, the northern the right, and the

4. Ibid., vol. 2, p 116.

5. Ibid., vol. 1, p50i.

6. See our article 'Thunderbolts', in *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 27.

7. In the Egyptian language kemi signifies 'black earth', a designation for which equivalents can also be found among other peoples; from this word comes 'alchemy' (al merely being the article in Arabic), which originally designated the Hermetic science, that is, the sacerdotal science of Egypt.

8. 'Isis and Osiris', in *Plutarch, Moralia*, vol. v., tr. Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), par. 33, P83. Eo.

southern the left.⁹ These correspondences are rather superficial, and the true reason must be quite different since the same comparison with the heart has been applied likewise to every land to which a sacred and spiritually 'central' character has been attributed, no matter what its geographical situation. Moreover, according to Plutarch himself, the heart, which represented Egypt, at the same time represented heaven: 'And the heavens, since they are ageless because of their eternity, they portray by a heart with a censer beneath it.'¹⁰ And so, whereas the heart is itself figured as a vase, which is none other than what the legends of the Western Middle Ages were to call the 'Holy Grail', it functions in turn and simultaneously as hieroglyph both for Egypt and for heaven.

The conclusion to be drawn from these considerations is that there are as many particular 'Holy Lands' as there are regular traditional forms, since they represent the spiritual centers that correspond respectively to these different forms; however, if the same symbolism applies uniformly to all these 'Holy Lands', it is because all these spiritual centers have an analogous constitution, often extending to the most precise details, inasmuch as they are all images of the same unique and supreme center that alone is truly the 'Center of the World', from which they take their attributes as participating in its nature by direct communication (which is what constitutes traditional orthodoxy), and as effectively representing it more or less outwardly for particular times and places. In other words, there exists one 'Holy Land' par excellence, the prototype of all the others and the spiritual center to which all other centers are subordinate, the seat of the primordial tradition from which all the particular traditions are derived by adaptation to whatever specific conditions attach to a people or an epoch. This 'Holy Land' par

9. Ibid., par. 32, P79. In India on the contrary it is the South that is designated as the 'right side' (*dakshina*), but despite appearances this comes to the same thing, for this should be understood as the side to one's right when facing the east, while on the other hand it is easy to visualize the left side of the world as extending to the right of the person contemplating it, and conversely—as happens for two persons facing each other.

10. Ibid., par. 10, P27. This symbol, with the significance it is given here, seems susceptible of comparison with that of the phoenix.

excellence is the 'supreme country', according to the meaning of the Sanskrit term *Paradesha*, from which the Chaldeans made *Pardes* and *Westerners Paradise*; it is indeed the 'Terrestrial Paradise', which is the starting-point of every tradition, having at its center the unique source from which the four rivers flow to the four cardinal points,¹¹ and which is also the 'abode of immortality', as can easily be seen by turning to the first chapters of *Genesis*.¹²

We cannot think of returning here to all the questions concerning the supreme center and which we have already treated more or less amply elsewhere: its preservation, with varying degrees of secrecy, according to the period concerned, from the beginning to the end of the cycle, that is from the 'Terrestrial Paradise' to the 'Celestial Jerusalem', which represent its two extremes; the many names by which it has been known, among them *Tula*, *Luz*, *Salem*, and *Agarttha*; and the different symbols that have represented it, such as the mountain, the cavern, the island, and many more, standing for the most part in direct relation to the symbolism of the 'Pole' or the 'World Axis'. To these representations we may also add those which make of it a city, a citadel, a temple, or a palace, according to the particular aspect under which it is envisaged; and this gives us occasion to recall not only the Temple of Solomon, which relates more directly to our subject, but also the triple enclosure, of which we wrote recently that it represents the initiatic hierarchy of certain traditional centers,¹³ and also the mysterious labyrinth, which, though in a more complex form, pertains to a similar conception, with the

11. This source is identical with the 'fountain of teaching' to which we have had occasion to make various allusions (see below).

12. This is why the 'fountain of teaching' is at the same time the 'fountain of youth' (*fans jui'enuis*), for whoever drinks of it is freed from the temporal condition; it is moreover situated at the foot of the 'Tree of Life' (see the following two-part study *The Secret Language of Dante and the Fedeli d'Amore*), and its waters are obviously identified with the 'elixir of longevity' of the Hermeticists (the idea of 'longevity' having here the same significance as in the Eastern traditions) or the 'draught of immortality' so often encountered under various names.

13. See our article 'The Triple Enclosure of the Druids', *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 12, where we point out the precise relationship of that figure in both its circular and its square forms with the symbolism of the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and the 'Celestial Jerusalem'.

difference that it emphasizes above all the idea of a 'journey' to the hidden center.¹⁴

We must now add that the symbolism of the 'Holy Land' has a double meaning: whether it be related to the supreme center or to a subordinate center, it represents not only that center itself, but also, by natural association, the tradition emanating from the former or conserved by the latter, that is, in the first case, the primordial tradition, and in the second, a particular traditional form.¹⁵ This double meaning appears again clearly in the symbolism of the 'Holy Grail', which is at once a vessel (*grasale*) and a book (*gradale* or *graduale*), the latter manifestly designating the tradition, while the former more directly pertains to the state corresponding to the effective possession of this tradition, that is, the 'edenic state', if it is the primordial tradition that is being considered, for whoever has attained this state is thereby reintegrated into *Pardes*, so that one can say his abode is henceforth in the 'Center of the World'.¹⁶ It is not without reason that we bring these two symbolisms together here, for their very close similarity shows that when we speak of the 'Knighthood of the Holy Grail' or of the 'Guardians of the Holy Land' we must understand one and the same thing. It remains, then, for us to

14. The Cretan labyrinth was the palace of Minos, whose name, identical with that of Manu, designates the primordial Legislator. It is evident, moreover, from the point we are making, why walking the labyrinths traced upon the paving stones of certain churches in the Middle Ages was considered to replace the pilgrimage to the Holy Land for those who were unable to accomplish it; and it should be remembered that pilgrimage is precisely one of the figures of initiation, so that 'pilgrimage to the Holy Land' is, in the esoteric sense, the same thing as the 'search for the Lost Word' or the 'quest for the Holy Grail'.

15. By analogy, the 'Center of the World' is, from the cosmogonic viewpoint, the original point from which the creative Word is uttered, and is also the Word itself.

16. It is important to remember here that in all traditions places essentially symbolize states. We would point out further that there is an obvious connection between the symbolism of the vase or cup and that of the fountain mentioned earlier. We have also seen that for the Egyptians the vase was the hieroglyph of the heart, the vital center of the being. And finally, let us recall what we have already said on other occasions about wine as a substitute for the Vedic *soma* and as symbol of the hidden doctrine; in all of this, in one way or another, it is always a matter of the 'draught of immortality' and the restoration of the 'primordial state'.

explain as far as is possible just what the function of these 'guardians' was, a function that fell particularly to the Templars.¹⁷

In order to understand clearly what is involved here, a distinction must be made between the custodians of the tradition, whose duty is to conserve and transmit it, and those who to one degree or another only receive from it a communication and, one might say, a participation. The original trustees and dispensers of the doctrine remain at its source, which is strictly the center itself; thence the doctrine is communicated and distributed hierarchically to the different initiatic degrees in accordance with the currents represented by the rivers of *Pardes*, or, recalling a figure we have examined elsewhere,¹⁸ by the channels running from the interior to the exterior, linking together the successive enclosures that correspond to these degrees. Thus not all who share in the tradition reach the same degree or fulfill the same function; and a distinction should even be made between these two things, for although in general they correspond to each other, they are not strictly inseparable, for it can happen that a man may be intellectually qualified to attain the highest degrees but is not thereby qualified to discharge all the functions in the initiatic organization. Here only the functions are under consideration, and from this point of view we would say that the 'guardians' stand at the boundary of the spiritual center, taken in its widest sense, or in the uttermost enclosure, which both separates the center from the 'outer world' and brings it into contact with the latter. Thus, these 'guardians' exercise a double function: on the one hand, they are truly the defenders of the 'Holy Land' in the sense that they bar access to those not possessing the qualifications required for entry, and constitute what we have called the 'outer covering' that conceals it from the eyes of the profane; on the other hand, however, they assure regular relations with the outside world, as we shall explain.

17. Saint-Yves d'Alveydre refers to the 'guardians' of the supreme center as 'Templars of the Agarththa'; the observations we have made make clear the aptness of this expression, the full significance of which he perhaps did not fully grasp himself.

18. See 'The Triple Enclosure of the Druids', *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 12.

In the language of the Hindu tradition the role of defender clearly belongs to the Kshatriyas, and it is precisely 'chivalric' initiation that is essentially adapted to the nature proper to the men of this warrior caste. From this derive the special features of this initiation, the particular symbolism it uses, and especially the intervention of an affective element designated very explicitly by the term 'love', something we have already explained elsewhere and cannot pause to consider now.¹⁹ But in the case of the Templars there is something more to keep in mind: although their initiation was essentially 'chivalric', as was appropriate to their nature and function, they had a double character, at once military and religious; and it had to be so if they were, as we have good reason to think, among the 'guardians' of the supreme center, where spiritual authority and temporal power are brought together in their common principle, communicating the mark of that reunion in turn to all things directly connected with it. In the Western world, where the spiritual takes a specifically religious form, the true 'guardians of the Holy Land', as long as they had any 'official' existence, had to be knights, but knights who were at the same time monks; and that indeed is just what the Templars were.

This brings us directly to the second role of the 'guardians' of the supreme center, a role that consists, as we have just said, in assuring certain exterior relations and above all, let us add, in maintaining the link between the primordial tradition and the secondary, derived traditions. To this end each traditional form must possess one or more special organizations constituted, to all appearances, within that form itself, but composed of men aware of what lies beyond all 'forms', that is to say of the one doctrine that is the source and essence of all the others, and that is none other than the primordial tradition. In the world of the Judeo-Christian tradition such an organization naturally enough took as its symbol the Temple of Solomon, which had long since ceased to exist physically and could thus have only an altogether ideal significance as a reflection (as is every subordinate spiritual center) of the supreme center; and the very etymology of the name Jerusalem quite clearly indicates

19. See below, chap. 5: "the Secret Language of Dante and the Fedeli d'Amore'.

that it is only the visible image of the mysterious *Salem* of Melchizedek. If such was the nature of the Templars, in order to fulfill the role allotted them and which concerned a certain specific tradition, that of the West, they had to remain outwardly attached to the form of that tradition; but at the same time the inner consciousness of the true doctrinal unity must have enabled them to communicate with the representatives of other traditions,²⁰ which explains their relations with certain Eastern organizations, especially, as is only natural, with those who furthermore played a role similar to their own.

These considerations make it clear on the other hand why the destruction of the Order of the Temple²¹ should have brought in its wake the rupture of regular relations between the West and the 'Center of the World'; and the deviation that inevitably followed this rupture and that has become gradually more marked since then up to our own time must indeed be traced back to the fourteenth century. This is not to say however that all ties were severed at one blow; for quite some time it was possible to maintain relations with the supreme center to some degree, though only covertly, through the mediation of such organizations as the *Fede Santa*²² or the Fedeli d'Amore,²³ the *Massenie du Saint-Graal*, and doubtless many others also heir to the spirit of the Order of the Temple and for the most part attached to it by more or less direct filiation. Those who preserved this spirit alive and who inspired such organizations, though without themselves constituting a formal group, came to be known by the essentially symbolic name 'brothers of the Rose-Cross'; but a day came when even these brothers of the Rose-Cross had to leave the West, where conditions had become such that no further action was possible; and so, it is said, they withdrew

20. This relates to what has been called symbolically the 'gift of tongues'; on this subject we would refer readers to the study of the same name [chap. 371 in *Perspectives on Initiation*].

21. Guenon usually prefers this full designation for the Knights Templars. Eo.

22. A tertiary order of the Templars. Ed.

23. The 'Faithful of Love', of which Guenon will speak further in this text. The Italian spelling for this association has been used throughout in preference to the French *Policies d'Amour*. Et>.

to Asia, reabsorbed as it were by the supreme center of which they were a kind of emanation. For the Western world there is no longer a 'Holy Land' to guard, since the path leading to it was from that moment utterly lost. How much longer will this situation endure, and is it even to be hoped that communication might be re-established sooner or later? It is not for us to answer this question, for apart from the fact that we do not wish to risk any prediction, the solution depends entirely upon the West itself, for only by a return to normal conditions and a recovery of the spirit of its own tradition will it prove able to open anew the way that leads to the 'Center of the World'.

4

THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF DANTE AND THE 'FEDELI D'AMORE' I

UNDER the title *Il linguaggio segreto di Dante a dei fidele d'amore*,¹ Luigi Valli, to whom we are already indebted for several studies on the significance of Dante's writings, has published a new work that is too important for us to pass by with no more than a mere bibliographical note. Its thesis may be briefly summarized as follows: the various 'ladies' celebrated by the poets attached to the mysterious organization of the Fedeli d'Amore, from Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, and their contemporaries, to Boccaccio and Petrarch, are not women who actually lived on this earth but are all, under different names, one and the same symbolic 'Lady', who represents transcendent Intelligence (the *Madonna Intelligenza* of Dino Compagni) or divine Wisdom. In support of this thesis the author brings forward formidable documentation and a collection of arguments that must impress even the most sceptical; in particular he shows that those verses that seem most unintelligible from the literal point of view become perfectly clear with the hypothesis of a 'jargon' or conventional language the principal terms of which he claims to have interpreted; and he recalls other cases, notably that of the Persian Sufis, where a similar meaning has been concealed in this fashion under the guise of simple love poetry. It would not be feasible to summarize his whole argument, which is based on exact textual citations that support his views, and so we can only refer anyone interested in the subject to the book itself.

1. Roma: Biblioteca di filosofia e Scienza, Casa editrice 'Optima', 1928.

In truth, what is involved has always seemed to us an obvious and incontestable fact, though one nevertheless needing to be firmly established. Indeed, Valli foresees that his conclusions will be challenged by several kinds of adversary: firstly, the so-called 'positivist' criticism (which he is wrong to qualify as 'traditional' since it is, on the contrary, opposed to the traditional spirit, to which all initiatic interpretation is linked); secondly, the party spirit, whether Catholic or anti-Catholic, which will find no satisfaction at all in what he writes; and finally, 'aesthetic' criticism and 'romantic rhetoric', which are fundamentally nothing other than what one might call the 'literary' spirit. We have here a group of prejudices that will always and inevitably stand opposed to the search for the profound meaning of certain works, though in the presence of such works those of good faith and open mind will readily see which side the truth is on. For our part, the only objections we have to make concern certain interpretations that in no way affect the general thesis; moreover, the author has made no claim to provide a definitive solution to all the questions he raises and is the first to acknowledge that his work will require correction or amendment in many points of detail.

Valli's principal shortcoming, whence stem most of the insufficiencies observed in his work, is—let us say it plainly—that he lacks the 'initiatic' mentality required to treat such a subject in depth. His point of view is too exclusively that of an historian: it is not enough to 'investigate history' in order to solve certain problems; and, moreover, we are entitled to wonder whether this does not really amount to interpreting medieval ideas with the modern mentality, a reproach the author quite rightly levels at the official critics. Did the men of the Middle Ages ever 'investigate history for its own sake'? The above matters require a more profound kind of understanding, and if one brings to them only a 'profane' spirit and intention, one can only accumulate materials reflecting an altogether different spirit; and we do not see that there could be much interest in historical research if some doctrinal truth does not result from it.

It is truly regrettable that the author lacks certain traditional data and a direct and so to speak 'technical' knowledge of his subject matter. This prevented him from recognizing the properly initiatic import of our study *The Esoterism of Dante* and explains why he did not understand how little it matters, from our point of view,

whether such 'discoveries' he attributed to Rossetti, Aroux, or to anyone else, for we cite them only as 'supports' for considerations of quite another order: we are concerned with initiatic doctrine, not literary history. As regards Rossetti, we find rather strange the assertion that he was 'Rosicrucian' since the true brothers of the Rose-Cross (who were, by the way, not of 'Gnostic descent') had disappeared from the Western world well before his time; and even if he were attached to some sort of pseudo-Rosicrucian organization, of which there were so many, such an organization would certainly not have had any authentic tradition to impart to him. Moreover, Rossetti's initial idea of reading a purely political meaning into everything quite clearly contradicts such an hypothesis. Valli has only a very superficial and altogether 'simplistic' idea of Rosicrucianism, and he does not seem to have any inkling of the symbolism of the cross any more than he seems to have understood the traditional significance of the heart, which refers to the intellect and not to feelings. Let us say on this last point that the *cuore gentile* of the 'Fedeles d'Amour' is the heart purified, that is, devoid of all that concerns worldly objects, and by this very fact made ready to receive interior illumination. It is remarkable that an identical doctrine is found in Taoism.

Let us move on to some other points raised in the course of our reading, for there are some rather unfortunate references that detract from this otherwise serious work. Thus one might easily have found better authorities to cite on Gnosticism than G.R.S. Mead,² on number symbolism than Marc Saunter, and above all on Masonry than Leo Taxil!.' Moreover, Valli cites the last mentioned on a most elementary point, the symbolic ages of the different

2. G.R.S. Mead was a classical scholar and indefatigable translator of important and often obscure Gnostic and Hermetic texts, who allied his work for a time with the Theosophical Movement of H. P. Blavatsky. Ed.

3. Leo Taxil was a pseudonym of Gabriel Jogand-Pages, a controversial figure who was prosecuted several times for unscrupulous journalism, and who was at one time a virulent anti-cleric and active Mason. He subsequently perpetrated an elaborate anti-Masonic hoax, for which he achieved great notoriety. Taxil, ever difficult to pin down, would at one time claim that his motive had been to destroy Freemasonry by associating it with satanic practices, and then again imply that he only wanted to see how credulous the Catholic church could be! Ed.

grades, something that can be found anywhere. In the same place, following Rossetti, the author also cites the *Recueil precieux de la Maçonnerie Adonhiramite*, but the reference is made in an altogether unintelligible fashion, which clearly demonstrates that he himself has no personal knowledge of the book in question. We have, besides, grave reservations concerning everything Valli says of Masonry, which he qualifies bizarrely as 'ultra-modern'; an organization may have 'lost the spirit' (or what is called in Arabic the *barakah*) through the intrusion of politics or otherwise, yet keep its symbolism intact even while no longer understanding it; but Valli himself seems not to have a very good grasp of the true role of symbolism nor a very clear sense of traditional filiation. When he speaks of the different 'currents' he confuses esoterism and exoterism and takes as sources of inspiration for the Fedeli d' Amore what only represent prior incursions into the profane world of an initiatic tradition from which these Fedeli d'Amore themselves proceeded directly. Influences descend from the initiatic sphere into the profane world, but the inverse is not possible, for a river never returns to its source; that source is the 'fountain of teaching' so often in evidence in the poems studied here, and generally described as situated at the foot of a tree that is obviously none other than the 'Tree of Life'.⁴ The symbolism of the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and of the 'Celestial Jerusalem' must find its application here.

There are also some no less regrettable linguistic inaccuracies: thus the author qualifies as 'human' things that are on the contrary essentially 'supra-human', as, moreover, is the case for anything of a truly traditional and initiatic order. Similarly, he commits the error of calling initiates of any grade whatever 'adepts',⁵ whereas that term

4. This tree, among the Fedeli d'Amore, is generally a pine, a beech, or a laurel; the 'Tree of Life' is often represented by evergreens.

5. The Fedeli d'Amore were divided into seven degrees; these are the seven rungs of the initiatic ladder, corresponding to the seven planetary heavens and the seven liberal arts. The expressions 'terzo cielo' (heaven of Venus), 'terzo loco' (to be compared with the Masonic term 'third apartment'), and 'terzo grado' indicate the third degree of the hierarchy in which the *saluto* (or 'salute') was received, this rite taking place, it seems, at the feast of All Saints, as did others at Easter, around which the action of *The Divine Comedy* is centered.

must be strictly reserved for the supreme degree. The misuse of this word is particularly noteworthy because it constitutes, so to speak, a 'hallmark': there are a certain number of mistakes that the 'profane' rarely fail to commit, and this is one of them. We should also call attention to the constant use of words such as 'sect' and 'sectarian' to designate organizations that are initiatic and not religious, an entirely improper and most displeasing usage,⁶ which brings us directly to the gravest shortcoming we must point out in Valli's work.

This failing is Valli's continual confusion of the 'initiatic' and the 'mystical' points of view, and his assimilation of the matters in question into a 'religious' doctrine, whereas esoterism, even if it bases itself on religious forms (as is the case with the Sufis and the Fedeli d'Amore), really belongs to an entirely different order. A truly initiatic tradition cannot be 'heterodox'; to qualify it as such is to reverse the normal and hierarchical relationship between the interior and the exterior. Esoterism is not contrary to 'orthodoxy', even orthodoxy construed simply in the religious sense; it is above or beyond the religious point of view, which is obviously not at all the same thing; and in fact the unjustified accusation of heresy was often nothing more than a convenient ruse for getting rid of people who might be problematic for altogether different reasons. Rossetti and Aroux were not wrong in thinking that in Dante's works theological expressions mask something else, but only in believing that these expressions must be interpreted 'inversely'; esoterism is not superimposed on exoterism, but neither is it opposed to it, for it is not on the same plane and gives to the same truths a deeper meaning by transposing them to a higher order. It is of course true that *Amor* is the inverse of *Roma*,⁷ but we must not conclude from that,

6. This is not at all the same thing, whatever some may think, as 'jargon' (*gergo*), which, as we have pointed out (*Voile d'Isis*, Oct. 1926, P652), was a technical term before passing into popular usage, where it took on a pejorative sense. Let us point out here also that we always take the word 'profane' in its technical sense, which of course implies nothing insulting.

7. It is curious that if one writes this simple phrase, 'In Italia i· Roma' [In Italy and Rome], and then reads it backward, it becomes 'Amore ai Latini' [Love to the Latins]: 'chance' is sometimes surprisingly ingenious!

as some have wished to do, that it signifies the antithesis of *Roma*, but rather that *Roma* is only its reflection or visible image, necessarily inverted as is the image of an object in a mirror—which gives us occasion to recall the *per speculum in aenigmate* of Saint Paul. Regarding Rossetti and Aroux and some reservations we have about certain of their interpretations, we will add that one cannot say a method is ‘unacceptable because unverifiable’ without running the risk of falling into the prejudices of ‘positivist’ criticism, which would entail rejecting everything obtained by direct knowledge, especially and in particular all knowledge obtained through the regular transmission of a traditional teaching, which is in effect unverifiable... for the profane!⁸

It is the more astonishing that Valli confuses esoterism with ‘heterodoxy’ in view of the fact that he has at least understood, far better than his predecessors, that the doctrine of the Fedeli d’Amore was in no way ‘anti-Catholic’ (even being, like that of the Rosicrucians, rigorously ‘catholic’ in the true sense of the word) and that it had nothing in common with the profane currents from which the Reformation was to come. Where then did he get the idea that the Church had revealed the deeper meaning of its ‘mysteries’ to the general populace? On the contrary, so little of this is taught by the Church that one comes to doubt, with good reason, whether she herself has retained any knowledge of it; and it is precisely in this ‘loss of spirit’ that the ‘corruption’ already denounced by Dante and his associates consisted,⁹ although the most elementary prudence dictated that when speaking of this ‘corruption’ they not do so clearly. But one should not conclude from this that the use of a

8. It must be admitted that it is difficult to avoid the influence of the spirit of the times; thus, the qualification of certain Biblical books as ‘pseudo-solomonic’ and ‘mystico-platonic’ seems to us an annoying concession to modern exegesis, that is to say to the same ‘positivist criticism’ against which the author so justifiably takes his stand.

9. The head of Medusa, which turns men to ‘stone’ (a word that plays a very important part in the language of the Fedeli d’Amore), represents the corruption of Wisdom; her hair (according to the Sufis symbolic of the divine mysteries) turns into serpents, naturally taken in the pejorative sense, for in its other sense the serpent is also a symbol of Wisdom itself.

symbolic terminology has no other *raison d'être* than the desire to conceal the true meaning of a doctrine; there are things that by their very nature cannot be expressed otherwise than in this form, and this side of the question, which is by far the most important, scarcely seems to have been recognized by the author. And there is yet a third aspect, intermediate so to speak, where prudence is indeed involved, but in the interest of the doctrine itself and no longer of its exponents. This aspect is more particularly related to the symbol of wine used by the Sufis, whose teaching, let us add in passing, cannot be qualified as 'pantheistic' except by a typical Western error. The allusions he makes to this symbol in no way establish that 'wine' signifies 'mystery', a secret or restricted doctrine, simply because *yayin* and *sod* are equivalent numerically in Hebrew, or because in Islamic esoterism wine is the 'drink of the elite', which the common man may not use with impunity.¹⁰

But let us move on to the confusion of the 'mystical' with the 'initiatic' point of view, a confusion that is connected to the preceding one because it is the false assimilation of esoteric doctrines to mysticism (which latter pertains to the religious domain) that leads to situating them on the same plane as exoterism and insisting on opposing them to it. We see very well what it is in the present case that could have provoked this error: a 'chivalric' tradition always

10. The proverbial expression 'to drink like a Templar', generally taken in the most crudely literal sense, doubtless has this as its real origin since the 'wine' that the Templars drank was the same as that drunk by the Jewish Kabbalists and the Islamic Sufis. Similarly, the other expression, 'to swear like a Templar', is only an allusion to the initiatic vow, robbed of its proper significance by profane incomprehension and malice. [To better understand what the author is saying in this text it should be noted that wine taken in the ordinary sense of the word is a forbidden beverage in Islam; hence, whenever reference is made to it in Islamic esoterism it must be understood to designate something more subtle. In fact, according to the teaching of Muhyi'd-Din ibn al-'Arabi, 'wine' signifies the 'science of spiritual states' (*ilin al-ahwitl*), whereas 'water' represents the 'absolute science' (*al-ilm al-imtitlaq*), 'milk' the 'science of revealed laws' (*ilmii-ch-chriiy*), and 'honey' the 'science of sapiential norms' (*ibn al-nawamiss*). Moreover, if one notes that these four 'beverages' are precisely the substances of the four paradisaal rivers according to the Koran (47, 17), it will be understood that the 'wine' of the Sufis differs in substance from the familiar beverage that serves as its symbol—and this applies to the other three initiatic beverages as well. — note by M.Valsan.

requires the preponderance of a principle represented as feminine (*Madonna*)¹¹ as well as the intervention of an affective element (*Amore*) in order to adapt to the nature of the men to whom it is particularly addressed. The linking of such a traditional form with that represented by the Persian Sufis is altogether sound, but it should be added that these two are far from being the only cases where one encounters the cult of the 'donna-Divini', that is to say the feminine aspect of the Divinity: we also find it in India, where that aspect is designated as the *Shakti*, equivalent in certain respects to the Hebraic *Shekinah*, and it should be noted that the cult of the *Shakti* concerns above all the Kshatriyas. A 'chivalric' tradition is precisely nothing other than a traditional form appropriate to the Kshatriyas, and that is why it cannot constitute a path that is purely intellectual as is that of the Brahmins; the latter is the 'dry way' of the alchemists, whereas the former is the 'moist way',¹² water symbolizing the feminine as fire does the masculine, the first corresponding to the emotivity and the second to the intellectuality that predominate respectively in the natures of the Kshatriyas and the Brahmins. This is why such a tradition may seem mystical from the outside even when it is really initiatic, so much so that one could even think that mysticism in the ordinary sense of the word is a sort of vestige of it, a 'survival' in a civilization such as that of the West, after every regular traditional organization has disappeared.

The role of the feminine principle in certain traditional forms is noticeable even in Catholic exoterism in the importance attributed to the cult of the Virgin. Valli seems astonished to find the *Rosa Mystica* figuring in the litanies of the Virgin, but there are in these same litanies many other properly initiatic symbols, and what he does not

11. The 'active Intellect', represented by Madonna, is the 'celestial ray' that constitutes the link between God and man, and that leads man to God: it is the Hindu *Buddhi*. Nevertheless, one should beware of taking 'Wisdom' and 'Intelligence' as strictly identical, for there are two complementary aspects to be distinguished here (*Hohmah* and *Binah* in the Kabbalah).

12. In another sense, and according to another correlation, these two ways might also be, respectively, that of initiates in general and that of mystics; but the latter way is 'irregular' and need not be envisaged by anyone holding strictly to the traditional norm.

seem to suspect is that their application is perfectly justified through the association of the Virgin with Wisdom and with the Shekinah. Apropos of this let us also note that Saint Bernard, whose connection with the Templars is well known, appears as a 'knight of the Virgin'; and he calls the Virgin 'his Lady', the origin of the expression Our Lady' [Notre Dame] even having been attributed to him. She is also *Madonna*, and in one of her aspects is identified with Wisdom, hence the same *Madonna* of the Fedeli d'Amore, this being yet another correspondence Valli does not suspect, any more than he seems to suspect the reason why the month of May is consecrated to the Virgin.

One thing ought to have led Valli to see that the doctrines in question were not 'mysticism' at all: he himself acknowledges the almost exclusive importance these doctrines attach to 'knowledge', something totally foreign to the mystical point of view. He is mistaken, moreover, about the consequences to be drawn therefrom, for this emphasis is not a characteristic peculiar to 'gnosticism', but a general feature of all initiatic teaching, whatever form it may have taken; knowledge is always the sole aim, and all the rest but different means of attaining it. One must take care not to confuse 'gnosis', which signifies 'knowledge', with 'gnosticism', although the latter obviously takes its name from the former; besides, the term 'gnosticism' is rather vague and seems in fact to have been applied indiscriminately to very different things.¹⁴

One must not allow oneself to be hindered by external forms, whatever they may be. The 'Fedeli d'Amore' were well able to go

13. It should be noted that in certain cases the same symbols even represent simultaneously the Virgin and Christ. This is indeed an enigma worthy of being posed to the sagacity of our modern researchers, and its solution would result from a consideration of the links of the *Shekinah* with *Metatron*. See *The King of the World*, chap. 3].

14. Valli says that the 'critics' show little appreciation for the traditional theses of contemporary 'gnostics'; for once such 'critics' are in the right because these 'neognostics' have never received anything through any transmission whatsoever, and all that is involved is an attempt at a 'reconstitution' from documents, very fragmentary ones, that lie within reach of one and all. On this point one can believe the testimony of someone who has had occasion to observe these things closely enough to know the real story.

beyond these forms, as is attested by the fact that in one of the first tales of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Melchizedek affirms that, as between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, 'no one knows which is the true faith.' Valli was right to interpret this affirmation in the sense that 'the true faith lies hidden under the external aspects of the various beliefs,' but what is most remarkable here—and this he did not see—is that these words are put into the mouth of Melchizedek, who is precisely the representative of the single tradition concealed under all these outer forms, clearly indicating that certain individuals in the West at that time had retained a knowledge of the true 'Center of the World'. However that may be, an 'affective' language, such as that of the Fedeli d'Amore, is also an outer form by which one must not be fooled, for it may very well conceal something far more profound; and the word *amour* in particular may, by virtue of an analogical transposition, signify something altogether different from the sentiment it ordinarily denotes. This deeper meaning of 'love' in connection with the doctrines of the Orders of Chivalry becomes clear enough if one considers the following together: firstly, Saint John's phrase, 'God is Love'; then the battle-cry of the Templars, 'Vive Dieu, Saint Amour'; and finally the last verse of the *Divine Comedy*, 'L'Amor che muove il Sole e l'altre stelle.'¹⁵ Another interesting point in this regard is the relationship established between 'love' and 'death' in the symbolism of the Fedeli d'Amore, a twofold relationship, as the word death itself has a double meaning. On the one hand, there is a parallel and a sort of association of love with death, where the latter must be understood as 'initiatic death'; and this parallel seems to have endured in the current that, at the close of the Middle Ages, gave rise to the depictions of the 'dance of death' [*danse macabre*];¹⁶ on the other hand, there is also a point of view that establishes an antithesis between love and death, an antithesis that can be explained in part by the very formation of the words [*amour* and *mort*]: the root *mor* is common to both, and, in

15. Concerning the Orders of Chivalry, let us say that the 'Johannine Church' denotes the totality of all those who were related in any way to what was called in the Middle Ages the 'Kingdom of Prester John', to which we have alluded in our study *The King of the World*.

16. We have seen in a fifteenth-century cemetery capitals in whose sculpture the attributes of love and death are curiously joined.

a-mor, is preceded by a privative 'a', as in the Sanskrit a-mara, amrita, so that 'amour' could be interpreted as a sort of hieroglyphic equivalent for 'immortality'. The 'dead' can in this sense be regarded, in a general way, as designating the profane, whereas the 'living', or those who have attained immortality, are the initiates; and here we should recall the expression 'Land of the Living', synonymous with 'Holy Land' or 'Land of the Saints', 'Pure Land', and so forth; and the opposition that we have just indicated is, in this context, equivalent to the opposition of hell, which is the profane world, to the heavens, which represent the degrees of the initiatic hierarchy.

As for the 'true faith' of which we spoke a while ago, it is designated as the *Fede Santa*, an expression which, like the word *Amore*, applies at the same time to the initiatic organization itself. This *Fede Santa* [Holy Faith], of which Dante was a Kadosch, is the faith of the Fedeli d'Amore; and it is also the Fede dei Santi [Faith of the Saints] —that is, the Emounah of the Kadosch, as we explained in *The Esoterism of Dante*. This designation of the initiates as 'Saints', of which Kadosch is the Hebrew equivalent, is perfectly understandable if one considers the meaning of the 'heavens' just now indicated, since the heavens are in fact described as the abode of the saints. This must be seen in the context of many other analogous denominations, such as 'Pure Ones', 'Perfect Ones', Cathars, Sufis, Ikhwan-al-Safa' [Brethren of Purity], and so forth, which are all taken in the same sense, permitting us thereby to understand what the 'Holy Land' truly is.¹⁷

This raises another point to which Valli alludes all too briefly: the secret significance of pilgrimage, which is related to the peregrinations of initiates whose itineraries in fact coincided most frequently with those of ordinary pilgrims, with whom they were thus easily confused, thus permitting them the better to conceal the true reasons for their journeys. Moreover, the very locations of pilgrimage sites such as the sanctuaries of antiquity have an esoteric value that should be taken into consideration here, and this is something

17. It is perhaps not without interest to note further that the initials *P.S.* can also be read as *tides Sapientia*, an exact translation of the *Pistis Sophia* of the gnostics.

directly related to what we have called 'sacred geography'¹⁸ and which must also be considered together with what we have written on the subject of the Compagnons and the Bohemians,¹⁹ a subject to which we shall perhaps return on another occasion.

The question of the 'Holy Land' could also provide the key to the relationship of Dante and the Fedeli d'Amore to the Templars, again a subject that receives very incomplete treatment in Valli's book. Valli does consider these relationships with the Templars, as well as with the alchemists, to be an undeniable fact, and he points out some interesting correspondences, as, for example, that of the Templars' nine-year probation with the symbolic age of nine years in the *Vita Nuova* — but there could have been many other things to choose. Thus, apropos of the Templars' center on Cyprus, it would be interesting to examine the meaning of that island's name, its connection with Venus and the 'third heaven', and the symbolism of copper, from which it took its name, all subjects that we can only point to at the moment, without dwelling on them.

Similarly, regarding the obligation imposed on the Fedeli d'Amore to employ the poetic form in their writings, there would be good reason to ask why poetry was called the 'language of the gods' by the ancients; why *vates* in Latin signified both the poet and the soothsayer or prophet (oracles, moreover, being rendered in verse); why verses were called *carmina* (charms, incantations, a word identical with the Sanskrit *karma*, understood in its technical sense of 'ritual act');²⁰ and also why it is said of Solomon and other sages, particularly in the Islamic tradition, that they understood the 'language of the birds',²¹ which, strange as it may seem, is only another name for the 'language of the gods'.²²

Before concluding these remarks, we must still say a few words on the interpretation of the *Divine Comedy* that Valli has developed in

18. On this subject Grillot de Givry has provided a study entitled 'Les Foyers du mysticisme populaire' in *Voile d'Isis*, April 1920.

19. Cf. *Le Voile d'Isis*, October 1926.

20. *Rita* in Sanskrit signifies what is in conformity with order, a meaning that the adverb *rite* has retained in Latin; the cosmic order is here represented by the law of rhythm.

21. See 'The Language of the Birds', *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 9.

22. The same thing is also found in the Germanic legends.

other works and which he simply summarizes in the work we are now considering. The symmetries of the cross and of the eagle, on which the poem is based entirely, certainly explain a part of its meaning (in conformity, moreover, with the conclusion of *De Monorchia*);^{23*} but there are in this poem many other things that cannot be completely explained in this way even if we limit ourselves to the use made of symbolic numbers, the author wrongly believing that he has found some single key sufficient to resolve all difficulties. Furthermore, he seems to regard these 'structural connections' as devices peculiar to Dante, whereas, on the contrary, there is something essentially traditional in this symbolic 'architecture', which, although it did not perhaps play a part in the modes of expression customary among the Fedeli d'Amore properly speaking, nonetheless existed in organizations more or less closely allied to their own, and was closely bound to the very art of the builders.²⁴ There seems to be an intuition of these relationships, however, when he states that 'a study of symbolism in the figurative arts' could further the research in question. Moreover, here, as everywhere, one could discover many other points of comparison, sometimes quite unexpected ones, once all 'aesthetic' preoccupations were laid aside.²⁵

If we have dwelt at such length on Valli's book it is because it is one that truly deserves our attention, and if we have especially pointed out its omissions, it is because in this way we are able to indicate for him and for others new paths for research that may successfully complement the results already achieved. It seems that the time has come when the true significance of Dante's work may at last be uncovered; if the interpretations of Rossetti and Aroux were not taken seriously in their own times, it is perhaps not because minds were much less prepared to receive them than they are today, but rather because it was foreseen that the secret must be kept for six centuries (the Chaldean *Naros*). Luigi Valli often speaks

23. Cf. *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*, chap. 8.

24. We recall the Masonic expression 'fragment of architecture', which applies in the truest sense to the work of Dante.

25. We are thinking especially of certain of the ideas contained in Pierre Piobb's curious book *Le Secret de Nostradamus*, Paris, 1927.

of these six centuries during which Dante was not understood, but evidently without seeing any particular meaning in that fact; and this again demonstrates the need, in studies of this kind, for a knowledge of 'cyclical laws', something the modern West has so completely forgotten.

5

THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF DANTE AND THE 'FEDELI D'AMORE' II

WE DEVOTED the preceding chapter to Luigi Valli's important work of the same title published in 1928; in 1931 we learned of the sudden and premature death of the author, from whom we were hoping for other studies no less worthy of interest; we then received a second volume, bearing the same title as the first and containing responses to objections that had been made to its thesis and some complementary notes.¹

Nearly all the objections, which attest to an incomprehension that is no cause for surprise, may be subsumed, as was moreover easy to foresee, under one of two headings: those from 'literary critics' well-imbued with scholarly and academic prejudices, and those from Catholic circles, where none want to admit that Dante belonged to an initiatic organization; all concur however, albeit for different reasons, in denying the existence of esoterism, even where it is most strikingly evident. The author seems to attach more importance to the first, which he discusses at far greater length than he does the second; we for our part would be tempted to do just the opposite, seeing in the latter a much graver symptom of the deformation of the modern mentality; but this difference in perspective is to be explained by Valli's chosen point of view, which is exclusively that of

1. Il linguaggio segreto di Dilute e dei Fidel's d'Amore, vol. II (Discussione e note aggiunte), Roma, Biblioteca di Filosofia e Scienza, Casa editrice Optima'.

a 'researcher' and historian. This all too exterior point of view gives rise to a certain number of deficiencies and linguistic inaccuracies, which we have had occasion to point out in the previous chapter. Valli acknowledges in connection with just this point that 'he has never had contact with initiatic traditions of any kind,' and that 'his mental training is of a critical nature'; it is all the more remarkable then that he should have arrived at conclusions so far removed from those of ordinary 'criticism', conclusions that are even quite astonishing coming from someone who affirms his wish to be 'a man of the twentieth century'. It is no less regrettable that as a result of prejudice he does not allow himself to understand the notion of traditional orthodoxy; that he persists in applying the disagreeable term 'sect' to organizations of an initiatic, and not religious, character; and that he denies having confused the 'mystical' and the 'initiatic' whereas in fact he does this again throughout this second book. But these shortcomings must not prevent us from recognizing Valli's great merit, 'profane' though he may be and wished to remain, for having glimpsed a great part of the truth despite all the obstacles that his education was naturally bound to put in his way, and for having stated that truth without regard for the opposition he was bound to elicit from all those who have some interest in its remaining unknown.

We shall mention only two or three examples typical of the incomprehension of academic 'critics'. Some have gone so far as to contend that beautiful poetry cannot be symbolic; it seems that for them a work of art cannot be admired unless it has no meaning, and that the existence of a deeper meaning destroys its artistic value! Here we see expressed as clearly as possible that 'profane' conception of art in general and poetry in particular which we have recently had several occasions to describe as a modern degeneration wholly contrary to the character that both arts and sciences possessed originally, and that they have always had in any traditional civilization. Let us note in this regard a rather interesting formulation cited by Valli: in all medieval (as opposed to modern) art, 'what is at stake is the incarnation of an idea, not the idealization of a reality'; we would rather have said 'a reality of a sensible order', for an idea is

also a reality, and even one of a superior order, this 'incarnation of an idea' in a particular form being nothing hut symbolism itself.

Others have put forward a truly comical objection: they contend that it would be 'vile' to write in 'jargon', that is to say in a language of conventions, evidently regarding this only as a sort of cowardice and dissimulation. To tell the truth, Valli may perhaps have insisted too exclusively, as we have already noted, on the desire of the Fedeli d'Amore to conceal themselves for motives of prudence; it is incontestable that this was indeed the case—it was a necessity imposed on them by circumstances—but this is only the most outward and the least of the reasons justifying their use of a language that was not only conventional but also and above all symbolic. Analogous examples might be found in quite different circumstances, where there would have been no danger in speaking openly, were such a thing possible; and even then one could say that there is an advantage in excluding those not 'qualified', a policy arising from concerns other than simple prudence; but what must be emphasized above all is that truths of a certain order can, by their very nature, only be expressed symbolically.

Finally, there are some who find the existence of symbolic poetry among the Fedeli d'Amore unlikely because it would constitute a 'unique case', whereas Valli was determined to show that the same thing also existed in the East, and at precisely the same time, notably in Persian poetry. One could even add that this symbolism of love has sometimes been used in India as well; and, to confine ourselves to the Islamic world, it is rather singular that one almost always speaks solely of Persian poetry in this regard, whereas similar examples of a no less esoteric nature can readily be found in Arabic poetry, for instance in the work of Omar ibn al-Farid. And we may add that many other 'veils' were also used in the poetic expressions of Sufism, including that of scepticism, for which one could cite as examples Omar al-Khayyam and Abu'l-Ala al-Ma'arri. Regarding the latter in particular, there are very few who know that he was an initiate of high rank; and another curious fact of particular relevance to the subject that occupies us at present (and that so far we have not found noted anywhere else) is that his *Risalat al-Ghufran*

could be regarded as one of the principal Islamic 'sources' of the *Divine Comedy*.²

As for the obligation imposed upon all members of an initiatic order to write in verse, it is in perfect accord with the character of 'sacred language' which poetry formerly possessed; and as Valli quite justly says, something quite other is involved than merely 'creating literature'. Such was never the aim of Dante and his contemporaries, who, adds Valli ironically, 'were at fault in not having read the books of modern criticism.' Even in very recent times each member of certain Islamic esoteric confraternities was still obliged, on the occasion of the Shaykh's annual *mulid*, to compose a poem in which he would strive, even at the expense of the perfection of form, to incorporate a more or less profound doctrinal meaning.

Regarding Valli's latest remarks, some of which open the way for further research, we shall mention one concerning the relationship of Joachim de Fiore to the Fedeli d'Amore: *Fiore*, taken as a synonym of *Rosa*, is one of the symbols most widely used in the latter's poetry; and under the title of *Fiore* an Italian adaptation of the *Romance of the Rose* was written by a Florentine named Durante, who was almost certainly Dante himself.³ Moreover, the name of the convent of *San Giovanni in Fiore*, from which *Giocchino di Fiore* took his name, does not appear before his time. Was it he who named it? And if so, why did he choose this name? What is remarkable is that in his writings Joachim de Fiore speaks of a symbolic 'widow', as do also Francesco da Barberino and Boccaccio, both of whom belonged to the Fedeli d'Amore; and we should add that even today this 'widow' is still well-known in Masonic symbolism. In this regard it is regrettable that political preoccupations seem to have prevented Valli from noticing certain striking correspondences; he

2. Abu'l-Ala al Ma'arri (937-1057), one of the greatest Arab poets, who became blind as a child. Regarding his work *Risidat al-Ghufrun* (Treatise on Pardon), its treatment of the Nocturnal Journey of the Prophet, and its possible role as a precursor to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, see Miguel Asin Palacios, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, tr. Harold Sutherland (London: Frank Cass & Company, Ltd., 1968), P55. F.n.

3. *Dante* is in effect only a contraction of *Durante*, which was his real name.

is undoubtedly right to say that the initiatic organizations under discussion are not Masonic, but between the Masons and the Fedeli d'Amore the link is no less certain; and is it not curious, for example, that 'wind' in the language of the Fedeli d'Amore should have exactly the same meaning as 'rain' in that of Masonry?

Another important point concerns the relationship between the Fedeli d'Amore and the alchemists. A particularly significant symbol in this regard is found in Francesco da Barberino's *Documenti d'Amore*. The figure in question consists of twelve personages arranged symmetrically and forming six couples which represent as many initiatic degrees, surrounding a single figure at the center; this last, who holds in his hands the symbolic rose, has two heads, one male and one female, and is manifestly identical with the Hermetic *Rebis*. The only notable divergence from the figures that appear in alchemical treatises is that in the latter it is the right side that is masculine and the left feminine, whereas here we find the reverse. This peculiarity seems to have escaped Valli, who nonetheless provides the explanation himself without appearing to be aware of it when he says that 'man with his passive intellect is reunited with the active intelligence, represented by woman,' whereas it is generally the masculine that symbolizes the active element and the feminine the passive. What is most remarkable is that this sort of reversal of the usual relationship is also found in the symbolism of Hindu Tantrism; this parallel compels recognition all the more strongly when we find Cecco d'Ascoli saying 'onde io son ella' [whence I am she], exactly as the Shaktas, who instead of So'ham, or 'I am He' (the Ana Huwa of Islamic esoterism), say Sa'ham, or 'I am She'. On the other hand, Valli notes that adjacent to the *Rebis* figure in the *Rosarium Philosophorum* one sees a sort of tree bearing six pairs of faces disposed symmetrically on either side of the trunk, with a single face at the summit which he considers identical with the personages depicted by Francesco da Barberino. It does indeed seem that in both cases an initiatic hierarchy of seven degrees is involved, the last degree being characterized essentially as the reconstitution of the Hermetic androgyne, that is to say, in short, the restoration of the 'primordial state'. And this in turn accords with what we have had occasion to

say about the significance of the term 'Rose-Cross' as designating the perfection of the human state. As regards the seven degrees of initiation, we have alluded to the ladder of seven rungs in our study *The Esoterism of Dante*. It is true that these rungs are generally related to the seven planetary heavens, which refer to supra-human states, but by reason of analogy there must be a hierarchical correspondence in an initiatic system between the 'lesser' and the 'greater' mysteries. Then again, the being reintegrated into the center of the human state is by this very fact ready to rise to the superior states and already dominates the conditions of existence in this world of which it has become master; that is why the *Rebis* of the *Rosarium Philosophorum* has the moon beneath its feet, and that of Basil Valentine a dragon. This significance was completely misunderstood by Valli, who saw therein only symbols of corrupted doctrine or 'the error that oppresses the world,' whereas in reality the moon represents the domain of forms—this symbolism being the same as that of 'walking on the waters'—and the dragon, in this context the elemental world.

Harboring no doubts about Dante's links with the Templars, of which many indications exist, Valli also raises the subject of the medallion in the Vienna Museum which we mentioned in *The Esoterism of Dante*. When he went to inspect this medallion he discovered that its two sides had been joined together at a late date, suggesting that it must have been put together originally from two separate medallions; moreover, he recognized that this singular operation could not have been performed without some reason. As for the initials F.S.K.I.P.F.T., which figure on the medallion's reverse side, for him they represent the initials of the seven virtues, *Fides*, *Spes*, *Karitas*, *Justitia*, *Prudentia*, *Fortitudo*, *Temperantia*, despite their anomalous arrangement in two rows of four and three, rather than of three and four, as the distinction between the three theological virtues and the four cardinal virtues would require. Joined as they are to laurel and olive branches, 'which are the two sacred plants of initiates,' he admits that his interpretation does not necessarily exclude the existence of another, more hidden, significance; and we might add that the abnormal spelling *Karitas* rather than *Charitas* could well have been necessitated precisely by this double

meaning. Elsewhere in the same study we pointed out the initiatic role attributed to the three theological virtues, still preserved in the eighteenth degree of Scottish Freemasonry;* furthermore, the septenary of the virtues is composed of a higher ternary and a lower quaternary, which sufficiently indicates that it is constituted according to esoteric principles; and finally, this septenary, quite as well as that of the 'liberal arts', also divided into *trivium* and *quadrivium*, corresponds to the seven rungs to which we alluded earlier, all the more so as 'faith' (the *Fede Santa*) is in fact always represented on the highest rung of the 'mysterious ladder' of the *Kadosch*. All this therefore constitutes a far more coherent whole than superficial observers may believe.

While at the Vienna Museum Valli also discovered Dante's original medallion, the reverse side of which represents a still more strange and enigmatic figure: a heart placed at the center of a system of circles that has the appearance of (though it is not in fact) a celestial sphere, and which is not accompanied by any inscription.⁵ There are three meridional circles and four latitudinal circles, which Valli again relates respectively to the three theological and the four cardinal virtues. What leads us to regard this interpretation as correct is above all the accurate application made in this arrangement of the vertical and the horizontal directions to the relationships of the contemplative and the active life, or to the respective jurisdictions of the spiritual authority and the temporal power, to which the two groups of virtues correspond. An oblique circle, completing the figure (and forming with the others the number eight—that of equilibrium), links everything in a perfect harmony under the irradiation of the 'doctrine of love'.⁶

4. In the seventeenth grade, that of 'Knight of the East and West', one also finds a device formed of seven initials, those of a septenary of divine attributes whose enumeration is drawn from a passage in the Apocalypse.

5. This heart so placed reminds us of the no less remarkable and mysterious figure of the heart of Saint-Denis d'Orques, shown in the center of the planetary and zodiacal circles, a figure that was the subject of a study by Charbonneau-Lassay in *Regnabit*.

6. On this subject, the reader is referred to what we have said about Dante's treatise *De Monorchia* in our *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*.

A final point concerns the secret name that was given God by the Fedeli d'Amore: in his *Tractatus Amoris* Francesco da Barberino represented himself in an attitude of adoration before the letter T; and in the *Divine Comedy* Adam says that the first name of God was T,⁷ the one that came afterward being *El*. This letter T, which Dante calls the 'ninth figure' in accordance with its place in the Latin alphabet (and we know what symbolic importance the number nine⁸ held for him), is evidently no other than the yod, although this is the tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet; and in fact, apart from being the first letter of the tetragrammaton, the *yod* is itself a divine name, whether in isolation or repeated three times.⁹ It is this same *yod* that in Masonry became the letter 'G' by assimilation with 'God' (for it was in England that this transformation took place), this without prejudice to the many other secondary meanings that came to be centered in this same letter 'G', but which it is not our intention to examine here.

Saddened as we are by Valli's passing, we hope all the more that he will have successors in his chosen field of research, which is as vast as it is yet unexplored. It does seem that this will be the case, for he himself informs us that he has already been followed by Gaetano Scarlata, who has devoted a work¹⁰ to the special study of Dante's treatise *De vulgari eloquentia*. The book in question is also 'full of mysteries', as Rossetti and Aroux so well perceived, and though it seems to treat simply of the Italian language it relates in fact to a secret language. This procedure is also customary in Islamic esoterism, where, as we have pointed out on another occasion, an initiatic work may assume the appearance of a simple treatise on grammar. Many more discoveries no doubt remain to be made in the same

7. *Paradiso*, xxvi, iy).

8. The French text here gives the Arabic numeral 4, which is quite likely a misprint as the number four is not under consideration. ED.

9. Is it merely coincidental that the heart of Saint-Denis d'Orques, which we just mentioned, bears what appears to be a wound in the form of *yod*? *Would there not be some reason to suppose that the depictions of the 'Sacred Heart' antedating its 'official' adoption by the Church may have had certain links with the doctrine of the Fedeli d'Amore or of their successors?*

10. *Le origini della letteratura italiana nel pensiero di Dante*, Palermo, 1930.

order of ideas, and even if those who devote themselves to this research bring to it personally only a 'profane' mentality (provided however that it be unbiased) and see in it only the object of a sort of historical curiosity, the results obtained will be no less able, both in themselves and for those who know how to understand their true and full significance, to contribute effectively to a restoration of the traditional spirit. Do not these labors relate, however unconsciously or involuntarily, to the 'search for the Lost Word', which is the same as the 'quest for the Holy Grail'?

6

NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF DANTE

WHEN speaking previously of the two editions of Luigi Valli's last book, we mentioned a work along similar lines by Gaetano Scarlata devoted to Dante's treatise *De vulgari eloquentia*, or rather, as Scarlata prefers to call it (for the title has never been exactly fixed), *De vulgaris eloquentiae doctrina*, following the expression Dante himself employed at the outset when defining its subject matter in order to make evident his intentions as to the doctrinal content of poetry in the common [*vulgar*] tongue.¹ Indeed, those whom Dante calls *poeti vulgari* are those whose writings had, as he says, *verace intendimento*, that is, contained a hidden meaning in conformity with the symbolism of the Fedeli d'Amore, since he opposes them to the *litterali* (not the incorrect *litterati*, as one sometimes reads) or those who wrote with only a literal meaning. For Dante, the first are true poets, whom he also calls *trilingues doctores*, which can be understood in an outward sense since such poetry existed in Italian, Provençal (not 'French', as Scarlata incorrectly states) and Spanish; but in reality, since no poet ever actually wrote in all three languages, the term signifies that the poetry should be interpreted according to a threefold meaning; and on the subject of these *trilingues doctores*, Dante says *maxime conveniunt in hoc vocabulo quod est Atnor* [they most agree in that name which is Love),

1. *Le origini della letteratura italiana nel pensiero di Dante*, Palermo, 1930.

which is a rather obvious allusion to the doctrine of the Fedeli d'Amore.²

On the subject of these latter, Scarlata makes the very appropriate observation that they must never have constituted an association following rigorously defined forms, more or less similar to those of modern Masonry for example, with a central authority establishing 'branches' in various localities; and we might add in support of this view that in Masonry itself no such organization existed until the Grand Lodge was established in England in 1717. Moreover, it does not seem that Scarlata has grasped the full import of this fact, which he believes must be attributed simply to circumstances unfavorable to the stable outward existence of such an institution. In reality, as we have already often said, a truly initiatic organization cannot be a 'society' in the modern sense of the word, with all the external formalism that this implies: when statutes, written rules, and other things of that nature appear, it is certain that some degeneration is present, imparting to the organization a 'semi-profane' character, if one may use such an expression. But as concerns what belongs to a properly initiatic order, Scarlata has not gone to the heart of the matter and seems not even to have gotten as far as Valli. He sees above all the political aspect, which is on the whole accessory, and speaks constantly of 'sects', a point upon which we explained ourselves amply in the preceding chapter. In his treatment of the subject he draws but few consequences from the affirmation of the doctrine (esoteric, not heretical) of the *amor sapientiae*, which, however, is absolutely essential, the rest depending solely on historical contingencies. It is possible, moreover, that the subject of this study has lent itself quite readily to what appears to us an error of perspective: the *De vulgaris eloquentiae doctrina* has a direct link to the *De Monorchia*, and is consequently associated with that part of Dante's work where social applications occupy the most important place. But can these applications themselves be properly understood

2. One must undoubtedly understand by this three meanings superior to the literal one, so that all together one would have the four meanings Dante speaks of in the *Convilo*, as we indicated at the beginning of our study *the Esoterism of Dante*.

if one does not constantly refer them to their principle? What is most regrettable is that when he turns to general historical considerations Scarlata permits himself to be drawn into interpretations that are more than questionable: does he not go so far as to portray Dante and the Fedeli d'Amore as adversaries of the spirit of the Middle Ages and precursors of modern ideas, animated by a 'secular' and 'democratic' spirit that would in reality be the most 'anti-initiatic' thing conceivable? This second part of his book, although it contains some interesting bits of information, particularly on the Eastern influences at the court of Frederick II and in the Franciscan movement, would be worth taking up on a basis more in conformity with traditional interpretations. It is true, however, that the book is only presented as a 'first attempt at historical reconstruction,' and who knows but that the author may not be led by his subsequent research to rectify it himself?

One cause of Scarlata's misunderstanding is perhaps to be found in the way Dante contrasts the use of the *vulgare* [vernacular] to that of Latin, an ecclesiastical language, and also in the way poets use symbols, according to the *verace intendimento*, which he contrasts with that of the theologians (their way being rather that of simple allegory); but it was in the eyes of Dante's adversaries or (which often amounts to the same thing) of those who did not understand him that the *vulgare* could be no more than the *sermo laicus*, whereas for himself it was something altogether different; and furthermore, from the strictly traditional point of view, is not the function of initiates more truly 'sacerdotal' than that of an exoteric 'clergy' that knows only the letter and adheres to the shell of the doctrine?³ The essential point here is to ascertain what Dante means by the expression *vulgare illustre*, an expression that may seem strange and even contradictory if one holds to the ordinary sense of the words, but which becomes self-evident when one understands that for him *vulgare* is synonymous with *naturale*. It is the language that man learns directly through oral transmission (just as the child, who from the initiatic point of view represents the neophyte, learns

3. According to the normal hierarchical order, the initiate is above the 'clergy' (even if the latter are theologians), while the 'laity' is naturally below the latter.

its own mother tongue), that is, symbolically speaking, the language that serves as the vehicle for the tradition, and that may in this respect be identified with the primordial and universal language, a point touching closely on the question of the mysterious 'Syriac language' [lughat suryaniyyah] of which we have spoken in previous articles;⁴ and while it is true that for Dante this 'language of revelation' seems to have been Hebrew, such an affirmation, as we were just saying, should not be taken literally, for the same thing might be said of any language that has a 'sacred' character, that is to say which serves to express a regular traditional form.⁵ According to Dante, the language spoken by the first man and directly created by God was perpetuated by his descendants down to the raising of the Tower of Babel; afterward, hanc formant locutionis hereditati sunt filii Heber...; hits solis post confusionem remansit ['this form of speech was inherited by the sons of Heber...; to them alone did it remain after the confusion (of tongues)']; but these 'sons of Heber', are they not all those who have kept the tradition rather than any specific people? Has not the name 'Israel' often been employed to designate the totality of initiates, whatever their ethnic origin, who in fact really constitute the 'chosen people', and who possess the universal language that enables them all to understand each other, that is, the knowledge of the one tradition that is concealed beneath all its particular forms?⁶ Moreover, if Dante had really thought it was the Hebrew language that was in question, he would not have been able to say that the Church (designated by the enigmatic name *Petramala*) believes it speaks the language of Adam, for the Church speaks not Hebrew but Latin, for which no one yet, it seems, has claimed the quality of a primeval language; but if one understands Dante's phrase to mean that the Church believes it teaches the true

4. 'The Science of Letters ('lint al-huruf)', *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 8, and *The Language of the Birds*, *ibid.*, chap. 9.

5. It goes without saying that when we oppose 'vulgar languages' to 'sacred languages', we take the word 'vulgar' in its usual sense; if we took it in Dante's sense, this expression would no longer apply, and we ought rather to say 'profane languages' to avoid all ambiguity.

6. See on this subject the study 'The Gift of Tongues' in *Perspectives on initiation, duty*. 37.

doctrine of revelation, everything becomes perfectly intelligible. What is more, even if we admit that the early Christians, who possessed this true doctrine, actually spoke Hebrew (which would be historically inexact, for Aramaic is no more Hebrew than Italian is Latin), the Fedeli d'Amore, who considered themselves their successors, never pretended to reclaim this language in order to oppose it to Latin, as they should logically have had to do if it were necessary to keep to the literal interpretation.⁷

We see then that what is at issue is far removed from the purely 'philological' significance usually attributed to Dante's treatise, and that something quite other than the Italian language is involved; and even what genuinely relates to the latter may also have, at the same time, a symbolic value. Thus, when Dante opposes such and such a city or region to another, it is never simply a question of linguistic opposition; and when he cites certain names, such as *Petratnala*, *Papienses*, or *Aquilegienses*, there are in these choices (even without going so far as to consider geographical symbolism strictly speaking) fairly transparent intentions, as Rossetti had already noted; and naturally, in order to understand the real meaning of many apparently insignificant words, it is often necessary to refer back to the conventional terminology of the Fedeli d'Amore. Scarlata quite rightly points out that it is almost always the examples (including those that appear to have only a purely rhetorical or grammatical value) that furnish the key to the context; this was indeed an excellent means of diverting the attention of the 'profane', who could have seen in them only some commonplace phrases of no importance. It might be said that these examples play a role comparable to that of the 'myths' in the Platonic dialogues, and one need only look at what the academic critics make of these to entertain no further doubts as to the perfect efficacy of the strategy that

7. We would also add that, as Scarlata notes, the idea of the continuation of the primordial language is contradicted by the words that Dante himself attributes to Adam in the *Divine Comedy* (*Paradiso*, xxvi, 124), words that may be explained moreover through consideration of the cyclical periods: the original language was *tutta spenta* [totally spent] after the *Krita-Yuga* ended, and hence well before the enterprise of the 'people of Nimrod', which corresponds only to the beginning of *the Kali-Yuga*.

consists in offering as an *hors d'oeuvre*, so to speak, what is precisely the main course.

In short, what Dante seems to have had in mind was essentially the establishment of a language capable, by virtue of a superimposition of multiple meanings, of expressing as far as possible the esoteric doctrine; and if the codification of such a language can be qualified as 'rhetoric', it is in any case a very special kind of rhetoric, as far removed from what is understood by that word today as is the poetry of the Fedeli d'Amore from that of the moderns, whose predecessors are those 'litterali' whom Dante reproached for versifying 'foolishly' (*stoltamente*) and failing to put into their lines any profound meaning.⁸ According to Valli's expression, which we have already quoted, Dante set himself quite a different task from 'creating literature', which amounts to saying that he was precisely the complete opposite of a modern author; his work, far from being contrary to the spirit of the Middle Ages, is one of its most perfect syntheses, in the same rank as that of the cathedral builders; and the simplest initiatic facts enable us to understand without difficulty that there are very profound reasons for this correspondence.

8. In more or less the same way the predecessors of the present-day chemists were, not the true alchemists, but the 'puffers'; whether in the sciences or in the arts, the purely 'profane' conceptions of the moderns always result in a similar degeneration.

7

'FEDELI D'AMORE' & 'COURTS OF LOVE'

RESEARCH in Italy on the Fedeli d'Amore continues to give rise to interesting works. Alfonso Ricolfi, already known for some articles on this subject, has just published a study, to be followed by others, in which he states his intention to take up the work left unfinished by Luigi Valli.¹ Perhaps he does so with some reservations, however, for he considers that Valli has 'exaggerated' certain points, particularly in denying, contrary to the most common opinion, the real existence of all the women extolled by the poets attached to the Fedeli d'Amore. But in truth this question is no doubt less important than he seems to think, at least if one places oneself outside the point of view of simple historical curiosity, and it has no bearing whatsoever on a true interpretation of the work. Indeed, there is nothing impossible about the idea that in designating the divine Wisdom by a feminine name certain poets may in a purely symbolic way have adopted the name of a woman who had actually lived, and there are at least two reasons for doing so: firstly, 'as we had occasion to say recently, anything at all can, according to the nature of the individual, provide the occasion and starting-point for a spiritual development, and this may be true of an earthly love as well as of any other circumstance (all the more so as what we are dealing with here, lest we forget, can be characterized as a path for the Kshatriyas); and secondly, the real meaning of the name so used became the more impenetrable to the profane, who naturally held

1. *Studi stii fidele d'amore I. Le Corti d'Amore ed i loro riflessi in Italia*, Roma, Biblioteca della Nuove Rivista Storica, Societa Editrice Dante Alighieri, 1933.

to the literal meaning, and this advantage, although of a contingent order, was perhaps not entirely negligible.

This remark leads us to consider another point closely related to the preceding. Ricolfi deems it necessary to distinguish between 'Courts of Love' and 'courts of love'; and this distinction is not the mere subtlety it may seem at first glance. Indeed, one must understand by 'Court of Love' a symbolic assemblage presided over by Love itself personified, whereas a 'court of love' is only a human gathering, a sort of tribunal called upon to adjudicate more or less complex cases. Whether these cases were real or imaginary, or, in other words, whether they involved effective jurisdiction or simply a game (and they may in fact have been both), matters very little from our point of view. If they were truly only occupied with questions of profane love, the 'courts of love' were not assemblies of the genuine Fedeli d'Amore (unless they sometimes assumed this aspect outwardly in order to better disguise themselves); but they may have been an imitation and a kind of parody born of the incomprehension of the uninitiated, just as during the same period there were undoubtedly profane poets who celebrated real women in their verse and put nothing more in their poetry than a literal meaning. Likewise there were 'puffers' alongside the true alchemists, and here too we must beware of any confusion between the two groups, something not always easy to do without a thorough examination, for outwardly their language may be identical; and this same confusion may in fact have sometimes served, in both cases, to turn aside injudicious prying.

However, it is not admissible to attribute any sort of precedence or priority to what is counterfeit or degenerate; and Ricolfi seems disposed to allow too readily that the deeper meaning may have been added after the fact to something that at first would have had only an altogether profane character. With regard to this point we will be content to recall, as we have often done, that all art and science has an initiatic origin and that their strictly traditional character can have been lost only as a result of the incomprehension we have just mentioned; to assume the reverse is to admit an influence of the profane world upon the initiatic world, that is to say a reversal of the true hierarchical relationships inherent in the very nature of

things. What might give rise to such an illusion in the present case is that the profane imitation must always have been more visible than the true Fedeli d'Amore, who, moreover, were an organization that should not be considered a 'society', as we have already explained with regard to initiatic organizations in general.² If the Fedeli d'Amore seems to evade the ordinary historian, this is proof not of its non-existence, but, on the contrary, of its truly serious and profound character.³

One of the principal merits of Ricolfi's work is that it discloses new evidence for the existence of the Fedeli d'Amore in Northern France; and the little-known poem by Jacques de Baisieux on the Fiefs d'Amour (identified with the 'celestial estates' [fiefs celestes] in contrast to the 'terrestrial estates' [fiefs terrestres]), about which he speaks at length, is particularly significant in this respect. The traces of such an organization are certainly much rarer in that region than in the Languedoc and the Provence,⁴ but we must not forget that a short time later the *Romance of the Rose* appeared; and, in another connection, close links with the 'Knighthood of the Grail' (to which Jacques de Baisieux himself explicitly alludes) are suggested by the fact that Chretien de Troyes translated the *Ars Amandi* [The Art of Love] of Ovid, which also may well have some other meaning beside its literal one, something that should occasion no surprise given that Ovid is also the author of the *Metamorphoses*. Nor by any means has everything been said on the subject of 'knight-errantry', the very conception of which is connected with that of initiatic 'journeys'; but for the moment we must restrict ourselves to recalling what we

2. Cf. *Perspectives on Initiation*.

3. Let us recall further a propos of this that it can in no way be a matter of a 'sect': the initiatic domain is not the domain of exoteric religion, and the formation of religious 'sects' can only have been another instance of profane degeneration. We regret finding again in Ricolfi's work a certain confusion between the two domains, which greatly impedes an understanding of what is really involved.

4. Is it merely a coincidence that in the Compagnonnage the 'Tour de France' leaves aside the whole of the northern region, and includes mostly towns situated south of the Loire, or should we not see herein something the origin of which may go much further back and of which the underlying reasons, it goes without saying, are nowadays entirely lost from view?

have already written on this last subject, adding only that the expression 'wild knights' [*chevaliers sauvages*], which Ricolfi mentions, would merit a separate study.

Some rather strange things are also to be found in the book of Andre, chaplain of the King of France; unfortunately this for the most part escaped Ricolfi's attention and he only reports a few of them, without seeing therein anything extraordinary. For instance, it is said in this book that the palace of Love rises 'in the center of the Universe,' and that it has four sides and four gateways; the east gateway is reserved for the god, and the north remains forever closed. Now here is something remarkable: according to Masonic traditions the Temple of Solomon, which symbolizes the 'Center of the World', also takes the form of a quadrilateral or 'long square' with gateways opening on three of its sides, the north side alone having no opening; if there is a slight difference (absence of a gateway in the one case, gateway closed in the other), the symbolism is nevertheless exactly the same since the north is here the dark side, which the light of the sun does not reach? Moreover, Love appears here in the form of a king bearing on his head a crown of gold; and is this not how we also see him represented in Scottish Freemasonry at the grade of 'Prince of Mercy',⁶ and might we not say that he is therefore the 'king of peace', which is the very meaning of Solomon's name? And there is yet another parallel which is no less striking: in various poems and fables, the 'Court of Love' is described as composed entirely of birds who take turns speaking; now we have previously explained what is to be understood by the 'language of the birds',⁷ and would it be reasonable to see nothing but a coincidence in the fact that, as we have already pointed out, it is precisely in connection

5. this is the yin aspect of the Chinese tradition, the opposite aspect being that of *yang*, and this observation might help resolve the controversial question of the respective positions of the two symbolic columns: the one to the North must normally correspond to the feminine principle; that to the South, to the masculine.

6. See *The Esoterism of Dante*. In one of his articles for the *Corriere Padano* Ricolfi has himself studied the particular meaning given by the Fedeli d'Amore to the word *Merzi*, which clearly seems to have been one of the enigmatic names for their organization.

7. See our study on this subject in *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 9.

with Solomon that this 'language of the birds' is explicitly mentioned in the Koran? Let us add yet another point that is also not without interest in establishing other concordances: the principal roles in this 'Court of Love' generally seem to be attributed to the nightingale and the parrot. The importance accorded the nightingale in Persian poetry is well-known, and the interconnection with the poetry of the Fedeli d'Amore has already been pointed out by Luigi Valli; but what is perhaps less well-known is that the parrot is the *vahana*, or symbolic vehicle of *Kama*, that is, the Hindu *Eros*. Is there not much for further reflection here? And while we are on the subject of birds, is it not also curious that in his *Documenti d'Amore* Francesco da Barberino represents Love itself with the feet of a falcon or a sparrow-hawk, the bird emblematic of the Egyptian *Horus*, of which the symbolism has a close connection with that of the 'Heart of the World'?⁸

Speaking of Francesco da Barberino, Ricolfi returns to the figure already mentioned⁹ in which six couples symmetrically arranged, and a thirteenth, androgynous, figure at the center, quite clearly represent seven initiatic degrees. If his interpretation differs somewhat from Valli's, it is only on points of detail that do not at all alter its essential significance. He also reproduces a second figure, a representation of a 'Court of Love' where the characters are arranged on eleven tiers. This last fact does not seem to have attracted Ricolfi's attention particularly, but if one recalls what we have said elsewhere on the role of this number eleven for Dante in connection with the symbolism of certain initiatic organizations,¹⁰ its importance should easily be understood. It seems, moreover, that the author of the *Documenti d'Amore* may even have been acquainted with a certain specialized kind of traditional knowledge, such as the

8. Charbonneau-Lassay has devoted a study to this subject in the review *Regnabit*.

9. See chapter 5 above.

10. *The Esoterism of Dante*, chap. 7. Ricolfi seems moreover quite disposed to accept the links between the Fedeli d'Amore and the Templars, although he only alludes to them in passing, this question standing outside the subject he proposed to treat.

explication of the meaning of words through the elucidation of their constituent elements. Indeed, read attentively the following phrase in which he defines one of the twelve virtues corresponding to the twelve parts of his work (this number also has its *raison d'être*: a zodiac wherein Love is the sun), but which Ricolfi quotes without comment: *Docilitas, data novitiis notitia vitiorum, docet illos ab quorum vilitate abstinere*. Is there not something here that recalls, for example, Plato's Cratylus.¹²

Before leaving the subject of Francesco da Barberino, let us further point out a rather curious mistake Ricolfi has made with regard to his androgynous emblem, which is clearly Hermetic and has absolutely nothing to do with 'magic', these being altogether different things. He even goes so far as to speak in this connection of 'white magic', whereas he is inclined to see 'black magic' in the Rebis of Basil Valentine because of the dragon which, as we have already said,¹³ merely represents the elemental world (and which, moreover, is placed beneath the feet of the Rebis and is thus dominated by it), and, even more amusingly, also because of the set-square and the compass, for reasons that are only too easy to guess and undoubtedly depend more on political contingencies than on considerations of an initiatic order! And finally, to end, since Ricolfi seems to be in some doubt as to the esoteric character of the figure where, under

11. This phrase translates as 'Docility, when it has given the novices knowledge of their vices, will teach them to refrain from their baseness,' but Guenon's point rather revolves around the Latin roots that recur in several key words, a point which he does not further develop here. Ln.

12. In a more recent era we find a similar procedure employed in a much more obvious way in an Hermetic treatise by Cesare della Riviera entitled *11 Mondo matico degli Heroi* (see our account in *Le Voile d'Isis*, Oct. 1932). Similarly, when Jacques de Baisieux says that *a-mor* signifies 'deathless', one must not hasten to declare, as does Ricolfi, that this is 'false etymology'; for in reality etymology is not in question here, but rather a method of interpretation comparable to the *nirukta* of the Hindu tradition; and without knowing anything of the poem in question, we had pointed to this explanation ourselves, adding to it a comparison with the Sanskrit words *a-mara* and *a-mrita* in our first article devoted to the works of Luigi Valli, which became chapter 4 of this book.

13. See chapter 5 above.

the form of a simple 'illuminated letter', Francesco da Barberino had himself represented in adoration before the letter I , let us clarify further the significance of this letter. According to Dante, this was the primordial name of God, designating properly the 'Divine Unity' (which, moreover, is why this name is primordial, since the unity of essence necessarily precedes the multiplicity of attributes). Indeed, not only is it the equivalent of the Hebrew *yod*, hieroglyph of the Principle and itself principle of all the other letters of the alphabet, and of which its numerical value of ten reduces to unity (namely the unity displayed in the quaternary: $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$, or that of the central point that through its expansion produces the circle of universal manifestation); not only does the letter T itself represent unity in Latin numeration by reason of its lineal form, which is the simplest of all geometric forms (a point being strictly speaking 'formless'); but, further still, in the Chinese language the word *i* signifies 'unity' and *Ta'i-i* is the 'Great Unity', symbolically represented as residing in the pole star, which is again full of meaning, for, coming back to the letter T in Western alphabets, we notice that, being vertical, it is for that very reason apt to symbolize the 'World Axis', of which the importance in all traditional doctrines is quite well known;¹⁴ and thus this 'primordial name of God' recalls to us also the anteriority of 'polar' symbolism in relation to 'solar' symbolism.

We have called attention here mainly to the points where Ricolfi's explanations are patently unsatisfactory, for we think this most useful in the present context; but it goes without saying that it would be unfair to hold against specialists in 'literary historicism', whose training has not touched on the esoteric domain, their lack of the data required to discern and correctly interpret initiatic symbols. On the contrary, we should recognize their merit in daring to go against the grain of officially accepted opinions and anti-traditional interpretations that are imposed by the profane spirit dominating

14. In operative Masonry the plumb-line, a figure for the 'Work! Axis', is suspended from the pole star or from the letter 'G', which in this case takes its place and is itself, as we have already pointed out, only a substitute for the Hebraic *yod* (cf. *The Great Triad*, chap. 25).

the modern world, and we should thank them for putting at our disposal, by impartially disclosing the results of their research, documents wherein we may discover what they themselves did not see; and we can only hope that more works of this kind will soon be forthcoming and will shed new light on the exceedingly mysterious and complex subject of the initiatic organizations in the Western Middle Ages.

8

THE HOLY GRAIL

ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE has published a work on the legends of the Holy Grail¹ that is imposing in its size and in its extent of research. Anyone interested in the subject of the Grail will find herein a very complete and methodical exposition of the contents of the many texts it mentions, as well as diverse theories that have been proposed to explain the origins and significance of these legends, which are complex and at times even contradictory in certain of their elements. It must be added that Waite's intention was not merely to publish a work of erudition, and for this too he should be commended; we are entirely in agreement with him on the minimal value of all labors that do not exceed this point of view and of which the interest, in short, can only be 'documentary'. His aim was to bring out the real and 'inner' significance of the symbolism of the Holy Grail and of the 'quest'. We are obliged to say, however, that this aspect of his work is unfortunately the one that seems least satisfactory and that the conclusions he arrives at are even rather disappointing, all the more so when one thinks of all the work expended to reach them; and it is on this aspect that we should like to formulate some observations that will, quite naturally, relate to questions we have already treated on other occasions.

We do not believe we do Waite an injustice to say that his work is somewhat *one-sighted*;² in French one might say 'partial', though

1. *The Holy Grail: The Galahad Quest in the Arthurian Literature* [most recent edition: New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1961]).

2. The French text has 'one-sighted' italicized and in English. ED.

this would not be strictly exact, and in any case we do not mean to suggest that he intended that it be so. Rather, it has more to do with that failing so common among those who have 'specialized' in a particular order of studies to incline toward reducing everything to it and to neglect whatever cannot be made to fit it. That the legend is Christian is incontestable, and Waite is right to say so; but does that necessarily preclude its being something else at the same time? Those who are conscious of the fundamental unity of all traditions will see no incompatibility here, but for his part, Waite is unwilling to see anything but what is specifically Christian, confining himself to a particular traditional form of which the connection with other forms, precisely through its 'inner' aspect, seems thereby to escape him. Not that he denies the existence of elements from another source, probably anterior to Christianity, for this would go against the evidence; but he accords these only a minor importance and seems to consider them somehow 'accidental', as though they had become attached to the legend 'from outside' simply in consequence of the environment in which it was elaborated. Hence he views these elements as deriving from what is commonly called 'folklore', not always to belittle them, as the name itself might suggest, but more to satisfy a certain contemporary 'fashion' and not always taking account of the intentions implied therein, and on which it may be of some interest to dwell a bit further.

The very concept of 'folklore' as it is commonly understood rests on the radically false idea that there exist 'popular creations', spontaneous products of the masses; and one can immediately see the close relationship between this way of looking at things and 'democratic' prejudices. As has been quite rightly said, 'the profound interest of all so-called popular traditions lies above all in the fact that they are not popular in origin';³ and we would add that if, as is almost always the case, we are dealing with elements that are traditional in the true sense of the word, however deformed, diminished, or fragmentary they may sometimes be, and with things of real symbolic value, then their origin, far from being popular, is not

3. Luc Benoist, *La Cuisine des Anges, une esthetique de la pensee* (Paris: Pddleton, 1932). p 74-

even human. What may be popular is uniquely the fact of 'survival' when these elements come from traditional forms that have disappeared; and in this respect the term 'folklore' takes on a meaning very near to that of 'paganism', taking the latter in its etymological sense and with no polemical or abusive intent. The people thus preserve, without understanding them, the debris of ancient traditions sometimes even reaching back to a past too remote to be determined and which is therefore consigned to the obscure domain of 'prehistory'; and in so doing they function as a more or less 'subconscious' collective memory, of which the content has manifestly come from somewhere else.⁴ What may seem most astonishing is that, when we go to the root of the matter, the things so conserved are found to contain in a more or less veiled form a considerable body of esoteric data, that is, what is least 'popular' in essence, and this fact of itself suggests an explanation that we will lay out in a few words. When a traditional form is on the verge of extinction, its last representatives may very well deliberately entrust to this collective memory of which we have just spoken what would otherwise be irrevocably lost. This, in short, is the only way to save what can, at least in some measure, be saved; and, at the same time, the natural incomprehension of the masses is a sufficient guarantee that whatever possesses an esoteric character will not be despoiled in the process but will remain as a sort of witness to the past for those in later times who may be capable of understanding it.

Having said this, we see no reason without closer examination to attribute to 'folklore' everything that pertains to traditions other than Christianity, as though the latter alone were an exception; such seems to be Waite's intention however when he accepts this attribution for all the 'pre-Christian'—and especially the Celtic—elements in the Grail legends. From the perspective of the explanation just given there is no traditional form that is privileged; the only distinction to be made is between forms that have disappeared and those still living. The issue then comes down to knowing whether or not

4. This is an essentially 'lunar' function, and it should be noted that, astrologically, the popular masses effectively correspond to the moon, which at the same time indicates their purely passive nature, incapable of initiative or spontaneity.

the Celtic tradition was really no longer living when the legends in question were being elaborated, and this is at least debatable: on the one hand, this tradition may have endured longer than is commonly believed, with a more or less hidden organization; on the other, the legends themselves may be far older than the 'critics' imagine; not that there need have been texts now lost (we do not believe this any more than Waite does), but there may have been an oral transmission that lasted several centuries, which would not be at all exceptional. For our part, we see here the sign of a 'conjuncture' between two traditional forms, one ancient and the other then still new, the Celtic and the Christian, a conjuncture through which what was to be conserved of the first was, as it were, incorporated into the second, no doubt being modified in its outward form to some extent by adaptation and assimilation, but not by transposition to another plane as Waite would have it, for there are equivalences between all regular traditions. The issue therefore is quite other than a simple question of 'sources' as understood by the erudite. It would perhaps be difficult to specify exactly when and where this conjuncture occurred, but this has only a secondary and primarily historical interest; it is, moreover, easy to imagine that such events are unlikely to leave traces in written 'documents'. Perhaps the 'Celtic' or 'Culdean' church merits more attention in this regard than Waite seems disposed to grant it; its very name might lead one to think so, and there is nothing improbable in the suggestion that behind this church there may have been something of a different order, no longer religious, but initiatic, for, like all that pertains to links between different traditions, what is here in question necessarily derives from the initiatic or esoteric domain. Exoterism, whether religious or not, never goes beyond the limits of the traditional form to which it properly belongs; whatever goes beyond these limits cannot belong to a 'church' as such, which can only be its external 'support', a point we shall have occasion to return to later.

Another observation concerning symbolism more particularly here imposes itself: there are symbols that are common to the most diverse and widespread traditional forms, not as a result of 'borrowings', which would in many cases be quite impossible, but because they really belong to the primordial tradition whence,

directly or indirectly, all these forms have issued. This is precisely the case with the vase or cup. Why should what relates thereto be merely 'folklore' when present in 'pre-Christian' traditions, whereas in Christianity alone it is an essentially 'eucharistic' symbol? The assimilation envisaged by Bournouf⁵ and others like him are not to be rejected here, but rather the 'naturalistic' interpretations some have wished to impose on Christianity as on everything else, interpretations that are in fact nowhere valid. What needs to be done, then, runs exactly contrary to the procedure of Waite, who, confining himself to external and superficial explanations, which he takes on faith so long as they do not concern Christianity, sees radically different and unrelated meanings where there are only more or less multiple aspects of the same symbol or of its various applications. It would no doubt have been otherwise had he not been hampered by his preconceived notion of a sort of difference in kind between Christianity and other traditions. Likewise, though Waite quite rightly rejects any application to the Grail legend of theories that make appeal to so-called 'gods of vegetation', it is regrettable that he should be much less clear about the ancient mysteries, which never had anything in common with this quite recently invented 'naturalism'; 'gods of vegetation' and other such fictions have never existed save in the imagination of Fraser⁶ and others of his ilk whose anti-traditional intentions are not in doubt.

It seems that Waite has been more or less influenced by a certain 'evolutionism', a tendency that clearly betrays itself when he declares that the origin of the legend is much less important than the form it eventually attained; and he seems to believe that there must have been, from the one to the other, a sort of progressive improvement. In reality, where something truly traditional is concerned, everything must on the contrary be present from the beginning, and subsequent developments serve only to render it more explicit without the adjunction of new and external elements. Waite seems to admit a sort of 'spiritualization' whereby a higher meaning might be

5. This reference is presumably to Eugene Bournouf, French linguist, author of *La Vase Sacree, who deciphered the ancient Avestan tongue using manuscripts brought back by Anquetil-nuperron*. Ed.

6. Sir James G. Fraser, *author of The Golden Bough*. Ed.

grafted on to something that did not originally possess it—whereas it is in fact usually the other way round—in this way recalling a bit too closely the profane outlook of the ‘historians of religion’. We find a striking example of this sort of reversal in connection with alchemy, for Waite thinks that material alchemy preceded spiritual alchemy, and that this latter made its appearance only with Khunrath and Jacob Boehme. If he had been familiar with certain Arabic treatises extant well before these writers he would have been obliged to modify his opinion simply on the basis of written documents; moreover, since he recognizes that the language employed is the same in both cases, we might ask him how he can be sure in any given text that the operations described are material only. The truth is that it was not always felt necessary to declare explicitly that it was really a question of something else, something that had to be veiled precisely by the symbolism then in use; and if subsequently there were some who did declare this, it was largely because of degenerations traceable to an ignorance of the value of the symbols which led men to take everything literally and in an exclusively material way, as did the ‘puffers’ who were the precursors of modern chemistry. To think that a new meaning can be given to a symbol that does not possess it intrinsically is almost to deny symbolism, for it makes of the latter something artificial if not entirely arbitrary, and in any case something purely human. In this order of ideas, Waite goes so far as to say that everyone finds in a symbol what he himself puts into it, so that its meaning would change with the mentality of each epoch; here we recognize the ‘psychological’ theories so dear to many of our contemporaries. Were we not right, then, to speak of ‘evolutionism’? We have said it often but cannot repeat it often enough: every true symbol bears its multiple meanings within itself, and this from its very origin, because it is not constituted as such by any human convention but in virtue of the ‘law of correspondence’ that links all worlds together; if some see these meanings while others do not, or see them only in part, they are no less truly contained in the symbol, for it is the ‘intellectual horizon’ of each person that makes all the difference, symbolism being an exact science and not a reverie in which individual fantasies are given free rein.

In matters of this order, then, we do not believe in the ‘poetic inventions’ of which Waite seems disposed to make so much; far

from transmitting the essential, these inventions merely hide it, intentionally or not, by wrapping it in a 'fiction' of misleading appearances that sometimes conceal it only too well, for when they encroach overmuch it finally becomes nearly impossible to discover the deep and original meaning. Is this not how symbolism among the Greeks degenerated into 'mythology'? This danger is most to be feared when the poet himself is unaware of the real value of symbols, for it is evident that such cases do occur (the fable of the 'ass bearing relics' applies here as well as to many other situations), the poet then playing a part analogous to that of the common people when they conserve and unwittingly transmit initiatic teaching, as we have just said above. A question arises here most particularly: were the authors of the Grail romances poets of this latter kind, or were they on the contrary conscious to some degree of the profound meaning they were expressing? It is, of course, not easy to answer this with any certainty, for here again appearances can be deceiving. Faced with a mixture of insignificant and incoherent elements, one is tempted to think that the author did not know what he was speaking about; yet this need not necessarily be so, for it often happens that the obscurities and even the contradictions are quite intentional, and that pointless details are expressly included to lead the profane astray in the same way that a symbol may be deliberately concealed within a more or less complicated ornamental pattern; in the Middle Ages, especially, examples of this kind abound; one need only look at Dante and the *Fedeli d'Amore*. The fact that the higher meaning is less transparent in the work of Chretien de Troyes, for example, than in that of Robert de Boron, does not necessarily prove that the first was less conscious of it than the second; still less should we conclude that this meaning is absent from his writings, which would be an error comparable to attributing to the ancient alchemists preoccupations of a merely material order for the sole reason that they did not deem it opportune to spell out in so many words that their science was in reality of a spiritual nature.⁷ Furthermore, the question of the 'initiation' of the authors of the romances

7. If Waite believes, as he seems to, that certain things are too 'material' to be compatible with the existence of a higher meaning in the texts where they appear, one might ask him what he thinks, for example, of Rabelais and Boccaccio.

is perhaps less important than we might first think, for it makes no difference in any case to the external forms under which the subject is presented; once we are dealing with an 'exteriorization', but not in any way a 'vulgarization', of esoteric teaching, it is easy to understand that the form must be as it is. We would go further and say that even a profane person may serve as 'spokesman' [*pone-parole*] of an initiatic organization engaged in such an 'exteriorization', in which case he will have been chosen simply for his qualities as a poet or writer, or for some other contingent reason. Dante wrote in full knowledge of what he was doing; Chretien de Troyes, Robert de Boron, and many others were probably less conscious of what they were expressing, and some among them probably understood nothing at all; but ultimately this is of no importance, for if there was an initiatic organization behind them, whatever it may have been, the danger of a deformation due to their incomprehension was thereby averted since this organization was able to guide them continually without their even suspecting it, either through the intermediary of certain of its members who furnished them with the elements to be put into their work, or through suggestions or influences of another kind, more subtle and less 'tangible' but no less real for all that, nor less effective. It will easily be seen that this has nothing to do with so-called poetic 'inspiration' as the moderns understand the term and which is only imagination pure and simple, or with 'literature' in the profane sense of the word; neither, for that matter, let us hasten to add, is it a question of 'mysticism', but this last point bears directly on other questions to be considered in the second part of this study.

It seems beyond doubt that the origins of the Grail legend must be linked to the transmission from Druidism to Christianity of traditional elements of an initiatic order. Once this transmission had been effected in a regular manner, whatever the modalities of that transmission may have been, these elements thereby became an integral part of Christian esoterism. We are in agreement with Waite on this second point, but must say that the first seems to have escaped him. There can be no doubt of the existence of Christian esoterism in the Middle Ages; proofs of all kinds are ready to hand, and denials of it due to modern incomprehension, whether from the side of partisans or of adversaries of Christianity, are impotent

in face of this fact, a point we have made often enough and which we need not insist upon again here. But even among those who do admit the existence of this esoterism there are many who have a more or less inexact conception of it; such seems to be the case with Waite, judging from his conclusions, for here again we find confusions and misunderstandings that must be dispelled.

We say quite deliberately 'Christian esoterism', and not 'esoteric Christianity', for we are not in fact dealing with a special form of Christianity but with the 'inner' aspect of the Christian tradition; and it should be clear that this is more than a simple nuance of language. Besides, when there is reason to distinguish in this way two aspects of a traditional form, one esoteric and the other exoteric, it must be understood that they do not refer to the same domain, so much so that there can be no conflict or opposition of any sort between them. In particular, when the exoterism has a specifically religious character, as is the case here, the corresponding esoterism, while taking its base and support from the religious form, has nothing to do with the religious domain in and of itself, being situated in fact in an altogether different order. It follows immediately that esoterism can under no circumstances be represented by 'churches' or 'sects' of any kind, for these are always religious by definition, and therefore exoteric—yet another point we have dealt with elsewhere, and need only recall in passing. Certain 'sects' may indeed have been born of a confusion between the two domains, and from an erroneous 'exteriorization' of poorly understood and wrongly applied esoteric teaching; but true initiatic organizations, strictly keeping to their own proper domain, necessarily remain foreign to such deviations, and their very 'regularity' obliges them to recognize only what has the character of orthodoxy, even if this is only in the exoteric order. One may therefore be assured that those who persist in ascribing to 'sects' what concerns esoterism or initiation are on the wrong track and can only go astray. There is no need to make a fuller examination in order to rule out all hypotheses of this kind; and if one finds in some 'sects' elements that seem to be esoteric in nature, the conclusion to be drawn is not that these elements originated with these sects, but that, on the contrary, it was precisely with the sects that they were diverted from their true meaning.

Having established this point, certain apparent difficulties are at once resolved, or, more accurately, become non-existent; and thus there is no cause to wonder what the position of orthodox Christianity, understood in the ordinary sense, might be in respect to a line of transmission outside of the 'apostolic succession', such as is suggested in several versions of the Grail legend. If here it is a question of an initiatic hierarchy, then the religious hierarchy could not in any way be affected by its existence, which, moreover, it need not even acknowledge 'officially' so to speak since it exercises a legitimate jurisdiction only in the exoteric domain. Similarly, when there is question of a secret formula in relation to certain rites, we will say quite frankly that there is a singular naivete in asking whether the loss or the omission of this formula may not prevent the celebration of the Mass from being regarded as valid. The Mass, as it exists, is a religious rite, and the other is an initiatic rite; each is valid in its own domain, and even if they share a 'eucharistic' character this does nothing to change the essential distinction, any more than the fact that one and the same symbol may be interpreted according to the esoteric and the exoteric points of view prevents these latter from being completely distinct and related to entirely different domains. Whatever may be the external resemblances, which, moreover, are due to correspondences between them, the import and aim of initiatic rites is altogether different from those of religious rites. With all the greater reason, then, there can be no point in trying to establish whether or not the mysterious formula in question might not be identified with a formula used in some church that possesses a more or less special ritual: firstly, as far as churches with a claim to orthodoxy are concerned, the variants of the ritual are completely secondary and have no bearing whatsoever on anything essential; secondly, these variant rituals can never be other than religious, and as such they are all perfectly equivalent, and consideration of one or another of them brings us no closer to the initiatic point of view. How much futile research and discussion could be avoided if one were clear from the outset on the principles involved!

Now, even if the writings on the Grail legend emanated directly or indirectly from an initiatic organization, this by no means implies that they constitute an initiatic ritual, as some have assumed

rather bizarrely; and it is curious that, at least to our knowledge, no such hypothesis has ever been put forward with regard to works that describe an esoteric process quite openly, such as the *Divine Comedy* or the *Romance of the Rose*. It is in any case obvious enough that not all writings that present an esoteric character are for that reason rituals. Waite, who rejects this supposition with good reason, brings into clear relief some of the improbabilities it involves, notably that the supposed candidate for initiation would have to ask a question, rather than answer questions put by the initiator, as is generally the case; and we might add that the divergences among the different versions of the legend are incompatible with the character of a ritual, which necessarily has a fixed and definite form. But what in all this prevents the legend from being attached in some other respect to what Waite calls 'Instituted Mysteries', and which we would simply call initiatic organizations? Waite's objection derives from the fact that his notion of such organizations is far too narrow and inexact in more than one respect. On the one hand, he seems to conceive of them as something almost exclusively 'ceremonial' (a rather typically Anglo-Saxon way of seeing things, be it said in passing); on the other hand, falling victim to a very widespread error to which we have often called attention, he imagines them more or less as 'societies', whereas if some of them may have assumed this form it can only have been the result of an altogether modern degeneration. He has no doubt been personally acquainted with a good number of these pseudo-initiatic associations which are now rife throughout the West; and though they seem to have left him somewhat disaffected, he has nonetheless remained to some extent influenced by them, by which we mean that, failing to perceive clearly the difference between authentic initiation and pseudo-initiation, he wrongly attributes to genuinely initiatic organizations features comparable to those found in the counterfeit bodies with which he happened to come in contact; and this mistake entails still other consequences, which, as we shall see, bear directly on the positive conclusions of his book.

It should be obvious enough that nothing in the initiatic order could be confined in so narrow a framework as that of modern 'societies'; but it is precisely in failing to find anything remotely

resembling his 'societies' that Waite finds himself at a loss and ends up endorsing the fantastic supposition that an initiation could exist outside of any organization or regular transmission. We can do no better here than to refer the reader to articles we have previously devoted to this question.⁸ Outside these so-called 'societies' Waite apparently sees no other possibility than that of some vague and indefinite thing that he calls the 'secret church' or the 'interior church', following terminology, borrowed from such mystics as Eckartshausen and Lopukhin,⁹ in which the very word 'church' indicates that one finds oneself reduced purely and simply to the religious point of view, even though it may be one of those more or less aberrant varieties in which mysticism tends to develop spontaneously as soon as it escapes the control of a rigorous orthodoxy. Waite in fact remains one of those—unfortunately so numerous today—who for various reasons confuse mysticism and initiation, and he goes so far as to speak indiscriminately of these two things, incompatible as they are, as though they were almost synonymous. For him, initiation ultimately resolves into nothing more than 'mystical experience'; and we even wonder whether fundamentally he does not conceive of this 'experience' as something 'psychological', which would again bring us back to a level inferior to that of mysticism properly understood, because true mystical states elude the domain of psychology entirely, despite all the modern theories of the sort of which William James is the best-known representative. As for the inner states, of which the realization pertains to the initiatic domain, they are neither psychological nor even mystical; they are something much more profound, and are not something of which one can neither say exactly what they are nor whence they come, since they imply on the contrary an exact knowledge and a precise technique,

8. See *Perspectives 011 Initiation*, chaps. 26 and 27. En.

9. The German mystic Karl von Eckartshausen (1752-1813), whose best known works are *God is Purest Love* and *The Cloud upon the Sanctuary*; and the less well known Russian mystic Ivan Vladimirovitch Lopukhin (1756-1812), whose writings on the 'Interior Church' are very scarce. See Waite's lengthy introduction to Lopukhin's *Some Characteristics of the Interior Church* (London: the theosophical Publishing Company, 1912), and also chapter vii of Book xi of his *The Holy Grail*, cited at the beginning of this chapter. Ed.

sentimentality and imagination no longer playing the least part here. To transpose truths of the religious order into the initiatic order is by no means to dissolve them into some hazy sort of 'ideal'; on the contrary, it is at once to penetrate both their deepest and their most 'concrete' [positif] meaning, dispelling the clouds that impede and limit the intellectual horizon of ordinary humanity. In truth, such a conception as Waite's no longer entails transposition, but at the very most a sort of prolongation, as it were, or an extension in the 'horizontal' sense, since whatever pertains to mysticism remains in the religious domain and does not extend beyond it; to go further requires more than adherence to a 'church' qualified as 'interior', primarily because such a 'church' is merely 'ideal', which, put more plainly, comes down to saying that it is in fact only an imaginary organization.

The 'secret of the Holy Grail' could not really be anything like this, nor could any other truly initiatic secret; if we would discover where this secret is found we must refer to the perfectly 'concrete' constitution of spiritual centers, something we have indicated quite explicitly in our study *The King of the World*. Here we shall confine ourselves to observing that Waite sometimes touches on matters of which the full significance seems to escape him: thus he speaks on various occasions of 'substitutes', which can be spoken words or symbolic objects; now this may refer either to the various secondary centers insofar as they are the images or reflections of the supreme center, or to successive phases of the 'obscuration' that gradually occurs in the external manifestations of these same centers in conformity with cyclical laws. Moreover, the first of these two cases is included in a way in the latter because the very formation of the secondary centers that correspond to particular traditional forms, whatever these may be, already marks the first degree of obscuration vis-a-vis the primordial tradition; in fact, from this point on the supreme center is no longer in direct contact with the outside world, and the link is only maintained through the intermediary of the secondary centers. On the other hand, if one of these should disappear, it can be said that it has in some way been resorbed into the supreme center, of which it was only an emanation. Here again there are degrees to be observed; it may happen that such a center

only becomes more hidden and closed, and this is represented by the same symbolism as its complete disappearance, since any move away from the exterior is at the same time and in equal measure a return toward the Principle. We are alluding here to the symbolism of the final disappearance of the Grail: whether raised up to heaven, as in certain versions, or transported to the 'Kingdom of Prester John', as in certain others, exactly the same thing is signified, a point which Waite scarcely seems to suspect.¹⁰ What is involved is this same withdrawal from the exterior toward the interior by reason of the state of the world at a certain time, or, to be more precise, the state of that portion of the world connected with the traditional form under consideration. This withdrawal, moreover, applies here only to the esoteric aspect of the tradition, the exoteric aspect having apparently remained unchanged in the case of Christianity; but it is precisely through the esoteric aspect that effective and conscious links with the supreme center are established and maintained. It must necessarily be the case, however, that something from it subsists, even if invisibly, as long as this traditional form remains living; for it to be otherwise would amount to saying that the 'spirit' had entirely withdrawn, leaving only a dead body behind. It is said that the Grail was no longer seen as it was formerly, but it is not said that it can no longer be seen; accordingly it is always present, at least in principle, for those who are 'qualified', but in fact these have become more and more rare, to the point where they now constitute only a tiny exception; and since the time when the Rosicrucians are said to have withdrawn into Asia, whether this be understood literally or symbolically, what possibilities for an effective initiation could such qualified individuals still find open to them in the West?

10. From the fact that a letter attributed to Prester John is obviously apocryphal, Waite draws the conclusion that he did not exist, a singular style of argument to say the least; and the question of linkages between the Grail legend and the Order of the Temple he treats in a scarcely less summary fashion. It seems that he is, no doubt unconsciously, in some haste to brush aside these matters that are both so full of significance and so incompatible with his 'mysticism'; and, in a general way, the German versions of the legend seem to us to merit more consideration than he accords them.

9

THE SACRED HEART & THE LEGEND OF THE HOLY GRAIL

IN his article¹ Louis Charbonneau-Lassay very rightly points out that the legend of the Holy Grail, written down in the twelfth century though originating much earlier—since in reality it is a Christian adaptation of some very ancient Celtic traditions—is something belonging to what might be called the ‘prehistory of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus’. The idea of this comparison had already occurred to us when reading an earlier, and from our standpoint extremely interesting, article entitled ‘Le Coeur humain et la notion du Coeur de Dieu dans la religion de l’ancienne Egypte’,² from which we cite the following passage: ‘In hieroglyphics, a sacred writing wherein the image of the thing itself often represents the very word that designates it, the heart was represented only by an emblem, the vase. Is not the heart of man indeed the vase in which his life is continually maintained by means of his blood?’ It is this vase, taken as a symbol of the heart and substituting for it in Egyptian ideography, that at once called to mind the Holy Grail, all the more in that we also see here, beside its general symbolic meaning (considered, moreover, under both its human and its divine aspects), a special and much more direct relationship with the very heart of Christ.

1 . L’Iconographie ancienne du Coeur de Jesus, *Regnabit*, June 1925.

2 . Ibid., Nov. 1924. [Cf. Charbonneau-Lassay, *Le Bestinire du Christ* (Paris: Desdie de Brouwer, 1940), chap. 10, P95. ED.]

Indeed, the Holy Grail is the cup that contains the precious blood of Christ, and which even contains it twice, since it was used first at the Last Supper and then by Joseph of Arimathea to collect the blood and water that flowed from the wound opened in the Redeemer's side by the centurion's lance. This cup is thus a kind of substitute for the heart of Christ as a receptacle of his blood; it takes its place so to speak, and becomes its symbolic equivalent; and in this connection is it not still more remarkable that the vase should already in ancient times have been an emblem of the heart? Moreover, the cup in one form or another, just as the heart itself, plays an important part in many of the traditions of antiquity, particularly so among the Celts no doubt, since the whole fabric of the legend of the Holy Grail, or at least its guiding thread, came from them. It is regrettable that we cannot know with any precision what form this tradition took prior to Christianity, and so it is for everything concerning the Celtic doctrines, for which oral teaching was the sole means of transmission; but there are enough concordances for us at least to establish the meanings of the principal symbols that figured in them, this after all being what is most essential.

But let us return to the legend in the form in which it has come down to us, since what it has to say of the Grail's origin is particularly worthy of our attention: the cup was fashioned by angels from an emerald that fell from Lucifer's brow at the time of his fall. This emerald is strikingly reminiscent of the *until*, the frontal pearl that in Hindu iconography often takes the place of the third eye of *Shiva*, representing what might be called the 'sense of eternity'. This comparison seems better suited than any other to clarify exactly the symbolism of the Grail; and it illustrates yet another relationship with the heart, which, for the Hindu tradition, as for many others— though perhaps in Hinduism more clearly so—is the center of the integral being, to which consequently this 'sense of eternity' must be directly attached.

It is then said that the Grail was entrusted to Adam in the Terrestrial Paradise, but that at the time of his fall Adam lost it in his turn, for he could not take it with him when he was cast out of Eden; and this also becomes very clear in light of what we have just indicated: man, separated from his original center through his own fault,

found himself henceforth confined to the temporal sphere; he could no longer regain the unique point from which all things are contemplated under the aspect of eternity. The Terrestrial Paradise was in fact the true 'Center of the World', which is everywhere symbolically assimilated to the divine Heart; and can it not be said that as long as he lived in Eden Adam truly lived in the Heart of God?

What follows next is more enigmatic: Seth was able to return to the Terrestrial Paradise and was thus able to recover the precious vase. Now Seth is one of the figures of the Redeemer, the more so as his very name expresses the ideas of foundation and stability, and he announces in a way the restoration of the primordial order destroyed by the fall of man. From this point there was at least a partial restoration in the sense that Seth and those who possessed the Grail after him were able thereby to establish, somewhere on earth, a spiritual center that was like an image of the Lost Paradise. The legend does not say where or by whom the Grail was preserved up to the time of Christ, or how its transmission was assured; but its manifestly Celtic origin suggests that the Druids probably played a part here, and that they must be numbered among the regular guardians of the primordial tradition. In any case, the existence of such a spiritual center, or even of several centers, simultaneously or successively, does not seem to be in doubt, wherever we may suppose them to have been located. What should be noted is that, among other designations, 'Heart of the World' was always and everywhere applied to these centers, and that in all traditions the descriptions of these centers are based upon an identical symbolism which can be traced to the precise details. Is this not sufficient to show that the Grail, or what is represented as such, had, already prior to Christianity, and even for all time, a very close link with the divine Heart and with *Emmanuel*, that is to say with the manifestation, virtual or real according to the epoch concerned, but always present, of the Eternal Word at the heart of terrestrial humanity?³

According to the legend, after the death of Christ the Holy Grail was transported to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus; the story of the Knights of the Round Table and their exploits, which we do not intend to take up here, then begins to unfold. The Round

3. *Emmanuel* means 'with us [is] God [El]'. Ed.

Table was destined to receive the Grail upon one of its knights having succeeded in winning it and bringing it from Great Britain to Brittany; and this table is also probably a very ancient symbol, one of those associated with the idea of the spiritual centers to which we have just alluded. Moreover, the circular form of the table is related to the 'zodiacal circle' (another symbol that merits a special study) through the presence around it of twelve chief personages, a feature that is also to be found in the constitution of all the centers in question. This being so, may one not see in the number of the twelve apostles one sign among a multitude of others of the perfect conformity of Christianity with the primordial tradition, to which the designation 'pre-Christian' so precisely fits? And we have also noticed in connection with the Round Table a strange concordance in the symbolic revelations made to Marie des Vallies⁴ in which there is mention of a 'round table of jasper that represents the Heart of Our Lord', while there is at the same time mention of 'a garden that is the Holy Sacrament of the altar,' which, with its 'four fountains of living water,' is mysteriously identified with the Terrestrial Paradise. Again, is this not a rather astonishing and unexpected confirmation of the relationships we have pointed out?

Naturally, we cannot pretend that these cursory observations constitute a thorough study of a subject so little known as this; for the moment we must confine ourselves to giving mere indications, fully realizing that at first sight these are likely to be something of a surprise to those unfamiliar with the ancient traditions and their customary modes of symbolic expression. But we intend to develop and justify them more amply later through articles in which we may be able to touch on many other points no less worthy of interest.⁵

Returning meanwhile to the legend of the Holy Grail, let us mention a singular complication that we have not yet taken into account. Through one of those verbal assimilations that often play a far from negligible part in symbolism, and that may moreover have deeper

4. See *Regnabit*, November 1924. [Marie des Vallees, a seventeenth-century nun, contemplative, and visionary, who was also the confidant and inspirer of St John Hudes, who himself was the apostle of public devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Ed.]

5. See *The King of the World*. Eo.

reasons than we may imagine at first sight, the Grail is simultaneously a vase or cup (*grasale*) and a book (*gradale* or *graduate*). In some variants of the legend the two meanings are very closely linked, for the book becomes an inscription engraved by Christ or by an angel upon the cup itself. We do not intend to draw any conclusion from this at the moment, although parallels may easily be found with the 'Book of Life' and certain elements in Apocalyptic symbolism.

Let us also add that the legend associates the Grail with other objects, notably a lance, which, in the Christian adaptation, is none other than the lance of the centurion Longinus; but what is curious is that this lance, or one of its equivalents, already existed as a sort of complementary symbol for the cup in ancient traditions. Among the Greeks the spear of Achilles was credited with the power to cure the wounds it had caused; and medieval legend attributes precisely the same power to the lance of the Passion, recalling another similarity of the same kind: in the myth of Adonis (whose name, moreover, signifies 'the Lord'), when the hero is mortally gored by the tusk of a wild boar (which here replaces the lance), his blood, flowing to the earth, gives rise to a flower.⁶ Now, Charbonneau-Lassay has pointed to 'a twelfth-century press-mould for altar bread on which the blood from the wounds of the Crucified can be seen falling in droplets that are transformed into roses, and a thirteenth-century stained glass window of the cathedral of Angers, in which the divine blood, flowing in rivulets, also blossoms into the shapes of roses.'⁷ We shall return later to the topic of floral symbolism, viewed under a somewhat different aspect; but whatever may be the multiplicity of meanings presented by nearly all the symbols, they fit together in perfect harmony, and this very multiplicity, far from constituting a disadvantage or shortcoming, is on the contrary, for anyone who can understand it, one of the chief advantages of a language far less narrowly limited than the ordinary.

6. On the symbolism of the wild boar and its 'polar' significance, which places it squarely in relation with the 'World Axis', see 'The Wild Boar and the Bear', in *Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 24.

7. *Regnabit*, January 1925.

By way of concluding these notes let us mention several symbols that sometimes take the place of the cup in various traditions and that are in fact identical with it. This is not to depart from our subject, for the Grail itself, as may easily be realized from everything we have just said, originally had no other significance than that generally attributed to the sacred vase or vessel, wherever it is encountered, notably the significance attributed in the East to the sacrificial cup containing the Vedic *Soma* (or the Mazdean *Haoma*), that extraordinary eucharistic 'prefiguration' to which we shall perhaps return on another occasion.⁸ What the *Soma* properly represents is the 'draught of immortality' (the Amrita of the Hindus and the Ambrosia of the Greeks, two etymologically related words), which confers on or restores to those who receive it with the requisite disposition that 'sense of eternity' to which we have already referred.

One of the symbols that we wish to mention is the downward-pointing triangle, which is a kind of schematic representation of the sacrificial cup and is encountered as such in certain *yantras*, or geometrical symbols, in India. But what is also very remarkable from our point of view is that the same figure is also a symbol of the heart, the shape of which it reproduces in a simplified way, the 'triangle of the heart' being an expression current in all Eastern traditions. This leads to the interesting observation that the figure of a heart inscribed in a triangle thus oriented is in itself altogether legitimate, whether it be a question of the human heart or of the divine Heart, and that this is very significant when it is related to the emblems used by certain Christian Hermeticists of the Middle Ages, whose intentions were always fully orthodox. If in modern times some have sought to attach a blasphemous meaning to this figure,⁹ it is because, consciously or not, they have altered its primary sense to the point of reversing its normal value. This is a phenomenon for which many examples could be cited and which moreover finds its explanation in the fact that certain symbols are indeed susceptible of a twofold interpretation and have, as it were, two opposing faces. For example, do not the serpent and the lion both signify, according

8. See *The King of the World*, Arap. 6. En.

9. *Regnabit*, August-September 1924.

to context, Christ and Satan? We cannot set forth here a general theory on this subject, for this would lead us too far afield, but it goes without saying that in all this there is something that makes the handling of symbols a very delicate business and that also calls for quite special care when it comes to discovering the real meaning of certain emblems and of correctly interpreting them.

Another symbolism that is frequently equivalent to the cup is that of flowers: does not the form of a flower indeed evoke the idea of a 'receptacle', and do we not speak of the 'calyx' of a flower?¹⁰ In the East, the symbolic flower par excellence is the lotus; in the West, the rose most often plays the same role. We do not of course mean to imply that this is the only significance proper to the rose, or to the lotus; quite the contrary, for we have ourselves just pointed out another, but we willingly see this significance in the design embroidered on the altar canon at the abbey of Fontevrault,¹¹ where the rose is placed at the foot of a lance along which flow drops of blood. There this rose appears in association with the lance exactly as does the cup elsewhere, and it does seem to be collecting the drops of blood rather than developing from a transformation of one of them. Even so, the two meanings complement far more than they oppose each other, for in falling on the rose these drops of blood vivify it and make it bloom. They are the 'celestial dew', according to the expression so often used in reference to the idea of the Redemption or to the associated ideas of regeneration and resurrection; but that again would call for lengthy explanations even if we were to limit ourselves to bringing out the concordance of the various traditions in the case of this one other symbol.

On another front, since the Rose-Cross has been mentioned in connection with the seal of Luther,¹² we will say that this Hermetic emblem was at first specifically Christian, whatever may be the false and more or less 'naturalistic' interpretations given it from the seventeenth century onward, and is it not remarkable that in this figure the rose occupies the center of the cross, the very place of the Sacred

10. The French *calice* can mean chalice, cup, or the calyx of a flower. En.

11. Regnabit, January 1925, figure 100. En.

12. Ibid., January 1925.

Heart? Apart from those representations where the five wounds of the Crucified are figured as so many roses, the central rose, when it stands alone, can very well be identified with the Heart itself, with the vase that contains the blood, which is the center of life and also the center of the entire being.

There is still at least one other symbolic equivalent of the cup, the lunar crescent; but to explain this adequately would demand further elaborations quite outside the scope of the present study. We only mention it therefore in order not to neglect entirely any aspect of the question.

From all the comparisons brought forward above we can already draw one conclusion which we hope to be able to further clarify in the future: when one finds such concordances everywhere, is this not more than a mere indication of the existence of a primordial tradition? And how is it to be explained that even those who feel obliged in principle to admit that this primordial tradition exists think no more about it more often than not, and in fact go on reasoning as if it had never existed, or at least as if nothing of it had been preserved over the centuries? Some reflection on how abnormal such an attitude is will perhaps render one less disposed to wonder at certain considerations which, in truth, only seem strange by virtue of the mental habits of our time. Besides, only a little unprejudiced research is required to discover on all sides the signs of this essential doctrinal unity, a consciousness of which may sometimes have been obscured among mankind but has never entirely disappeared. And in proportion as one advances in this research, the more the points of comparison seem to multiply of their own accord and new proofs to appear at every turn: to be sure, the *Quaerite et invenietis* [Seek and ye shall find] of the Gospel is no vain saying.

ADDENDUM

WE will add a few words here¹³ in answer to an objection that was made to our view of the relationship between the Holy Grail and the Sacred Heart, even though the reply already given at the time seems to us fully satisfactory.¹⁴

It is of little importance that Chretien de Troyes and Robert de Boron did not see in the ancient legend, of which they were only the adapters, all the significance contained in it. This significance was nevertheless really there, and we claim only to have made it explicit without introducing anything 'modern' into our interpretation. It is quite difficult, moreover, to say exactly what the writers of the

13. This additional text was published in *Regnabit*, December 1925, and has been appended here in view of its relevance to the present chapter. ED.

14. See *Regnabit*, Oct. 1925, PP358-359. A correspondent had written to the journal: 'A very interesting study of Rene Guenon on the Holy Grail and the Heart of Jesus. But cannot one level against his thesis an objection that would undermine it to the point of collapse? Chretien de Troyes probably never thought of the Heart of Christ. In any case, the Celts of ancient Gaul certainly never thought of it. To see in the Holy Grail an emblem of the Heart of Christ is therefore a quite modern interpretation, which may be ingenious but which would have astonished our ancestors!' *Regnabit* responded: 'Some day Guenon himself may be able to tell us what he thinks of the objection advanced against his thesis. We simply note that the complete "nescience" of the Celts or of Chretien de Troyes concerning the Heart of Jesus cannot "undermine" the interpretation of the legend of the Holy Grail given us by Guenon. He does not assert that the Celts *have seen* in the mysterious Vase an emblem of the Heart of Jesus. He shows that the Holy Grail—which the Celts knew, ..and the legend of which they passed on to us—is *objectively* an emblem of the living Heart, which is the true cup and the true life. Now this second affirmation is independent of the first. That the Celts *did not see* such and such a meaning in the legend that nourished their thought does not prove that this meaning is absent. It simply proves that this meaning remains hidden, even to those who must have loved the admirable legend so much. Today we all know that the phrase *full of grace* of the angelic salutation includes the grace of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Imagine that during long centuries an entire school of theology *had not seen* in the formula the meaning that we see today—this would not prove that the meaning *is not there*. It would prove simply that this school had not grasped the entire significance of the formula. It is *a fortiori* possible that one of the true meanings of a religious myth may not have been perceived even by those who piously conserved the legend.' ED.

twelfth century saw or did not see in the legend; and given that they only played the part of 'transmitters', we readily agree that they did not see all that was seen by those who inspired them, that is, the real custodians of the traditional doctrine.

On the other hand, as regards the Celts, we were careful to recall the precautions that are necessary when speaking of them in the absence of any written documents. But why should it be supposed, despite the contra-indications that are nevertheless available, that the Celts were less favored than the other ancient peoples? We see everywhere, and not only in Egypt, the symbolic assimilation of the heart and the cup or vase. Everywhere the heart is considered to be the center of the being, a center that in the many aspects of this symbol is both divine and human. Furthermore, the sacrificial cup everywhere represents the Center or the Heart of the World, the 'abode of immortality'.¹⁵ What more is required? We are well aware that the cup and the lance, or their equivalents, have had yet other meanings, in addition to those we mentioned, but without wishing to dwell any further on this point, we can say that all these meanings, no matter how strange some of them may appear to modern eyes, are in perfect agreement among themselves, and that they really express applications of the same principle to diverse orders according to a law of correspondence on which is founded the harmonious multiplicity of meanings included in all symbolism.

We hope to show in other studies not only that the Center of the World is in fact to be identified with the Heart of Christ, but also that this identity was plainly indicated in ancient doctrines. Obviously, the expression 'Heart of Christ' must in this case be taken in a sense that does not coincide precisely with that which could be

15. We could have recalled the Hermetic athanor, the vase where the 'Great Work' is effected, the name of which, according to some, was derived from the Greek athanatos, 'immortal'. The invisible fire that is perpetually maintained there corresponds to the vital heat that resides in the heart. Likewise, we could have shown the relationships with another very widely used symbol, that of the egg, which signifies resurrection and immortality and to which we may have occasion to return. On the other hand, we note that the cup in the Tarot cards (the origin of which is quite mysterious) has been replaced by the heart in ordinary playing cards, which is another indication of the equivalence of the two symbols.

called 'historical', but it must be said yet again that historical facts themselves, like all the rest, are 'translations' of higher realities into their own particular 'language' and conform to the law of correspondence we have just alluded to, a law that alone makes possible the explanation of certain 'prefigurations', it is a question, if you will, of the Christ-principle, that is, of the Word manifested at the central point of the Universe. But who would dare to maintain that the Eternal Word and Its historical, earthly, and human manifestation are not really one and the same Christ under different aspects? We touch here on the relationship between the temporal and the timeless, and perhaps it is not appropriate to dwell further on this, for these are precisely things that symbolism alone can express, in the measure that they are expressible. In any case, it is enough to know how to read the symbols in order to find in them all that we ourselves have found; but alas, in our age especially, not everyone knows how to read them.

ANNEX

10

SAINT BERNARD

AMONG the great figures of the Middle Ages, there are few whose study is more suited for counteracting certain prejudices cherished by the modern mind than Saint Bernard. In fact what could be more disconcerting for the modern mind than to see a pure contemplative, one who always wished to be and to live as such, called upon to play a dominant role in conducting the affairs of Church and of State, and succeeding where all the prudence of professional diplomats and politicians had failed? What could be more surprising and even more paradoxical, according to the ordinary way of judging such things, than a mystic who shows only disdain for what he calls 'the quibblings of Plato and the niceties of Aristotle,' but who nonetheless triumphs without difficulty over the most subtle dialecticians of his day? All of Saint Bernard's life seems destined to show, through striking example, that in order to solve problems of an intellectual and even a political order there exist means quite other than those we have long since become accustomed to considering the only ones effective, no doubt because they are the only ones within reach of a purely human wisdom, which is not even a shadow of true wisdom. The life of Saint Bernard thus seems an anticipated refutation of these errors of rationalism and pragmatism, which are supposedly opposed to each other but are actually interdependent; and at the same time, for those who examine it impartially, this life confounds and upsets all those preconceived ideas of 'scientific' historians, who consider along with Renan that 'the negation of the supernatural constitutes the very essence of critical thinking,' something we readily admit, though for the reason that we see in this incompatibility the exact opposite of what they do: the condemnation, not of the supernatural, but of 'critical

thinking' itself. Truly, what lessons could be more profitable for our time than these?

Bernard was born in 1070 in Fontaines-les-Dijon; his parents belonged to the upper ranks of Burgundian nobility, and if we mention this fact it is because to this origin can be linked certain features of Bernard's life and doctrine that we will discuss in the following pages. We do not wish to imply that this alone could account for the sometimes quarrelsome ardor of his zeal or the violence he repeatedly introduced into the polemics he engaged in, qualities that were moreover superficial, for kindness and mildness incontestably formed the basis of his character. What we especially allude to are his relationships with the institutions and the ideal of chivalry, to which we must in any case accord great importance if we are to understand the events and the very spirit of the Middle Ages.

At about the age of twenty, Bernard decided to retire from the world; and in a very short while he had succeeded in converting to his views all his own brothers, as well as some of his neighbors and several of his friends. In his early apostleship, his persuasive force was such that in spite of his youth he became (as his biographer states) 'the terror of mothers and wives; friends were in fear of seeing him approach their friends.' Here already was something extraordinary, and it would surely be inadequate to attribute it simply to the force of his 'genius', in the profane sense of the word. Would it not be better to recognize here the action of divine grace, which somehow or other penetrated the whole person of the apostle and shone out abundantly from him, communicating itself through him as through a channel, to use a simile he himself was to apply later to the Holy Virgin, and that can also be applied within certain limits to all the saints?

It was thus that in 1112 Bernard, accompanied by thirty young men, entered the monastery of Cîteaux, which he had chosen because of the strictness with which the Rule was observed there—a strictness contrasting with the laxity that had been introduced in all the other branches of the Benedictine Order. Three years later, his superiors did not hesitate to entrust to him, in spite of his inexperience and unsteady health, the direction of twelve monks who were going to found a new abbey, that of Clairvaux, over which he was to

rule until his death, always refusing the honors and dignities that were so often offered to him in the course of his career. The renown of Clairvaux was not slow to spread, and the abbey's growth was truly prodigious: when its founder died, it is said to have housed some seven hundred monks and had given birth to more than sixty new monasteries.

The care that Bernard brought to the administration of Clairvaux, personally overseeing everything down to the most minute details of everyday life, the part that he took in the direction of the Cistercian Order as the head of one of its foremost abbeys, the skill and the success of his interventions to smooth over difficulties that frequently arose with rival Orders—all these qualities give sufficient proof that what one calls 'practical sense' may often be united with the highest spirituality. All this would have been more than enough to fully absorb the energy of an ordinary man, yet Bernard soon saw another whole field of activity open up before him, indeed almost in spite of himself, for he never feared anything as much as being obliged to leave his cloister to mix in the affairs of the outside world, from which he had intended to isolate himself forever in order to surrender himself completely to asceticism and contemplation, with nothing to distract him from what was in his eyes, according to the Gospel, 'the one thing needful.' In this hope he was greatly disappointed, but all those 'distractions' (in the etymological sense of the word) from which he could not escape and about which he would complain with some bitterness did not at all prevent his attaining the heights of mystical life. That fact is truly remarkable, and what is no less so is that in spite of his humility and all the efforts he made to live in seclusion his collaboration was requested for all sorts of important affairs, and that although he was nothing in the eyes of the world, everyone, including high civil and ecclesiastical dignitaries, always spontaneously bowed to his compelling spiritual authority—whether this was due to his own saintliness, or to the age in which he lived, being hard to tell. What a contrast between our own age and one in which a simple monk, through no more than the radiance of his eminent virtues, could become in a sense the center of Europe and Christianity: the uncontested arbiter of all conflicts where public interest was in play, both in politics and in

religion; the judge of the most renowned masters of philosophy and theology; the restorer of the unity of the Church; the mediator between the papacy and the empire; one, finally, whose preaching was to rally armies of several hundred thousand men!

BERNARD had begun early to denounce the luxurious living of most of the members of the secular clergy and even monks in certain abbeys; his remonstrations had provoked resounding conversions, including that of Suger, the illustrious Abbot of Saint-Denis, who even though he did not officially hold the title of prime minister to the King of France, was already fulfilling its functions. It was his conversion of Suger that made known the name of the Abbot of Clairvaux at court, where he was regarded it seems with a respect mixed with fear, for one saw in him the indomitable adversary of all abuses and injustices; and, indeed, he soon intervened in conflicts that had broken out between Louis the Fat and various bishops, and he protested loudly any infringements of civil authority against the rights of the Church. In truth, it was still a question of purely local affairs of interest only to a given monastery or diocese, but in 1130 events of a completely different gravity occurred that put in peril the whole Church, which became divided by a schism created by the anti-pope Anaclet II, and it was on this occasion that Bernard became renowned throughout all Christendom.

We need not enter here into all the details of the history of that schism: the cardinals, split into two rival factions, had elected in succession Innocent II and Anaclet II; the first, forced to flee from Rome, never despaired of his rights and appealed to the universal Church. It was France that responded first; at a council convened by the King at Etampes, Bernard appeared (in the words of his biographer) 'like a true envoy of God' among the assembled bishops and lords; all followed his advice on the question submitted to their inspection and recognized the validity of the election of Innocent II. The latter was on French soil at the time, and Suger went to the Abbey of Cluny to announce to him the decision of the council; he passed through all the main dioceses and was everywhere welcomed with enthusiasm; this momentum was to solidify Innocent's support in almost all of Christendom. The Abbot of Clairvaux then

made his way to the King of England and quickly overcame his hesitations; perhaps he also had a part, at least indirectly, in the recognition of Innocent II by King Lothaire and the German clergy. He then went to Aquitaine to combat the influence of Bishop Gerard d'Angouleme, a partisan of Anaclet II; but it was only in the course of a second trip to that region, in 1135, that he succeeded in destroying the schism by effecting the conversion of the Count of Poitiers. In the interval, he had had to go to Italy, summoned by Innocent II, who had returned there with the aid of Lothaire, but who had been stopped by unforeseen difficulties due to the hostility of Pisa and Genoa; it was necessary to find a compromise between the two rival cities and to make them accept him, and it was Bernard who was given charge of this difficult mission, which he acquitted with the most marvelous success. Innocent could finally return to Rome, but Anaclet remained entrenched in St Peter's, of which it proved impossible to gain control; Lothaire, crowned emperor at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, soon retired with his army; after his departure, the anti-pope took the offensive and the legitimate pontiff again fled and took refuge in Pisa.

The Abbot of Clairvaux, who had returned to his cloister, was dismayed by the news; shortly afterward came the rumor that troops had been deployed by Roger, King of Sicily, to win all of Italy to the cause of Anaclet, ensuring his own supremacy there at the same time. Bernard wrote immediately to the inhabitants of Pisa and Genoa to encourage them to remain faithful to Innocent; but this faithfulness was but a weak support, and to conquer Rome, it was from Germany alone that effective aid could be expected. Unfortunately, the Empire was ever a prey to division, and Lothaire could not return to Italy before he had assured peace in his own country. Bernard left for Germany and worked for the reconciliation of the Hohenstaufens with the emperor; there again his efforts were crowned with success, and he witnessed its happy outcome confirmed at the Diet of Bamberg, after which he made his way to the council that Innocent II had convened at Pisa. On this occasion he had to address the misgivings of Louis the Fat, who opposed the departure of the bishops from his kingdom; the prohibition was lifted, and the principal members of the French clergy were able to

respond to the appeal of the head of the Church. Bernard was the soul of the council; between the meetings, as historians of the day describe it, his door was besieged by those who had some serious matter to resolve, as if this humble monk were endowed with the power to decide at will all ecclesiastical questions. Delegated next to Milan to bring back that city to the side of Innocent II and Lothaire, he was acclaimed by the clergy and the faithful, who in a spontaneous show of enthusiasm, wanted to make him their archbishop, an honor from which he extricated himself only with the greatest difficulty. He wished only to return to his monastery and did in fact go back there, though not for long.

From the beginning of 1136, Bernard had once more to abandon his solitude, in compliance with the pope's wishes, to come to Italy to meet the German army, commanded by Duke Henry of Bavaria, son-in-law of the emperor. A misunderstanding had arisen between Henry and Innocent II; Henry, little concerned with the rights of the Church, chose consistently to align himself only with the interests of the State. But the Abbot of Clairvaux was strongly in favor of re-establishing harmony between the two powers and reconciling their rival claims, especially in certain questions of investiture, in which he seems regularly to have played the role of moderator. Meanwhile however Lothaire, who himself had taken command of the army, subdued all of southern Italy; but he made the mistake of rejecting the peace proposal of the King of Sicily, who quickly took his revenge, putting everything to fire and sword. Bernard did not hesitate then to go to Roger's camp, but Roger was ill-disposed toward his words of peace; Bernard predicted a defeat for him, which in fact happened; then retracing his steps, Bernard rejoined Roger at Salerno and made every effort to turn him away from the schism into which ambition had drawn him. Roger consented to hear both the partisans of Innocent and of Anaclet, but while pretending to conduct the inquiry impartially, he was only trying to gain time and refused to make a decision; at any rate this debate had the positive result of bringing about the conversion of one of the principal authors of the schism, Cardinal Peter of Pisa, whom Bernard won to the side of Innocent II. This conversion dealt a terrible blow to the cause of the anti-pope; Bernard knew how to profit from

this and, in Rome itself, through his ardent and convincing words, he managed in a few days to win over most of the dissidents from Anaclet's side. That took place in 1137, around the time of Christmas; one month later, Anaclet suddenly died. Some of the cardinals most involved in the schism elected a new anti-pope who took the name Victor IV, but their resistance could not last very long, and they all submitted on the eighth day of Pentecost; a week later, the Abbot of Clairvaux again headed home to his monastery.

This short summary should suffice to give an idea of what one might call the political activity of Saint Bernard, which moreover does not stop there: from 1140 to 1144 he was to protest the abusive meddling of King Louis the Young in episcopal elections, then to intervene in the serious conflict between the same king and Count Thibaut of Champagne; but it would be tedious to go on at length about such affairs. In summary, one could say that the conduct of Saint Bernard was always determined by the same intentions: to defend the right, to combat injustice, and perhaps most of all to maintain unity in the Christian world. It is this constant preoccupation with unity that animated his struggle against the schism; it is also what made him undertake, in 1145, a trip to Languedoc to bring back to the Church the neo-Manichean heretics who were starting to spread in this region. It seems that he had ever-present in his thought the Gospel words: 'That all may be one, even as my Father and I are one.'

HOWEVER, the Abbot of Clairvaux had to struggle not only in the political domain, but also in the intellectual domain, where his triumphs were no less astonishing, since they were marked by his condemnation of two eminent adversaries: Abelard and Gilbert de la Porree. Through his writings and teachings Abelard had acquired for himself the reputation of a most skillful dialectician; he even made excessive use of dialectic, for instead of seeing in it only what it really is, that is, a simple means to arrive at understanding the truth, he regarded it almost as an end in itself, which naturally resulted in a sort of verbosity. It also seems that, both in his method and in the very essence of his ideas, he engaged in a pursuit of novelty not unlike that of modern philosophers; and at a time when

individualism was practically unknown, this defect had no chance of being considered a virtue, as is the case nowadays. And so some soon began to worry about these innovations, which tended to establish a veritable confusion between the domains of reason and faith; it is not that Abelard was a rationalist properly speaking, as has sometimes been claimed, for there were no rationalists prior to Descartes; but he did not know how to distinguish between what belonged to reason and what is higher than it, between profane philosophy and sacred wisdom, between purely human know-how and transcendent knowledge, and there lay the root of all his errors. Did he not go so far as to maintain that philosophers and dialecticians enjoy a constant inspiration comparable to the supernatural inspiration of the prophets? One understands easily why Saint Bernard, when his attention was called to such theories, rallied against them forcefully and even with an outburst of anger, and also that he should have bitterly reproached their author for having taught that faith was merely a simple opinion. The controversy between these two very different men, begun in private talks, soon reverberated loudly in the schools and monasteries. Abelard, confident of his competence in handling an argument, demanded that the Archbishop of Sens call a council before which he might justify himself publicly, for he thought he could easily lead the discussion in such a way as to confound his adversary. But things turned out quite otherwise: the Abbot of Clairvaux, in fact, saw the council as only a tribunal before which the suspect theologian was appearing as a defendant; in a preparatory session he produced the writings of Abelard and pointed out their most reckless propositions, which he proved heterodox; the next day, the author having been introduced, Bernard enunciated these propositions and called upon Abelard to either retract them or justify them. Abelard, instantly foreseeing a condemnation, did not await the judgment of the council but declared immediately that he would appeal the decision to the court of Rome; the proceeding nonetheless followed its course, and when the condemnation was pronounced, Bernard wrote such vehemently eloquent letters to Innocent II and the cardinals that six weeks later the verdict was confirmed in Rome. Abelard could only submit; he took refuge at Cluny with Peter the Venerable, who

arranged an interview for him with the Abbot of Clairvaux and succeeded in reconciling them.

The Council of Sens took place in 1140; in 1147, Bernard obtained in the same way, at the Council of Rheims, the condemnation of the errors of Gilbert de la Porrie, the Bishop of Poitiers, regarding the mystery of the Trinity; these errors arose from the fact that their author applied to God the real distinction between essence and existence, which is applicable only to created beings. However, Gilbert retracted without much difficulty, so that it was simply forbidden to read or transcribe his writings until they had been corrected; his authority, apart from the specific points in question, was not affected, and his teaching remained in good repute in the schools throughout the Middle Ages.

Two years before this last affair, the Abbot of Clairvaux had had the joy of seeing one of his fellow Cistercian monks, Bernard of Pisa, rise to the pontifical throne; the new pope took the name of Eugene III and Bernard always maintained the most warm-hearted relations with him. It was this new pope who near the beginning of his reign charged Bernard to preach the Second Crusade. Until then, the Holy Land had held, in appearance at least, only a minor place in Saint Bernard's preoccupations; however, it would be wrong to think that he had remained totally indifferent to events there, the proof of this being a fact which is not usually given the weight it deserves: namely, the part Bernard played in the founding of the Order of the Temple, the first of the military orders by date and importance, which was to serve as a model for all the others. It was in 1128, about ten years after its foundation, that the order received its Rule at the Council of Troyes, and it was Bernard who, as secretary of the Council, was charged with drawing up this Rule, or at least with delineating its chief features, for it seems that it was only somewhat later that he was called to complete it and he finished its final wording only in 1131. He then commented on this Rule in *De laude novae militiae* (In Praise of the New Militia), where he set forth with magnificent eloquence the mission and the ideal of Christian chivalry, which he called the 'militia of God'. These connections between the Abbot of Clairvaux and the Order of the Temple, which modern

historians consider only a rather secondary episode in his life, assuredly had quite a different importance in the eyes of men of the Middle Ages; and we have shown elsewhere that these connections undoubtedly explain why Dante chose Saint Bernard as his guide in the highest circles of Paradise.

IN the year 1145, Louis VII formulated a plan to go to the aid of the Latin principalities of the East, menaced by the Emir of Aleppo; but the opposition of his advisers had constrained him to postpone the plan's execution, and the definitive decision had been left to a plenary assembly which was to take place in Vezelay during the Easter holiday of the following year. Eugene III, detained in Italy by a revolution provoked in Rome by Arnaud of Brescia, charged the Abbot of Clairvaux to take his place at that assembly; Bernard, after having read aloud the papal bull, which invited France to the Crusade, delivered a speech that was, to judge by its impact, the most important speech of his life, all those present rushing to receive the cross from his hands. Encouraged by this success, Bernard traveled the cities and provinces, everywhere preaching the Crusade with untiring zeal; where he could not travel in person, he sent letters no less eloquent than his speeches. Then he went to Germany, where his preaching had the same result as in France; the Emperor Conrad, after resisting for a time, under Bernard's influence changed his mind and joined the Crusade. Toward the middle of the year 1147, the French and German armies set off on this great expedition which despite its formidable appearance was to end in disaster. The causes of this failure were many, the main ones seeming to have been the treason of the Greeks and the lack of cooperation between the various leaders of the Crusade; but certain critics hoped, quite unjustly, to lay responsibility for the failure on the Abbot of Clairvaux, who had to write a veritable apology for his conduct, an apology which was however at the same time a justification of the defeat as an act of Providence, showing that the unhappy outcome was not attributable to the faults of Christians alone, and that therefore 'the promises of God remain intact, for they do not contradict the rights of justice'; this apology is contained in the book *De Consideratione* [On Contemplation], addressed to Eugene III, a book which is like

the will or testament of Saint Bernard and which contains especially his views on the rights of the papacy. Besides, not all were discouraged, and Suger soon conceived a plan for a new Crusade, of which the Abbot of Clairvaux was himself to be the leader; but the death of this great prime minister of Louis VII stayed the plan's execution, and Saint Bernard himself died shortly afterward in 1153, his last letters testifying that he was preoccupied to the very end with the deliverance of the Holy Land.

Although the immediate purpose of the Crusade was not attained, must one say even so that such an expedition was entirely useless and that the efforts of Saint Bernard were spent to no avail? We do not think so, despite what may be thought about it by those historians who concern themselves only with external appearances, for there were in these great movements of the Middle Ages, which were both political and religious, more profound motives, one of which—the only one we will note here—was the wish to maintain within Christianity a keen awareness of its unity. Christianity was identical with Western civilization, which was founded at that time on an essentially traditional basis, as is any normal civilization, and which was to reach its apogee in the thirteenth century; the loss of that traditional character would inevitably follow any rupture in the very unity of Christianity of which we are speaking. Such a rupture, which was later accomplished in the religious domain by the Reformation, was effected in the political realm by the rise of nationalism, preceded by the destruction of the feudal regime; and one could say, from this last point of view, that the one who dealt the first blow to the grand edifice of medieval Christianity was Philip the Fair, the very one who through a coincidence by no means fortuitous destroyed the Order of the Temple, thereby directly attacking the work of Saint Bernard.

In the course of his travels, Saint Bernard frequently supplemented his preaching with miraculous healings, which were for the multitude like visible signs of his mission; these acts were reported by eye-witnesses, but Bernard himself never willingly spoke of them. Perhaps he imposed this reserve on himself because of his extreme modesty; but undoubtedly at the same time he attributed only a

secondary importance to these miracles, considering them a mere concession accorded by divine mercy to the weakness of faith among the majority of the men, according to the words of Christ: 'Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.' This attitude was in accord with the disdain that Bernard had in general for all outward and visible show of the sacred, such as the pomp of ceremonies and the ornamentation of churches; some have even reproached him, with apparent justification, for harboring only contempt for religious art. Those who formulate this criticism, however, forget a necessary distinction that Bernard himself established between what he called church architecture and monastic architecture: it was only the latter that was to have the austerity he advocated, and it was only to the religious orders and to those who followed the road of perfection that he forbade 'the cult of idols', that is to say of forms, which he proclaimed, on the contrary, were useful as a means of education for the simple and the imperfect. If he did protest against the abuses of representations devoid of meaning and having no more than an ornamental value, he did not wish, as has been falsely alleged of him, to forbid symbolism in architectural art, for he himself made frequent use of symbolism in his own sermons.

THE doctrine of Saint Bernard is essentially mystical, by which we mean that he sees everywhere the divinity of things under the aspect of love, which it would moreover be wrong to interpret in the merely sentimental sense, as modern psychologists do. Like many great mystics, he was especially drawn to the Song of Solomon, on which he commented in many sermons, forming a series that continued throughout most of his career; and this commentary, which always remained incomplete, described all the degrees of divine love, up to the supreme peace that the soul attains in ecstasy. The ecstatic state as he understood it, and which he certainly experienced, is a sort of death to the things of the world; along with such sensible images, all natural feeling disappears; everything is pure and spiritual within the soul itself, as in its love. This mysticism was naturally reflected in the dogmatic treatises of Saint Bernard, the title of one of the principal ones, *De diligendo Deo* [On Loving

God], indeed showing clearly the place that love held in it; but one would be wrong to think that this was to the detriment of true intellectuality. If the Abbot of Clairvaux always wished to remain a stranger to the vain subtleties of the scholastics, it was because he had no need of the laborious artifices of dialectic; he would resolve in a single blow the most arduous questions because his thinking did not proceed by a long series of discursive operations; what the philosophers strove to reach by a circuitous route and by groping their way, he arrived at immediately, through the intellectual intuition without which no real metaphysics is possible, and without which one can only grasp at a shadow of the truth.

It is essential to call attention to one last trait in the character of Saint Bernard: the eminent place held in his life and in his writings by the cult of the Holy Virgin, something that has produced a flowering of legends and that may be why Bernard has remained so very popular. He loved to give to the Holy Virgin the name of Our Lady [*Notre Dame*], a usage that has become general since his time and that seems in large part due to his influence; it is as if he were, one might say, a true 'knight of Mary', and he truly regarded her as his 'Lady' in the chivalric sense of this word. If one compares the role that love plays in his teaching with the role it also plays, in a more or less symbolic manner, in the conceptions proper to the Orders of Chivalry, one will easily understand why we took care to mention his family's noble origins. Though he became a monk, Bernard remained always a knight, as did all those of his lineage; and by that very fact one could say that he was in a way predestined to play, as he did in so many instances, the role of intermediary, of conciliator and arbiter between the religious power and the political power, because there was in his person something of the nature of both. Monk and knight at one and the same time: these two traits were those of the members of the 'militia of God', of the Order of the Temple; they were also, and first of all, those of the author of their Rule, the great saint who was called the last of the Fathers of the Church, and whom some would see, not without some reason, as the prototype of Galahad, the perfect knight without blemish, the victorious hero of the 'quest for the Holy Grail'.

TRADITIONAL FORMS AND COSMIC CYCLES

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1

SOME REMARKS ON THE DOCTRINE OF COSMIC CYCLES

WE HAVE OFTEN BEEN ASKED, regarding allusions we have been led to make here and there to the Hindu doctrine of cosmic cycles and its equivalents in other traditions, whether we might give, if not a complete explanation, at least an overview sufficient to reveal its broad outlines. In truth, this seems an almost impossible task, not only because the question is very complex in itself, but especially owing to the extreme difficulty of expressing these things in a European language and in a way that is intelligible to the present-day Western mentality, which has had no practice whatsoever with this kind of thinking. All that is really possible, in our opinion, is to try to clarify a few points with remarks such as those that follow, which can only raise suggestions about the meaning of the doctrine in question rather than to really explain it.

In the most general sense of the term, a cycle must be considered as representing the process of development of some state of manifestation, or, in the case of minor cycles, of one of the more or less restricted and specialized modalities of that state. Moreover, in virtue of the law of correspondence which links all things in universal Existence, there is necessarily and always a certain analogy, either among different cycles of the same order or among the principal cycles and their secondary divisions. This is what allows us to use one and the same mode of expression when speaking about them, although this must often be understood only symbolically, for the very essence of all symbolism is precisely founded on the analogies

and correspondences which really exist in the nature of things. We allude here especially to the 'chronological' form under which the doctrine of cycles is presented: since a *Kalpa* represents the total development of a world, that is to say of a state or degree of universal Existence, it is obvious that one cannot speak literally about its duration, computed according to some temporal measure, unless this duration relates to a state of which time is one of the determining conditions, as in our world. Everywhere else, this duration and the succession that it implies can have only a purely symbolic value and must be transposed analogically, for temporal succession is then only an image, both logical and ontological, of an 'extra-temporal' series of causes and effects. On the other hand, since human language cannot directly express any condition other than those of our own state, such a symbolism is by that very fact sufficiently justified and must be regarded as perfectly natural and normal.

We do not intend to deal just now with the most extensive cycles, such as the *Kalpas*; we will limit ourselves to those which develop within our *Kalpa*, that is, the *Manvantaras* and their subdivisions. At this level, the cycles have a character that is at once cosmic and historical, for they particularly concern terrestrial humanity, while at the same time being closely linked to events occurring in our world but outside of the history of humanity. There is nothing to surprise us here, for the idea of seeing human history as somehow isolated from all the rest is exclusively modern and sharply opposed to what is taught by all traditions, which on the contrary unanimously affirm a necessary and constant correlation between the cosmic and the human orders.

The *Manvantaras*, or eras of successive *Manus*, are fourteen in number, forming two septenary series of which the first includes both past *Manvantaras* and our present one, and the second future *Manvantaras*. These two series, of which one relates to the past as well as to the present that is its immediate result, and the other to the future, can be linked with those of the seven *Svargas* and the seven *Patalas*, which, from the point of view of the hierarchy of the degrees of existence or of universal manifestation, represent the states respectively higher and lower than the human state, or anterior and posterior with respect to that state if one places oneself at

the viewpoint of the causal connection of the cycles symbolically described, as always, under the analogy of a temporal succession. This last point of view is obviously the most important here, for it enables us to see within our *Kalpa* a kind of reduced image of the totality of the cycles of universal manifestation according to the analogical relation we mentioned earlier; and in this sense one could say that the succession of *Manvantaras* in a way marks a reflection of other worlds in ours. To confirm this relationship, one could also note that the words *Manu* and *Loka* are both used as symbolic designations for the number 14; to say that this is simply a 'coincidence' would be to give proof of a complete ignorance of the profound reasons inherent in all traditional symbolism.

Yet another correspondence with the *Manvantaras* concerns the seven *Dvipas* or 'regions' into which our world is divided. Although according to the proper meaning of the word that designates them these are represented as islands or continents distributed in a certain way in space, one must be careful not to take this literally and to regard them simply as different parts of present-day earth; in fact, they 'emerge' in turns and not simultaneously, which is to say that only one of them is manifested in the sensible domain over the course of a certain period. If that period is a *Manvantara*, one will have to conclude that each *Dvipa* will have to appear twice in the *Kalpa* or once in each of the just mentioned septenary series; and from the relationship of these two series, which correspond to one another inversely as do all similar cases, particularly the *Svargas* and the *Patalas*, one can deduce that the order of appearance for the *Dvipas* will likewise have to be, in the second series, the inverse of what it was in the first. In sum, this is a matter of different 'states' of the terrestrial world rather than 'regions' properly speaking; the Jambu-Dulpa really represents the entire earth in its present state, and if it is said to extend to the south of Meru, the 'axial' mountain around which our world revolves, this is because Meru is identified symbolically with the North Pole, so that the whole earth is really situated to the south with respect to it. To explain this more completely it would be necessary to develop the symbolism of the directions of space according to which the *Dvipas* are distributed, as well as correspondences existing between this spatial symbolism and the

temporal symbolism on which the whole doctrine of cycles rests; but since we cannot here go into these considerations, which alone would require a whole volume, we must be content with these summary indications, which can be easily completed by all who already have some knowledge of what is involved.

This way of envisaging the *Kalpas* is also confirmed by concordant data from other traditions which also speak of 'seven lands', particularly Islamic esoterism and the Hebrew Kabbalah. Thus in the latter, even while these 'seven lands' are outwardly represented by as many divisions of the land of Canaan, they are related to the reigns of the 'seven kings of Edom' which clearly correspond to the seven *Mamis* of the first series; and all are included in the 'Land of the Living' which represents the complete development of our world considered as realized permanently in its principial state. We can note here the coexistence of two points of view, one of succession, which refers to manifestation in itself, and the other of simultaneity, which refers to its principle or to what one could call its 'archetype'; and at root the correspondence between these two points of view is in a certain way equivalent to that between temporal symbolism and spatial symbolism, to which we just alluded in connection with the *Kalpas* of the Hindu tradition.

In Islamic esoterism, the 'seven lands' appear, perhaps even more explicitly, as so many tabaqut or 'categories' of terrestrial existence, which coexist and in a way interpenetrate, but only one of which is presently accessible to the senses while the others are in a latent state and can only be perceived exceptionally and under certain special conditions; these too are manifested outwardly in turn, during the different periods that succeed one another in the course of the total duration of this world. On the other hand, each of the 'seven lands' is governed by a Qutb or 'Pole', which thus corresponds very clearly to the Mami of the period during which his land is manifested; and these seven Aqtub are subordinate to the supreme 'Pole' just as (the different *Mamis* are subordinate to the *Adi-Mami* or primordial *Mami*; but because these 'seven lands' coexist, they also in a certain respect exercise their functions in a permanent and simultaneous way. It is hardly necessary to point out that the designation of 'Pole' is closely related to the 'polar' symbolism of Merit which we just

mentioned, for Meru itself has in any case its exact equivalent in the mountain of Quf in Islamic tradition. Let us also add that the seven terrestrial 'Poles' are considered to be reflections of the seven celestial 'Poles' which preside respectively over the seven planetary heavens; and this naturally evokes the correspondence with the *Svargas* in Hindu doctrine, which shows in sum the perfect concordance in this regard between the two traditions.

We shall now consider the divisions of a *Manvantara*, that is to say the *Yugas*, which are four in number. First of all, and without dwelling on it at length, let us point out that this quaternary division of a cycle is susceptible of multiple applications and that it is in fact found in many cycles of a more particular order. One can cite as examples the four seasons of the year, the four weeks of the lunar month, and the four ages of human life; here too there is correspondence with a spatial symbolism, in this case principally related to the four cardinal points. On the other hand, we have often called attention to the obvious equivalence of the four *Yugas* with the four ages of gold, silver, bronze, and iron as they were known to Greco-Latin antiquity, in both cases, each period is marked by a degeneration in regard to the age that preceded it; and this, which is directly opposed to the idea of 'progress' as understood by the modern world, is very simply explained by the fact that every cyclical development, that is in sum every process of manifestation, quite truly constitutes a 'descent' since it necessarily implies a gradual distancing from the principle, and this is moreover the real meaning of the 'fall' in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

From one *Yuga* to the next the degeneration is accompanied by a decrease in duration, and this is thought to influence the length of human life; and what is most important in this respect are the ratios that exist between the respective durations of these different periods. If the total duration of the *Manvantara* is represented by 10, that of the *Krita-Yuga* or *Satya-Yuga* is 4, that of the *Treta-Yuga* is 3, that of the *Dvapara-Yuga* is 2, and that of the *Kali-Yuga* is 1. These numbers are also those belonging to the feet of the symbolic bull of *Dharma* which are represented as resting on the earth during the same periods. The division of the *Manvantara* is therefore carried out according to the formula $10=4 + 3 + 2 + 1$, which is, in reverse,

that of the Pythagorean *Tetraktys*: $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$. This last formula corresponds to what the language of Western Hermeticism calls the 'circling of the square', and the other to the opposite problem of the 'squaring of the circle', which expresses precisely the relation of the end of a cycle to its beginning, that is, the integration of its total development. Here there is an entire symbolism both arithmetic and geometric which we can only indicate in passing so as not to digress too far from our principal subject.

As for the numbers given in different texts for the duration of the *Manvantara* and consequently for that of the *Yuyas*, it must be understood that they are not to be regarded as a 'chronology' in the ordinary sense of the word, we mean as expressing a literal number of years; and this is also why certain apparent differences in these numbers do not really imply any contradiction. Generally speaking, it is only the number 4,320 that is to be considered in these figures, for a reason that we shall explain later, and not the many zeros that follow it, which may well be meant to lead astray those who wish to devote themselves to certain calculations. At first glance, such a precaution might seem strange, and yet it is easily explained: if the real duration of the *Manvantara* were known, and if in addition its starting-point were exactly determined, anyone could without difficulty draw therefrom deductions allowing him to foresee certain future events. But no orthodox tradition has ever encouraged inquiries by means of which someone might see more or less into the future, since in practice such a knowledge has more drawbacks than real advantages. This is why the starting-point and the duration of the *Manvantara* have always been more or less carefully concealed, either by adding or subtracting a given number of years from the real dates, or by multiplying or dividing the durations of the cyclical periods so as to conserve only their exact proportions; and we will add that certain correspondences have also sometimes been reversed for similar reasons.

If the duration of the *Manvantara* is 4,320, those of the four *Yuyas* will respectively be 1,728, 1,296, 864, and 432; but by what number must we multiply them to obtain an expression of these durations in years? It is easy to see that all the cyclical numbers are directly related to the geometric division of the circle; thus $4,320 = 360 \times 12$.

Besides, there is nothing arbitrary or purely conventional in this division because, for reasons relating to the correspondence between arithmetic and geometry, it is normal for it to be carried out according to multiples of 3, 9, and 12, whereas decimal division is that best suited for the straight line. And yet this observation, although truly fundamental, would not enable us to go very far in determining cyclical periods if we did not also know that in the cosmic order their principal basis is the astronomical period of the precession of the equinoxes, of which the duration is 25,920 years, so that the displacement of the equinoctial points is one degree in 72 years. This number 72 is precisely a sub-multiple of $4,320 = 72 \times 60$, and 4,320 is in turn a sub-multiple of $25,920 = 4,320 \times 6$. The fact that we find in the precession of the equinoxes numbers linked to the division of the circle is yet another proof of its truly natural character; but the question that now arises is this: what multiple or sub-multiple of the astronomical period in question really corresponds to the duration of the *Manvantara*?

The period that appears most frequently in different traditions is in truth not so much the precession of equinoxes as its half; actually, it is this that corresponds in particular to the 'great year' of the Persians and the Greeks which is often expressed by approximation as either 12,000 or 13,000 years, its exact duration being 12,960 years. Given the very particular importance which is thus attributed to that period, it is to be presumed that the *Manvantara* will have to comprise a whole number of these 'great years'; but what will that number be? Here we find, elsewhere than in Hindu tradition, at least a precise indication which this time seems plausible enough to be accepted literally: among the Chaldeans, the duration of the reign of *Xisuthros*, which is manifestly identical to *Vaivasvata*, the *Manu* of the present era, is fixed at 64,800 years, or exactly five 'great years'. Let us note incidentally that the number 5, being that of the bhutas or elements of the sensory world, must necessarily have a special importance from the cosmological point of view, something that tends to confirm the reality of such an evaluation; perhaps there is reason to consider a correlation between the five bhutas and the successive five 'great years' in question, all the more so in fact since in the ancient traditions of Central America one encounters

an explicit association of the elements with certain cyclical periods; but this question would require closer examination. However that may be, if such is indeed the real duration of the *Manvantara*, and if we continue to take as a base the number 4,320, which is equal to the third part of the 'great year', it is then by 15 that this number will have to be multiplied. On the other hand, the five 'great years' will naturally be distributed unequally but according to simple relationships among the four *Yugas*: the *Krita-Yuga* will contain 2 of them, the *Treta-Yuga* 1/2, the *Dvapara-Yuga* 1, and the *Kali-Yuga* 1/4; these numbers are of course half of those we previously used when representing the duration of the *Manvantara* by 10. Expressed in ordinary years, these same durations of the four *Yugas* will be respectively 25,920, 19,440, 12,960, and 6,480 years, forming the total of 64,800 years; and it will be recognized that these numbers are at least within perfectly plausible limits and may very well correspond to the true chronology of present terrestrial humanity.

We will end these considerations here, for as concerns the starting-point of our *Manvantara* and consequently the exact point in its course where we are presently situated, we do not intend to risk an attempt to determine them. By all traditional data we know that we have been in the *Kali-Yuga* for a long time already; and we can say without fear of error that we are in an advanced phase, a phase whose description in the *Puranas* corresponds in the most striking fashion to the characteristics of our present epoch. But would it not be imprudent to wish to be more exact, and would this not inevitably end in the kinds of predictions to which traditional doctrine has, not without good reasons, posed so many obstacles?

REVIEWS

MIRCEA ELIADE: *Le Mythe de l'Eternel Retour: Archetypes et repetition* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961) [77ie *Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991)]. The title of this small volume, which does not exactly correspond to its contents, does not appear to us to be a very happy one, for it inevitably makes one think of the modern notions to which this term 'eternal return' is usually applied

and which, besides confusing eternity with indefinite duration, imply the existence of a repetition that is impossible and clearly contrary to the true traditional notion of cycles, according to which there is only correspondence and not identity. In the final analysis there is in the case of the macrocosmic order a difference comparable to that which exists in the microcosmic order between the idea of reincarnation and that of the passage of the being through the multiple states of manifestation. But this is not in fact what Eliade's book is about, and what he means by 'repetition' is nothing other than the reproduction or rather the ritual imitation of 'what was in the beginning'. In an integrally traditional civilization, everything proceeds from 'celestial archetypes'; thus cities, temples, and dwellings are always erected according to a cosmic model; another related question, one which at root differs much less from the former than the author seems to think, is that of symbolic identification with the 'Center'. These are things about which we ourselves have often spoken;¹ Eliade has brought together numerous examples referring to the most diverse traditions which show quite well the universality and, we could say, the 'normality' of these ideas. He then goes on to the examination of rites properly so called, always from the same point of view; but there is one point on which we must state a serious reservation: he speaks of 'archetypes of profane activities', whereas precisely, as long as a civilization preserves an integrally traditional character, there are no profane activities. It seems to us that what he so designates is what has become profane as a result of a degeneration, which is something quite different, for then, and by that very fact, there can no longer be a question of 'archetypes', for the profane is such only because it is no longer linked to any transcendent principle. Besides, there is certainly nothing profane in the examples he gives (ritual dances, anointing of a king, traditional medicine). In what follows, the emphasis is more particularly on the question of the annual cycle and the rites linked to it. By virtue of the correspondence that exists between all cycles, the year itself may naturally be taken as a reduced image of the great cycles of universal manifestation, and this is what explains in particular that its beginning may be considered to have a 'cosmogonic' character. The idea of a 'regeneration of time', which the author interjects here, is not very clear, but it seems that what must be understood by

1. See especially *The King of the World*. Eo.

this is the divine conservation of the manifested world, with which the ritual action is a true collaboration by virtue of the relations existing between the cosmic order and the human order. What is regrettable is that despite all of this he thinks he is obliged to speak of 'beliefs', whereas what is involved is the application of a very real knowledge and of traditional sciences which have a value altogether different from that of the profane sciences. And why must he also, in another concession to modern prejudices, excuse himself for having 'avoided all sociological or ethnographic interpretation', whereas on the contrary we could not praise the author too much for this abstention, especially when we recall to what extent other studies have been spoiled by such interpretations?

The last chapters are less interesting from our point of view, and they are in any case the most questionable, for what they contain is no longer a description of traditional ideas but rather Eliade's own reflections, from which he tries to draw a sort of 'philosophy of history'. Moreover, we do not see how cyclical conceptions would be opposed in any way to history (he even uses the expression 'refutation of history'), and in truth history cannot really have meaning except insofar as it expresses the unfolding of events within the course of the human cycle, although profane historians are no doubt scarcely capable of conceiving this. If the idea of 'misfortune' can in one sense be attached to 'historical existence', it is precisely because the course of the cycle is accomplished according to a descending movement. One must add that the final remarks on the 'terror of history' seem to us rather too much inspired by 'current events'.

GASTON GEORGEL: *Les Rythmes dans l'Histoire* (Belfort: Gaston Georgel, 1937). This book constitutes an essay on the application of cosmic cycles to the history of peoples and to the phases of growth and decadence in civilizations. It is truly a pity that in undertaking such a work the writer did not have at his disposal more complete traditional data, and that he knew some only through rather doubtful intermediaries who mingled with them their own imaginings. Nevertheless, he has seen that the essential thing to consider is the period of the precession of the equinoxes and its division, even though he adds some complications that seem of little use: but the terminology he adopts to designate certain secondary periods betrays a number of

misunderstandings and confusions. Thus, the twelfth part of the precession certainly cannot be called a 'cosmic year'; that name would be much more fitting either for the entire period, or even more to its half, which is precisely the 'great year' of the ancients. On the other hand, the period of 25,765 years is probably borrowed from some hypothetical calculation of modern astronomers, but the duration traditionally indicated is 25,920 years. A singular consequence of this is that the author is sometimes led to take the exact numbers for certain divisions, for example 2,160 and 540, but then considers them as only 'approximate'. Let us add still one more observation on this subject: he thinks he has found a confirmation of the cycle of 539 years in certain biblical texts which suggest the number $77 \times 7 = 539$; but precisely here he should have taken $77 \times 7 + 1 = 540$, even if only by analogy with the jubilee year, which was not the 49th but really the 50th, or $7 \times 7 + 1 = 50$. As for applications, if there are correspondences and relationships that are not only curious but really worthy of note, we must say there are others which are much less striking or which even seem somewhat forced, to the point of recalling unfortunately the childishness of certain occultists. There would also be quite a few reservations to be made on other points, for example the fanciful figures set forth for the chronology of ancient civilizations. On the other hand, it would have been interesting to see whether the writer could have continued to get results of the same kind by expanding his field of inquiries, for there have been and still are many other peoples than those he considers. In any case, we do not think it possible to establish a general 'synchronism' because, for different peoples, the starting-point must likewise be different; and moreover, different civilizations do not simply succeed one another, they also coexist, as one can still witness today. In conclusion, the author has thought it well to indulge in several attempts at 'foreseeing the future', within rather restricted limits; that is one of the dangers of this kind of research, especially in our time, where so-called 'prophecies' are in such vogue. Certainly, no tradition has ever encouraged such things and it is even in order to obstruct them as much as possible rather than for any other reason that certain aspects of the doctrine of cycles have always been shrouded in obscurity.

GASTON GEORGE: Les Rythmes dans l'Histoire. (Besanton: Editions 'Servir', 1947). We reviewed this book when the first edition appeared (October 1937 issue); at the time, the author, as he indicates in the foreword of this new edition, knew almost nothing of the traditional data concerning cycles, to the point that it was only by good fortune that, starting from a strictly empirical viewpoint, he happened to suspect the importance of the precession of the equinoxes. The few remarks we made then had the consequence of turning him toward more detailed studies, for which we can certainly only congratulate ourselves, and we must express our thanks to him for what he is willing to say on our behalf. He has therefore modified and completed his work on many points, adding new chapters or paragraphs, one a history of the question of cycles, correcting various inaccuracies, and suppressing the doubtful considerations that he at first accepted on faith from occultist writers because he was able to compare them with more authentic data. We regret only that he forgot to replace the numbers 539 and 1,078 years with the correct numbers 540 and 1,080, something which the foreword however seemed to announce, all the more so because he did indeed rectify 2,156 years with 2,160, which introduces a certain apparent disagreement between the chapters dealing with these different cycles that are multiples of one another. It is also somewhat unfortunate that he retained the expressions 'cosmic year' and 'cosmic season' to designate periods much too short to really apply correctly (2,160 and of 540 years), which are rather, so to speak, only 'months' and 'weeks', all the more so since the name 'month' fits rather well for the course of a zodiacal sign in the precession of the equinoxes, and that, on the other hand, the number $540 = 77 \times 7 - 1$ has, like the number of (he sevenfold 'week of years' of the jubilee ($50 = 7 \times 7 + 1$), of which it is so to speak an 'extension', a particular link with the septenary. In any case, these are almost the only detailed criticisms that we have to make this time, and the book as a whole is very worthy of interest and favorably distinguished from certain other works on cyclical theories which put forth far more ambitious and assuredly little justified claims. Naturally, he restricts himself to what we can call the 'minor historical cycles', and this only within the framework of the Western and Mediterranean civilizations; but we know that Georget is presently preparing, in the same order of ideas, other works of a more general character, and we hope that he may soon be able to bring these also to a successful conclusion.

PART II

1

ATLANTIS AND HYPERBOREA

IN *Atlantis* (June 1929), Paul Le Cour comments on a footnote from our article of last May,¹ in which we maintained the distinction between Hyperborea and Atlantis against those who would conflate them and speak of an 'Hyperborean Atlantis'. In truth, although this expression seems to belong properly to Le Cour, our remarks were not directed only at him, for he is not alone in confusing the two; the same confusion can be found in Herman Wirth, author of an important work on the origins of humanity (recently published in Germany as *Der Aufgang der Menschheit*), who consistently uses the term 'north-Atlantic' to designate the region from which the primordial tradition emerged. On the other hand, Le Cour is, to our knowledge, the only one who claims that we affirm the existence of an 'Hyperborean Atlantis'. If we did not single him out for this, it is because questions of persons are of little importance to us, our only concern being to put our readers on guard against a false interpretation, whatever its source may be. We wonder how Le Cour reads us; we wonder more than ever, for he now has us saying that the North Pole was originally 'not the one of today, but the adjoining region, it seems, of Iceland and Greenland.' Where could he have found that? We are absolutely certain that we have never written a single word on this matter and that we have never made the slightest allusion to the question, which is in any case secondary from our point of view,

1. This article, entitled 'Thunderbolts', appeared in the May 1929 issue of *Le Voile d'Isis*, and forms chap. 27 of *Symbols of Sacred Science*.

of a possible displacement of the pole since the beginning of our *Manvantara*.² With all the more reason we have never specified its original location, which would be, in any event, on many grounds quite difficult to determine with respect to present-day regions.

Le Cour goes on to say that 'in spite of his [Guenon's] Hinduism, he admits that the origin of the traditions is Western.' We do not admit this at all, quite the contrary, for we say that it is polar, and as far as we know the pole is no more Western than it is Eastern; and we persist in maintaining, as we did in the note just referred to, that North and West are two different cardinal points. It is only in a later epoch that the seat of the primordial tradition, transferred to other regions, was able to become either Western or Eastern—Western for certain periods and Eastern for other; and in any case, the last transferal was surely to the East and already completed long before the beginning of the times called 'historic' (the only times accessible to the investigations of 'profane' history). We should note, moreover, that it is not at all 'in spite of his Hinduism' (in using this word Le Cour probably spoke more correctly than he knew), but on the contrary because of it that we consider the origin of the traditions to be Nordic, and even more exactly to be polar, since this is expressly affirmed in the Veda as well as in other sacred books.³ The land where the sun 'circled the horizon without setting' must have in fact been located very near the pole if not at the pole itself; it is also said that at a later date the representatives of the tradition were transported to a region where the longest day was twice as long as the shortest, but this already involves a subsequent phase which, geographically, clearly has nothing to do with Hyperborea.

Le Cour may be right in distinguishing between a southern Atlantis and a northern Atlantis, although they must not have been

2. This question seems to be linked to that of the inclination of the terrestrial axis, which, according to certain traditional ideas, would not have existed from the beginning, but was a consequence of what in Western language is called the 'Fall of Man'.

3. Those who want precise references here can find them in the remarkable work of B.G. Tilak, *The Arctic Home in the Veda*, which seems unfortunately to have remained completely unknown in Europe, no doubt because its author was a non-Westernized Hindu.

separate originally; but it is no less true that even the northern Atlantis had nothing hyperborean about it. As we freely acknowledge, what greatly complicates the issue is that over time the same designations have been applied to very different regions, and not only to successive locations of the traditional primordial center, but even to the secondary centers that proceeded more or less directly from it. We pointed out this difficulty in our study *The King of the World*, where, on the very page to which Le Cour refers, we wrote:

But it is also necessary to distinguish the Atlantean Tula [the original place of the Toltecs, which was probably situated in Northern Atlantis] from the Hyperborean Tula, the latter then truly representing the original and supreme center for the totality of the present Manvantara, it was this that was the 'sacred isle' par excellence, having originally been situated quite literally at the pole.... All the other sacred isles, which everywhere bear names of identical meaning, were only its images; and this applies even to the spiritual center of the Atlantean tradition, which only presided over a secondary historical cycle subordinate to the *Manvantara*.

To which we added this note:

A major difficulty in determining precisely the meeting-point of the Atlantean and the Hyperborean traditions results from various name substitutions that have given rise to many confusions; but in spite of everything the question is perhaps not entirely insoluble.⁴

4. [*The King of the World*, chap. 10, and note 2.] In regard to the Atlantean *Tula*, we think it worth reproducing here a piece of information that we gathered from a geography column in the *Journal des Debats* (January 22, 1929), entitled 'Les Indiens de l'isthme de Panama', whose importance certainly escaped even the author himself: 'In 1925, a great party of the Cuna Indians rose up, killed the Panamanian police that lived in their territory, and founded the Independent Republic of *Tuli*, whose flag was a *swastika* on an orange background with a red border. This republic still exists at the present time.' This seems to indicate that, in regard to the traditions of ancient America, much more still exists than one might be tempted to believe.

In speaking of this meeting-point, we were thinking chiefly of Druidism; and now, precisely on this subject, we find in Atlantis (July-August, 1929) another note that proves how difficult it sometimes is to make oneself understood. On the subject of our June article on the 'triple enclosure',⁵ Le Cour writes: 'It limits the scope of this emblem to make it only a Druidic symbol; it is likely to be earlier and to radiate beyond the Druidic world.' Now we are so far from making it only a Druidic symbol that in our article, after having noted the examples Le Cour himself gathered from Italy and Greece, we said:

The fact that this same figure is found elsewhere than among the Celts would indicate that there were, in other traditional forms, hierarchies constituted on this same model [of the Druidic hierarchy], which is perfectly normal.

As for the question of anteriority, it would be necessary first of all to know what precise epoch Druidism dates to, and it probably dates back earlier than is ordinarily supposed, all the more in that the Druids possessed a tradition of which a significant part was indisputably of hyperborean provenance.

We will take this occasion to make a further remark which has its own importance. We say 'hyperborean' to conform with the usage that has prevailed since the Greeks; but the use of this word shows that they, at least in the 'classical' epoch, had already lost the sense of the primitive designation. It would, in fact, suffice to say 'Boreas', a word strictly equivalent to the Sanskrit *Varciha*, or rather, when it involves an area of land, to its feminine form *Varahr*, it is the 'land of the wild boar', which also became the 'land of the bear' at a certain epoch during the period of ascendancy of the Kshatriyas, to which *Parashnrtima*⁶ put an end.

5. The article, entitled 'The Triple Enclosure of the Druids', appeared in *Le Voile d'Isis* in 1929, and forms chap, *not Symbols of Sacred Science*.

6. This name *Varalli* is applied to the 'sacred land' and symbolically likened to a certain aspect of the *Shakti* of *Vishnu*, the latter then being envisaged especially in his third *avatma*. There would be much to say on this subject, and perhaps we will someday return to it. This same name has never been used to designate Europe, as Saint Yves d'Alveydre seems to have believed; on the other hand, one might have

To finish this clarification, it remains for us to say a few words on three or four questions that Le Cour raises incidentally in his two notes. The first is a reference to the *swastika*, which he says we 'make the sign of the pole.' Without the slightest animosity, we will here ask Le Cour not to liken our case to his, for it is necessary to tell things as they are: we consider him a 'seeker' (and this is not in any way to lessen his merit) who offers explanations according to his personal views, which are somewhat adventurous at times; and that is altogether his right since he is not attached to any living tradition and is not in possession of any facts received by direct transmission. We could say, in other words, that he is doing archeology, whereas we are doing initiatic science, two points of view which, even when they touch upon the same subjects, cannot in any way coincide. We do not 'make' of the *swastika* the sign of the pole; we say that it is and has always been this, and that this is its true traditional meaning, which is an entirely different thing, for this is a fact that neither Le Cour nor we ourselves can change. Le Cour, who evidently can provide only more or less hypothetical interpretations, claims that the *swastika* is 'only a symbol related to an ideal lacking loftiness';⁷ that is his way of seeing things, but it is nothing more than that, and so we are all the more reluctant to discuss it in that it represents only a sentimental opinion; 'lofty' or not, an 'ideal' is to us something rather empty, and in reality it is a question of things that are much more 'positive', as we would readily say if this word were not so abused.

Le Cour, on the other hand, does not appear satisfied with the note we devoted to an article by one of his collaborators who wished to see at all costs an opposition between East and West, and who

viewed these questions a little more clearly in the West if Fabre d'Olivet and those who followed him had not hopelessly entangled the story of *Parashurima* with that of *Ramachandra*, that is, the sixth and the seventh *avatars*, who however are quite distinct in every respect.

7. We would suppose that in writing these words Le Cour had in mind modern and not traditional interpretations of the *swastika*, like those conceived by the German 'racists', for example, who in effect claimed to take possession of this emblem, dressing it up, moreover, with the baroque and trivial appellation of *hakenkreuz*, or 'hooked cross'.

showed, with regard to the East, an altogether deplorable exclusivism.⁸ He writes some astonishing things concerning this:

Rene Guenon, who is a pure logician, can only investigate the purely intellectual side of things, concerning the East as well as the West, as is proven by his writings; he demonstrates this again in declaring that Agni is sufficient unto itself (see *Regnabit*, April 1926), and in ignoring the duality Aor-Agni, to which we will often return, for this duality is the cornerstone of the edifice of the manifested world.

Although we are ordinarily indifferent to what is written about us, we cannot let it pass that we are a 'pure logician' when on the contrary we consider logic and dialectic to be simple expository instruments, as such useful at times, but of an entirely external character and without any interest in themselves. To repeat, we adhere only to the initiatic point of view, and the rest, that is to say all that is only 'profane' knowledge, is entirely without value in our eyes. Although we often do speak of 'pure intellectuality', it is only because this expression has a completely different meaning for us than it does for Le Cour, who seems to confuse 'intelligence' with 'reason' and who even envisages an 'esthetic intuition', whereas there is no genuine intuition other than 'intellectual intuition', which is of a suprarational order. There is here, moreover, something formidable in quite another way than can be conceived by one who clearly has not the least suspicion of what 'metaphysical realization' might be, and who probably imagines that we are only a kind of theoretician, which proves once more that he has scarcely understood our writings, which, strange to say, nonetheless appear to preoccupy him.

As for the fable of Aor-Agni, of which we are not in the least 'ignorant', it would be good once and for all to make an end of these reveries, for which Le Cour is moreover not responsible: if 'Agni is sufficient unto itself,' it is for the good reason that in Sanskrit this

8. Le Cour reproaches us for having said that his collaborator 'certainly does not have the gift of languages,' which he finds 'an unfortunate statement'; alas, he quite simply confuses the 'gift of languages' with linguistic knowledge, whereas what is involved has absolutely nothing to do with erudition.

term designates fire in all its aspects, and those who claim the contrary demonstrate their total ignorance of Hindu tradition. We did not say anything other than this in the note in our *Regnabit* article, which we believe it necessary to reproduce here:

Knowing that among the readers of *Regnabit* there are some who are acquainted with the theories of a school whose works, though very interesting and quite admirable in many respects, nonetheless invite certain reservations, we must say here that we cannot accept the use of the terms *Aor* and *Agni* to designate the two complementary aspects of fire (light and heat). The first of these two words is in fact Hebrew, while the second is Sanskrit, and one cannot associate in this way terms borrowed from different traditions, whatever may be, among such traditions, the real concordances and even the fundamental identity hidden under their diversity of forms; we must not confuse 'syncretism' with true synthesis. Moreover, if *Aor* is exclusively light, *Agni* is the igneous principle envisaged integrally (the Latin *ignis* being exactly the same word), and therefore light and heat together; the restriction of this term to the second aspect is entirely arbitrary and unjustified.

We need hardly add that in writing this note we in no way had Le Cour in mind; we were thinking solely of Huron de Paray-le Monial, to whom the invention of this bizarre verbal association properly belongs. We see no reason to give any attention to a fantasy issuing from Sarachaga's too fertile imagination, entirely lacking in authority and without the slightest value from the traditional point of view, to which we strictly confine ourselves.⁹

Finally, Le Cour takes advantage of these circumstances to affirm once again the anti-metaphysical and anti-initiatic theory of Western 'individualism', which is after all his own concern and involves only himself; and he adds, with a note of pride indicating quite well that he is hardly free from individual contingencies: 'We maintain

9. This is the same Sarachaga who wrote *zwadisca* for *swastika*; one of his disciples, to whom we once made this observation, assured us that he must have had a reason for writing it thus—a justification we find a little too facile!

our point of view because we are ancestors in the domain of knowledge.' This claim is truly a little extraordinary—does Le Cour then believe himself to be so ancient? Not only are modern Westerners not the ancestors of anyone, they are not even legitimate descendants, for they have lost the key to their own tradition; it is not 'in the East that there has been deviation,' whatever might be said by those who are ignorant of everything pertaining to the Eastern doctrines. The 'ancestors', to take up Le Cour's word, are the effective holders of the primordial tradition; there could not be any others, and, in the present age, these will certainly not be found in the West.

2

THE PLACE OF THE ATLANTEAN TRADITION IN THE *MANVANTARA*

IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTER we pointed out the all too common confusion between the primordial tradition, which was originally 'polar' in the literal sense of the word and whose starting-point is the very same as the present *Manvantara*, and the derivative and secondary Atlantean tradition, which relates to a much more restricted period. We said then, as we have said before,¹ that this confusion could be explained in some measure by the fact that the subordinate spiritual centers were constituted in the image of the supreme center, and that the same appellations had been applied to them. Thus it is that the Atlantean *Tula*, a name preserved in Central America where it was brought by the Toltecs, must have been the seat of a spiritual power that was as it were an emanation from that of the Hyperborean *Tula*, and since the name *Tula* designates Libra [the Scales], its double application is closely related to the transfer of that same designation from the polar constellation of the Great Bear to the zodiacal sign which even today bears the name of the Scales. It is also to the Atlantean tradition that one should relate the transfer of the *sapta-riksha* (the symbolic dwelling place of the seven *Rishis*) at a certain epoch from the same Great Bear to the Pleiades, a constellation also formed of seven stars but in a zodiacal position; what leaves no doubt in this respect is that the Pleiades were said to be daughters of Atlas and, as such, also called Atlantides.

1. See particularly *The King of the World*.

All this is in accord with the geographical locations of the traditional centers, themselves linked to their own characteristics as well as to their respective places in the cyclical period, for everything here holds together more closely than could be supposed by those ignorant of the laws of certain correspondences. Hyperborea obviously corresponds to the North, and Atlantis to the West; and it is remarkable that although the very designations of these two regions are clearly distinct, they may also give rise to confusion since names of the same root were applied to both. In fact, one finds this root under diverse forms such as hiber, iber, or eber, and also ereb by transposition of letters, designating both the region of winter, that is, the North, and the region of evening or the setting sun, that is, the West, and the peoples who inhabit both; this fact is manifestly of the same order as those we just mentioned.

The very position of the Atlantean center on the East-West axis indicates its subordination with respect to the Hyperborean center, located at the North-South polar axis. Indeed, although in the complete system of the six directions of space the conjunction of these two axes forms what one can call a horizontal cross, the North-South axis must nonetheless be regarded as relatively vertical with respect to the East-West axis, as we have explained elsewhere.² In conformity with the symbolism of the annual cycle, one can still call the first of these two axes the solstitial axis and the second the equinoctial axis; and this helps us understand that the starting-point given to the year may not be the same in all the traditional forms. The starting-point that one can call normal, as being in direct conformity with primordial tradition, is the winter solstice; the fact of starting the year at one of the equinoxes indicates the attachment to a secondary tradition, such as the Atlantean tradition.

Since this last, on the other hand, is located in a region that corresponds to evening in the diurnal cycle, it must be regarded as belonging to one of the last divisions of the cycle of present terrestrial humanity and therefore as relatively recent; and in fact, without seeking to give precise details which would be difficult to justify, one can say that it certainly belongs to the second half of the present

2. See our study *The Symbolism of the Cross*.

Manvantara? Besides, just as the autumn of the year corresponds to evening in the day, one can see a direct allusion to the Atlantean world in the fact that the Hebraic tradition (whose name moreover betrays its Western origin) indicates that the world was created at the autumn equinox (the first day of the month of *Thishri* according to a certain transposition of the word *Bereshith*); and perhaps that is also the most immediate reason (there are others of a more profound order) for the enunciation of 'evening' (*ereb*) before 'morning' (*boker*) in the recital of the 'days' of Genesis.⁴ This is confirmed by the fact that the literal meaning of the name Adam is 'red', for the Atlantean tradition was precisely that of the red race; and it seems also that the biblical deluge corresponds directly to the cataclysm in which Atlantis disappeared and that, consequently, it must not be identified with the deluge of *Satyavrata* which, according to Hindu tradition, having issued directly from the primordial tradition, immediately preceded the beginning of our *Manvantara*? Of course, this meaning, which one can call historical, does not in any way exclude the other meanings; besides, one must never lose sight of the fact that, according to the analogy that exists between a principal cycle and the secondary cycles into which it is subdivided, all considerations of this order are always susceptible of applications at different degrees; but what we wish to say is that, although the Atlantean cycle was taken as a foundation in the Hebrew tradition, it seems that the transmission was made either by the mediation of the Egyptians—which at least has nothing improbable about it—or by altogether different means.

3. We think that the duration of the Atlantean civilization must have been equal to a 'great year' understood in the sense of the half-period of the precession of the equinoxes; as to the cataclysm that put an end to it, certain concordant data seem to indicate that it took place 7,200 years before the year 720 of the *Kali-Yuga*, a year which is itself the starting-point of a known era, but of which those who still use it today no longer seem to know the origin or the significance.

4. Among the Arabs, too, the custom is to count the hours of the day beginning with the *maghreb*, that is, the setting of the sun.

5. On the other hand, the deluges of *Deucalion* and *Ogyges* among the Greeks, seem to relate to periods even more limited and to partial cataclysms later than that of Atlantis.

If we make this last reservation, it is because it seems particularly difficult to determine how, after the disappearance of Atlantis, the current coming from the West was joined with another current descending from the North and proceeding directly from the primordial tradition, a junction from which was to result the constitution of the different traditional forms proper to the last part of the *Manvantam*. This is in any case not a matter of a reabsorption pure and simple in the primordial tradition of what went forth from it at an earlier epoch; it is a matter of a sort of fusion of forms previously differentiated to give birth to other forms adapted to new circumstances of time and place; and the fact that the two currents then appear in a way to be autonomous can further support the illusion of the independence of the Atlantean tradition. If one wished to research the conditions under which that fusion took place, it would doubtless be necessary to give particular importance to the Celts and the Chaldeans, whose name, which is the same, designated in reality not a particular people, but rather a sacerdotal caste; but who knows today what the Celtic and Chaldean traditions were, or even that of the ancient Egyptians? One cannot be overprudent when it comes to civilizations that have entirely disappeared, and it is certainly not the attempts at reconstitution to which profane archeologists devote themselves that are likely to shed light on the question; but it is nonetheless true that many vestiges of a forgotten past are coming out of the earth in our age, and perhaps not without reason. Without risking the slightest prediction on what can result from these discoveries, the possible importance of which those who make them are generally incapable of suspecting, we must certainly see in this a 'sign of the times'. Must not everything be found again at the end of the Minivmitara, to serve as a starting-point for the elaboration of the future cycle?

PART III

1

A FEW REMARKS ON THE NAME *ADAM*

IN THE LAST CHAPTER we said that the literal meaning of the name *Adam* is 'red', and that one can see in it one indication of the link of the Hebraic tradition to the Atlantean tradition, which was that of the red race. On the other hand, in his interesting article on 'blood and some of its mysteries', our colleague Argos envisages for this same name *Adam* a derivation that may seem different. After recalling the usual interpretation that it means 'drawn from the earth' (*adamah*), he asks whether it could not rather come from the word *dam*, 'blood'; but the difference is only apparent, since all these words really have one and the same root.

It is worth remarking first of all that from the linguistic point of view the usual etymology, which derives *Adam* from *adamah*, translated as 'earth', is impossible; the inverse derivation would be more plausible, but in fact the two substantives both come from the same verbal root *adam*, which means 'to be red'. *Adamah* is not, originally at least, the earth in general (*eretz*) or the element earth (*yabashah*, a word whose original meaning indicates 'dryness' as a quality characteristic of this element). It is properly red clay, which by its plastic properties is particularly apt to represent a certain potentiality, a capacity to receive forms; and the work of the potter has often been taken as a symbol of the production of manifested beings from the undifferentiated primordial substance. It is for the same reason that 'red earth' seems to have special importance in Hermetic symbolism, where it can be taken for one of the symbols of 'prime matter', although when understood in its literal sense it can only play that role in a very relative way since it is already endowed with definite

qualities. Let us add that the relationship between a designation of the earth and the name of Adam, taken as a type of humanity, is found in another form in Latin, where the word *humus*, 'earth', is also singularly close to *homo* and *humanis*. On the other hand, if we relate this same name *Adam* more particularly to the tradition of the red race, the latter corresponds, among the elements, to earth, as it does to the West among the cardinal points, and this last concordance further justifies what we said previously.

As for the word *dam*, 'blood' (which is common to Hebrew and Arabic), it is also derived from the same root *adama* blood is properly the red fluid, which is in fact its most immediately apparent characteristic. The kinship between this designation of blood and the name of *Adam* is therefore incontestable and is self-evident through derivation from a common root; but this derivation appears to be direct for both, and it is not possible, starting from the verbal root *adam*, to pass by way of the intermediary of *dam* to the name of *Adam*. One could, it is true, envisage things in another way, less strictly linguistic, and say that it is because of his blood that man is called 'red'. Such an explanation is not very satisfying because the fact of having blood is not confined to man but is common with the animal species, so that it cannot really serve to characterize him. In fact in Hermetic symbolism the color red is that of the animal kingdom, as the color green is that of the vegetable kingdom and the color white that of the mineral kingdom;² and this, as regards the color red, can be related precisely to blood considered as the seat, or rather the support, of animal vitality properly speaking. From another point of view, if one comes back to the more specific relation of the name of *Adam* with the red race, the latter does not seem [in spite of its color] susceptible of being related to a predominance of blood in its organic constitution, for the sanguine temperament corresponds to fire among the elements, and not to earth;

1. The initial *aleph*, which exists in the root, disappears in the derived word, which is not an exceptional fact. This *aleph* does not in any way constitute a prefix having an independent meaning, as is thought by Latonche, whose linguistic conceptions are too often fanciful.

2. On the symbolism of these three colors, see our study *The Esoterism of Dante*.

and it is the black race which corresponds to the element of *fire*, as it does to the *South* among the cardinal points.

Let us further point out that among the derivatives of the root *Adam* is the word *edom*, which means 'reddish-brown' and which in any case differs from the name of *Adam* only by vowel points. In the Bible, *Edom* is a surname of Esau, whence the name 'Edomites' given to his descendants, and that of Idumaea to the country they inhabited (and which in Hebrew is also *Edom*, but in the feminine). This recalls the 'seven kings of Edom' mentioned in the *Zohar*, and the close resemblance of *Edom* to *Adam* may be one of the reasons why this name is taken here to designate the vanished peoples, that is, those of the previous *Manvantaras*? We also see the relationship that this last point presents with the question of what has been called the 'pre-adamites': if one takes *Adam* as being the origin of the red race and of its particular tradition, it can simply be a matter of the other races that have preceded the former in the course of the present human cycle. If we take it in a more extended sense as the prototype for the whole of present humanity, it will be a case of these earlier humanities to which precisely the 'seven kings of Edom' refers. In all cases, the discussions to which this question has given rise appear to be quite vain, for there should not be any difficulty about it, and in fact there is none, at least for the Islamic tradition, in which there exists an *hadith* (saying of the Prophet) that 'before the Adam whom we know, God created a hundred thousand Adams' (that is, an undetermined number), which is as clear an affirmation as can be of the multiplicity of the cyclical periods and of the corresponding humanities.

Since we alluded to blood as the support of vitality, we will recall that, as we have already had occasion to explain in one of our works,⁴ the blood effectively constitutes one of the links of the corporeal organism with the subtle state of the living being, which is properly the 'soul' (the *nephesh chayah* ['living soul'] of Genesis), that is, in the etymological sense (*anima*), the principal animator or

3. See *The King of the World*, end of chap. 6.

4. Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta, chap. 14. Cf. also *The Spiritist Fallacy*, pp 116-119.

vivifying force of the being. The subtle state is called *Taijasa* in the Hindu tradition, by analogy with *tejas* or the igneous element; and as fire is qualitatively polarized into light and heat, the subtle state is linked to the corporeal state in two different and complementary ways: through the blood as to the caloric quality and through the nervous system as to the luminous quality. In fact, even simply from the physiological point of view, blood is the vehicle of animating heat; and this explains the correspondence we indicated above of the sanguine temperament with the element fire. On the other hand, one can say that, in fire, light represents the superior aspect and heat the inferior aspect: Islamic tradition teaches that angels were created from the 'divine fire' (or from the 'divine light'), and that those who rebelled as followers of *Iblis* lost their natural luminosity, retaining only a lowly heat.⁵ Consequently, one can say that the blood is directly related to the inferior aspect of the subtle state; and from this comes the interdiction of blood as nourishment, since its absorption conveys that which is grossest in animal vitality, and which, being assimilated and mingling intimately with the psychic elements of man, can actually have very serious consequences. From this also derives the frequent use of blood in the practices of magic and even of sorcery (as attracting the 'infernal' entities by similarity of nature). But on the other hand, this is also susceptible under certain conditions of a transposition to a superior order, whence derive rites, either religious or even initiatic (like the Mithraic 'taurobolus' [bull sacrifice]), involving animal sacrifices; and since in this respect it is said that the sacrifice of Abel is opposed to the unbloody sacrifice of Cain, we will perhaps return to this point on some future occasion.

5. This is indicated in the relationship which exists in Arabic between the words *nur*, 'light' and *akir*, 'fire' (in the sense of heat).

2

KABBALAH

THE TERM *Kabbalah*¹ in Hebrew means nothing else than 'tradition' in the most general sense, and although it generally designates the esoteric or initiatic tradition when used with no further precision, it also sometimes happens that it may be applied to the exoteric tradition itself.² This term can therefore designate any tradition; but since it belongs to the Hebraic language, it is normal to reserve it to the Hebrew tradition alone, as we have noted on other occasions, or, if one prefers perhaps a more exact way of speaking, to the specifically Hebrew form of the tradition. If we insist on this point, it is because we have noted that some people have a tendency to attach another meaning to this word, to make it the name of a special type of traditional knowledge, wherever this may be found, and this because they believe they have discovered in the word all sorts of more or less extraordinary things that really are not there at all. We do not intend to waste our time bringing up all these fanciful interpretations; it is more useful to clarify the original meaning of the word, which will suffice to reduce them to nothing, and this is all we propose to do here.

The root QBL in Hebrew and Arabic³ signifies essentially the relationship of two things placed face to face with one another, and

1. Although the initial 'K' has been retained in spelling *Kabbalah*, since this represents current practice, when other terms and roots are introduced, the letter 'Q' has been used, as in the original French and in common philological practice. Éd.

2. This has not failed to cause certain errors: thus, we have seen some claim to link the *Talmud* to the 'Kabbalah', understood in the esoteric sense; indeed, the *Talmud* is certainly from the 'tradition', but is purely exoteric, religious, and legal.

3. We call attention to the fact, which perhaps is not sufficiently noticed, that these two languages, which share most of their roots, can very often shed light on one another.

from this come all the varied meanings of the words derived from it, as for example those of encounter and even opposition. From this relationship also comes the idea of a passage from the one to the other of the two terms, whence ideas like those of receiving, welcoming, and accepting expressed in the two languages through the verb *qabal*, and Kabbalah derives directly from this, that is to say 'that which is received' or transmitted (in Latin *tradituni*) from one to the other. Here there appears, along with the idea of transmission, that of a succession; but it must be noted that the primary meaning of the root indicates a relationship that can be simultaneous as well as successive, spatial as well as temporal. And this explains the double meaning of the preposition *qabal* in Hebrew and *qabl* in Arabic, which signify both 'in front of' (that is, 'facing' in space) and 'before' (in time); and the close relationship of these two words, 'in front of' and 'before', even in French,⁴ clearly shows that there is always a certain analogy between these two different modalities, one in simultaneity and the other in succession. This also allows the resolution of an apparent contradiction: although the usual idea when it comes to a temporal relationship is that of anteriority, which relates therefore to the past, it also happens that derivatives from the same root designate the future (in Arabic *mustaqbal*, that is to say literally that toward which one goes, from *istaqbal*, 'to go toward'). But do we not also say in French that the past is 'before' [*avant*] us, and the future is 'in front of' [*devant*] us, which is quite comparable? In sum, it suffices in every case that one of the two terms considered be 'in front of' or 'before' the other, whether it be a question of a spatial relationship or a temporal one.

All these remarks can be further confirmed by the examination of another root, equally common to Hebrew and Arabic, and which has meanings very close to these, one could even say identical in great part, for even though their starting-point is clearly different the derived meanings converge. This is the root QDM, which in the first place expresses the idea of 'to precede' (*qadam*), whence all that refers not only to a temporal anteriority but to a priority of any order. Thus for words derived from this root one finds, besides the

4. In French, *devant* and *avant*. Ed.

original and ancient meanings (*qedem* in Hebrew, *qidm* or *qidam* in Arabic) that of primacy or precedence and even that of walking, advancing, or progression (in Arabic *taqaddum*);⁵ and here again, the preposition *qadam* in Hebrew and *quddam* in Arabic has the double meaning of 'in front of' and 'before'. But the principal meaning designates what is first, whether hierarchically or chronologically, thus the idea most frequently expressed is that of origin or primordially, and by extension, that of antiquity when the temporal order is involved. Thus, *qadmon* in Hebrew and *qadim* in Arabic signify 'ancient' in current usage, but when they are related to the domain of principles, they must be translated by 'primordial'.⁶

Concerning these same words, there are other reasons that are not without interest. In Hebrew, derivatives of the root QDM also serve to designate the East,⁷ that is, the direction of the 'origin' in the sense that it is there that the rising sun appears (*oriens*, from *oriri*, from which comes also *origo* in Latin), the starting-point of the diurnal course of the sun; and at the same time it is also the point used when 'orienting' oneself by turning toward the rising sun.⁸ Thus *qedem* also means 'East', and *qadmon* 'eastern'; but one should not see in these designations the affirmation of a primordially of the East from the point of view of the history of terrestrial humanity, since, as we have often said, the original tradition is Nordic, 'polar' even, and neither Eastern nor Western; moreover, the

5. From which comes the word *qadam*, meaning 'foot', that is, what serves for walking.

6. Al-insin al-qadim, that is, 'primordial Man' is, in Arabic, one of the designations of 'Universal Man' (synonym of *Al-insin al-kemil*, which is literally 'perfect or complete Man'); it is precisely the Hebraic *Adam Qadmon*.

7. In French, *Orient*, whence *oriental*, 'eastern'. As pointed out below, the Latin *oriri* means 'to rise'. Ed.

8. It is curious to note that Christ is sometimes called *Oriens*, a designation that can doubtless be related to the symbolism of the rising sun; but by reason of the double meaning we are indicating here it is possible that we should also, and even above all, relate it to the Hebrew *Elohi Qedem* or the expression designating the Word as the 'Ancient of Days', that is, He who is before the days, or the Principle of the cycles of manifestation represented symbolically as 'days' by various traditions (the 'days of Brahma' in the Hindu tradition, the 'days of the creation' in the Hebrew Genesis).

explanation we just indicated seems to us fully sufficient. We will add in this connection that these questions of 'orientation' are generally quite important in traditional symbolism and in rites based on that symbolism; they are, besides, more complex than one might think and can give rise to certain errors, for in the different traditional forms there are many different modes of orientation. When one turns toward the rising sun, as we have just said, the South is designated as the 'right side' (*yamin* or *yaman*; cf. the Sanskrit *dakshina*, which has the same meaning) and the North as the 'left side' (*shemol* in Hebrew, *shimal* in Arabic); but it also happens that orientation is established by turning toward the sun at the meridian, and the point before one is then no longer the East but the South. Thus in Arabic the South has among other names that of *qiblah*, and the adjective *qibli* means 'southern' [*meridional*]. These last terms bring us to the root QBL; the same word *qiblah* is also known in Islam to designate the ritual orientation; in all cases it is the direction one has in front of one; and what is also rather curious is that the spelling of the word *qiblah* is exactly identical to that of the Hebrew *qabbalah*.

Now, one can ask why it is that in Hebrew 'tradition' is designated by a word coming from the root QBL, and not from the root QDM. It is tempting to answer that since the Hebrew tradition constitutes only a secondary and derived form, a name evoking the idea of origin or primordality would not be fitting; but this argument does not seem to us to be essential, for directly or not, every tradition is linked to its origins and proceeds from the primordial tradition, and we have even seen elsewhere that every sacred language, including Hebrew itself and Arabic, is thought to represent the primordial language in some way. The real reason, it seems, is that the idea that must especially be highlighted here is that of a regular and uninterrupted transmission, which is therefore properly expressed by the word 'tradition', as we noted at the beginning. This transmission constitutes the 'chain' (*shelsheth* in Hebrew, *silsilah* in Arabic) that unites the present to the past and that must continue from the present into the future; it is the 'chain of tradition' (*shelsheth haqabbalah*) or the 'initiatic chain' which we recently had occasion to speak of; and it is also the determination of a 'direction' (we find

here the meaning of the Arabic *qiblah*) which, through the course of time, orients the cycle toward its end and joins it again with its origin, and which, extending even beyond these two extreme points by the fact that its principal source is timeless and 'non-human', links it harmoniously to the other cycles, forming with these a greater 'chain', that which certain Eastern traditions call the 'chain of worlds' into which by degrees is integrated the entire order of universal manifestation.

3

KABBALAH AND THE SCIENCE OF NUMBERS

WE HAVE OFTEN STRESSED the fact that the 'sacred sciences' belonging to a given traditional form are really an integral part of it, at least as secondary and subordinate elements, and are far from representing merely a kind of adventitious addition linked to it more or less artificially. It is indispensable to understand this point well and never to lose sight of it if we wish to penetrate, however little, into the true spirit of a tradition; and it is all the more necessary to call attention to this, as in our day one rather frequently notes among those who claim to study traditional doctrines a tendency not to take these sciences into account, either because of the special difficulties presented by their assimilation, or because, in addition to the impossibility of fitting them into the framework of modern classifications, their presence is particularly annoying for anyone who strives to reduce everything to exoteric points of view and interprets doctrines in terms of 'philosophy' or 'mysticism'. Without wishing to elaborate yet again on the futility of such studies undertaken 'from the outside' and with wholly profane intentions, we will nevertheless repeat, because we see daily the opportunity, that the distorted ideas to which they inevitably lead are certainly worse than pure and simple ignorance.

It sometimes even happens that certain traditional sciences play a more important role than that we have just indicated, and that apart from the proper value they possess in themselves in their contingent order, they are taken as symbolic means of expression for the higher and essential part of the doctrine, to the extent that this becomes entirely unintelligible if we try to separate it from them. This is what happens in particular with the Hebrew Kabbalah for the 'science of

numbers', which moreover is largely identical to the 'science of letters', just as it is in Islamic esoterism, and this in virtue of the very constitution of the Hebrew and Arabic languages, which as we have just said are so close to one another in all respects.¹

The preponderant role of the science of numbers in the Kabbalah is a fact so evident that it cannot escape even the most superficial observer, and it is hardly possible even for 'critics' who are most full of prejudice or bias, to deny or to conceal it. Nevertheless, they are not remiss in giving erroneous interpretations of this fact in order to somehow make it fit into the framework of their preconceived ideas; we propose here especially to dissipate these more or less deliberate confusions, due in good part to abuse of the too famous 'historical method', which in spite of everything wants to see 'borrowings' anywhere it sees similarities.

We know that it is fashionable in university circles to claim that the Kabbalah is linked to Neoplatonism, so as to diminish both its antiquity and its scope; is it not considered to be an unquestionable principle that everything must come from the Greeks? It is unfortunately forgotten that Neoplatonism itself contains many elements that are not specifically Greek, and that in the Alexandrian period Judaism in particular had a far from negligible importance, so that if there really were borrowings, they could have occurred in a direction opposite to that claimed. This hypothesis is even more likely, first because the adoption of a foreign doctrine is hardly reconcilable with the 'particularism' that was always one of the dominant traits of the Judaic spirit, and then because, whatever one may think in other respects of Neoplatonism, it represents only a relatively exoteric doctrine (even if it is based on esoteric ideas, it is only an 'exteriorization' of them), which as such has not been able to exercise a real influence on an essentially initiatic and even very 'closed' tradition such as Kabbalah is and always has been.² Besides, we do

1. See the chapter 'Kabbalah' above; we ask our readers to refer also to the study 'The Science of Letters', which forms chapter 8 of *Symbols of Sacred Science*.

2. This last argument is equally valid against the claim of linking Islamic esoterism to the same Neoplatonism. Among the Arabs, only philosophy is of Greek origin, as is the case wherever we meet it with everything to which the name of philosophy (in Arabic, *falsafah*) can properly be applied, this name being as it were a mark of this origin; but here philosophy is no longer involved at all.

not see that there is any particularly striking resemblance between this and Neoplatonism, nor do we see in the form in which Neoplatonism is expressed that numbers play the same role that is so characteristic of the Kabbalah. The Greek language would hardly have allowed it, while it is, we repeat, something inherent to the Hebrew language itself, and must consequently have been linked from the beginning to the traditional form that expresses itself by it.

There is of course no reason to dispute that a traditional science of numbers may have existed among the Greeks, for it was as we know the basis of Pythagorism, which was not only a philosophy but also had a properly initiatic character; and it is from this that Plato drew not only the entire cosmological part of his doctrine such as expounded particularly in the *Timaeus*, but even his 'theory of ideas', which is really only a transposition in different terminology of the Pythagorean ideas about numbers considered as the principles of things. If we really want to find among the Greeks a term of comparison with the Kabbalah we must turn to Pythagorism; but it is precisely here that the inanity of the thesis of 'borrowings' becomes most clearly apparent. We are indeed in the presence of two initiatic doctrines, both of which give primary importance to the science of numbers, but that science is presented by each under radically different forms.

Here, some considerations of a more general order will be worthwhile. It is perfectly normal that the same science should be found in different traditions, for truth in any domain could not be the monopoly of one traditional form to the exclusion of others. This fact cannot then be a cause for astonishment except no doubt for the 'critics', who do not believe in the truth; and indeed it is the contrary that would be, not only surprising, but even scarcely conceivable. There is nothing here that implies a more or less direct communication between two different traditions, even in the case where one is incontestably more ancient than the other; can a certain truth not be seen and expressed independently of those who have already expressed it before, and, given that independence, is it not all the more probable that this same truth will in fact be expressed differently? It must however be clearly understood that this is in no way contrary to the common origin of all traditions;

but the transmission of principles from this common origin does not necessarily imply the explicit transmission of all the developments that are implicit in it and all the applications which they can produce. All that is a matter of 'adaptation', in a word, can be considered to belong properly to this or that particular traditional form, and, if one finds the equivalent elsewhere, that is because from the same principles one would naturally draw the same conclusions, whatever be the special way in which they will have been expressed here or there (with the reservation of course that certain symbolic modes of expression, being everywhere the same, must be regarded as going back to the primordial tradition). Moreover, the differences of form will generally be greater as one moves further away from principles to descend to more contingent orders; and this is one of the main difficulties in understanding certain traditional sciences.

It is easy to understand that these considerations remove almost all interest regarding the origin of the traditions or the provenance of the elements which they contain according to the 'historical' point of view as understood in the profane world, since they render perfectly useless the supposition of any direct filiation; and even where one notes a much closer similarity between two traditional forms, that similarity is explained far less by 'borrowings', which are often quite unlikely, than by 'affinities' due to a certain ensemble of common or similar conditions (race, type of language, way of life, etc.) among the peoples to whom these forms respectively apply.³ As

3. This can be applied particularly to the similarity of expression we have already pointed out between the *Kabbalah* and Islamic esoterism. Regarding this last point there is a rather curious remark to make: its 'exoterist' adversaries, in Islam itself, have often tried to deprecate it by attributing to it a foreign origin; and under the pretext that many of the best-known *Sufis* were Persian, they claim to see in it borrowings from Mazdaism, even extending this gratuitous affirmation to the 'science of letters'. Now, there is no trace of anything at all like this among the ancient Persians, whereas this science exists on the contrary in a very similar form in Judaism, something that is explained very simply by the 'affinities' to which we alluded, not to mention the more remote community of origin to which we will have to return. But even though this fact is perhaps the only one that could give some appearance of likelihood to the idea of a borrowing from a pre-Islamic and non-Arabic doctrine, it seems to have totally escaped them!

for cases of real filiation, this is not to say that they must be entirely excluded, for it is evident that all traditional forms do not proceed directly from the primordial tradition and that other forms must have sometimes played the role of intermediaries; but the latter are most often traditions that have entirely disappeared, and those transmissions in general go back to epochs far too distant for ordinary history—whose field of investigation is really very limited—to be capable of the slightest knowledge of them, not counting the fact that the means by which they were effected are not among those accessible to its methods of research.

All of this only seems to take us away from our subject, and so returning now to the relationships between the Kabbalah and Pythagorism, we can now ask ourselves this question: if the former cannot be derived directly from the latter (even supposing that it is not anterior to it), and even if this is only because of too great a difference in form, something to which we will return presently in a more precise fashion, can one not at least envisage a common origin for both, which according to some would be the tradition of the ancient Egyptians (this of course would take us back well before the Alexandrian period)? Let us say right away that this is a theory that has been much abused; and as concerns Judaism, we are unable in spite of certain more or less fanciful assertions to discover the slightest connection with what is known of the Egyptian tradition (we are speaking here of the form, the only thing to be considered, since the substance is necessarily identical in all traditions); doubtless it would have links that are more real with the Chaldean tradition, whether by derivation or by simple affinity, as far as it is possible to really grasp something of these traditions that have been extinct for so many centuries.

As for Pythagorism, the question is perhaps more complex. The journeys of Pythagoras, whether they are to be taken literally or symbolically, do not necessarily imply borrowings from doctrines of this or that people (at least as to the essentials, whatever may be the case for certain points of detail), but rather the establishment or strengthening of certain links with more or less equivalent initiations. It seems that Pythagorism in fact was above all the continuation of something that existed earlier in Greece itself, and that there

is no reason to look elsewhere for its principal source; we have in mind the Mysteries, and more particularly Orphism, of which it was perhaps only a 'readaptation' in this epoch of the sixth century before the Christian era, which by a strange synchronism saw changes of form take place at once among almost all peoples. It is often said that the Greek Mysteries were themselves of Egyptian origin, but such a general assertion is much too 'simplistic', and although this may be true in certain cases such as the Mysteries of Eleusis (which particularly come to mind in the circumstances), there are others where this is not tenable at all.⁴ Whether it be a question of Pythagorism itself or the earlier Orphism, it is not at Eleusis that we must look for the 'connecting point', but at Delphi; and the Delphic Apollo is not at all Egyptian but Hyperborean, an origin which is in any case impossible to envisage for the Hebrew tradition.⁵ And this leads us directly to the most important point as regards the science of numbers and the different forms it has assumed.

This science of numbers in Pythagorism appears closely linked to that of geometric forms; and it is the same in Plato, who in this respect is purely Pythagorean. One could see here the expression of a characteristic trait of the Hellenistic mentality, which is especially tied to visual forms; and we know that among the mathematical sciences it is in fact geometry that the Greeks especially developed.⁶ However, there is something else involved here, at least as regards 'sacred geometry'; the 'geometer' God of Pythagoras and Plato, understood in its most precise and, we could say, technical meaning,

4. It is hardly necessary to say that certain stories in which Moses and Orpheus both receive initiation at the same time in the temples of Egypt are only fantasies with no serious basis; and what has not been said on Egyptian initiation since Abbi Terrasson's *Sithos!*

5. We are speaking here of direct derivation. Even if the primordial tradition is Hyperborean, and if consequently all traditional forms without exception are in the end linked to that origin, there are cases like that of the Hebrew tradition where this could only be very indirectly and through a long series of intermediaries, which would moreover be very difficult to reconstruct exactly.

6. Algebra, on the other hand, is of Indian origin, and was only introduced into the West much later by the Arabs, who gave to it the name it has retained (*al-jabr*).

is none other than Apollo. We cannot undertake an elaboration of this subject, which would lead us too far afield, and we may perhaps come back to this question on another occasion. It is enough at present to point out that this fact is sharply opposed to the hypothesis of a common origin for both Pythagorism and the Kabbalah, even on the very point where a special effort has been made to link them, and which is really the only point which could have raised the idea of such a connection, that is, the apparent similarity between the two doctrines with regard to the role the science of numbers plays in them.

In the Kabbalah this same science of numbers is in not at all connected to geometric symbolism in the same way; and it is easy to see that this should be so, for this symbolism could not be suitable for nomadic peoples such as the Hebrews and the Arabs originally were.⁷ On the other hand, we find something there which does not have its equivalent among the Greeks: the close union, one could even say the identity in many respects, of the science of numbers with that of letters by reason of the latter's numerical correspondences. This is what is eminently characteristic of the Kabbalah⁸ and is found nowhere else, at least under this aspect and with this development, unless, as we have already said, it be in Islamic esoterism, that is to say in the Arabic tradition.

It might seem surprising at first sight that considerations of this kind should have remained foreign to the Greeks,⁹ since their letters

7. On this point, see chapter 21 of *The Reign of Quantity and The Signs of the Times*, entitled 'Cain and Abel'. We must not forget, as we indicated at the time, that in constructing the Temple, Solomon had recourse to foreign workers, a particularly significant fact because of the intimate relation which exists between geometry and architecture.

8. Let us recall that the word *gematria* (which, being of Greek origin, must, like a certain number of other terms of the same provenance, have been introduced at a relatively recent period, something that does not mean that what it designates may not have existed earlier), is not derived *from geometria*, as is often claimed, but from *grammateia*, so that once more it is the science of letters that is involved.

9. It is only with Christianity that one can find something like this in Greek, and then it is manifestly a question of a transposition of a symbolism whose origin is Hebraic. In this regard we are alluding principally to the Apocalypse; we could probably also find things of the same order in what remains of Gnostic writings.

too have a numeric value (which is moreover the same as their equivalents in the Hebrew and Arabic alphabets), and since indeed they never had any other numerical signs. The explanation of this fact is nonetheless quite simple. Greek writing is really only a foreign import (whether 'Phoenician', as is usually said, or in any case 'Cadmean', that is to say 'Eastern' without any more precise specification, the very names of the letters bearing witness to this), and never as it were became truly one in its symbolism, numerical or otherwise, with the language itself.¹⁰ On the contrary, in languages such as Hebrew and Arabic, the meaning of the words is inseparable from the symbolism of the letters, and it would be impossible to give a complete interpretation as to the deepest meaning of words, that which really matters from the traditional and initiatic point of view (for we must not forget that these are essentially 'sacred languages'), without taking into account the numerical value of the letters composing them; the relations existing between numerically equivalent words and the substitutions to which they sometimes lend themselves are in this respect a particularly clear example.¹¹ There is thus something here which, as we said at the outset, relates essentially to the very constitution of these languages, something that belongs to them in a truly 'organic' way and is very far from attaching to it from the outside and after the fact, as in the case of the Greek language; and since this element is found both in Hebrew and Arabic, one can legitimately regard it as proceeding from the

10. Even in the symbolic interpretation of the words (for example in Plato's *Cratylus*), a consideration of the letters of which they are composed does not intervene; it is the same, moreover, for *nirukta* in the Sanskrit language, and if in certain aspects of the Hindu tradition there nonetheless exists a symbolism of letters, even one that is well developed, it is based on principles entirely different from those in question here.

11. This is one of the reasons why the idea, which some extol under the pretext of 'convenience', of writing Arabic with Latin characters is altogether unacceptable, and even absurd (this without prejudice to other more contingent considerations, like the impossibility of establishing a truly exact transcription because of the very fact that all the Arabic letters do not have their equivalent in the Latin alphabet). The real reasons why certain orientalist propagators propagate this idea are moreover quite different from those they profess and must be sought in their 'anti-traditional' designs and in preoccupations of a political order; but that is another story...

common source of these two languages and of the two traditions they express, that is, what can be called the 'Abrahamic' tradition.

From the above considerations we can draw the necessary conclusion, namely that if we look at the science of numbers among the Greeks and among the Hebrews, we see it clothed in two very different forms and based in one case on a geometric symbolism, and in the other on the symbolism of letters.¹² Consequently there can be no question of 'borrowings' on one side any more than on the other, but only of equivalences such as are necessarily to be found among all traditional forms. We leave aside entirely any question of 'priority', which is of no real interest under these conditions, and is perhaps insoluble, for the real starting-point is perhaps very much earlier than the epochs for which it is possible to establish an even slightly rigorous chronology. Moreover, the very hypothesis of a direct common origin must also be ruled out, for the tradition of which this science is an integral part can be seen to date back on the one hand to an 'Apollonian' source, that is to say one that is directly Hyperborean, and on the other to an 'Abrahamic' source, which seems itself to be linked especially (as the very names of the Hebrews and Arabs suggest) to the traditional current that came from the 'lost island of the West'.¹⁴

12. We say 'based on' because in both cases these symbolisms effectively constitute the sensible 'support' and as it were the 'body' of the science of numbers.

13. We have used the expression 'science of numbers' to avoid any confusion with profane arithmetic, though we could perhaps adopt a term such as 'arithmology'; but because of the 'barbarism' of its hybrid composition we must reject the recently coined term 'numerology', by which some seem to want to designate a sort of 'divinatory art' that has almost no connection with the true traditional science of numbers.

4

LA KABBALE JUIVE OF PAUL VULLIAUD

UP TO NOW there has existed no serious body of work for the study of the Kabbalah; indeed, the book by Adolphe Frank, despite his reputation, showed how its author, imbued as he is with university prejudices and completely ignorant of Hebrew, was incapable of understanding the subject he undertook to treat. As for certain compilations that are as indigestible as they are fanciful, like that of Papus, better not to speak of them at all. Thus there was a regrettable gap to fill, and it seemed to us that the important work of Paul Vulliaud¹ was destined precisely for that purpose. However, although this work has been done very conscientiously and contains many interesting things, we must confess that on reading it we have felt a certain disappointment.

This work, which we would have been happy to recommend unreservedly, does not give what its very general title seems to promise, and the contents of the book are far from being without defect. Indeed, the subtitle 'Critical Essay' should have put us on guard as to the spirit in which this book was conceived, for we know only too well what the word 'critical' means when used by 'official' scholars; but since Vulliaud does not belong to this category we were at first merely surprised that he had used an expression susceptible to such an unfortunate interpretation. Later we began to understand the purpose which the author wished to hint at in this way; we found it expressed very clearly in a note where he declares

1. *La Kabbale juive: histoire et doctrine*, 2 vols., in octavo, of 520 and 460 pages (E. Nourry: Paris, 1923).

that he had assigned himself a 'double goal': 'To treat of the Kabbalah and its history, then at the same time to explicate the scientific method by which well-respected authors work.' (vol. 2, p206.)

Thus it was not a case of following the authors in question or of adopting their prejudices, but on the contrary of combatting them, for which we can only congratulate him. But he wished to oppose them on their own ground and as it were with their own weapons, and it is for this reason that he became, so to speak, the critic of the critics themselves. Indeed, he too places himself at the point of view of pure and simple erudition; but although he did this voluntarily, one might ask to what extent this attitude has been truly useful and beneficial. Vulliaud denies that he is a Kabbalist; and he does so with an insistence that surprises us and that we find hard to understand. Could he be one of those who glory in being 'profane' and who, up till now, we had for the most part only met in 'official' circles, those toward which he has himself given proof of a just severity? He even goes so far as to qualify himself as a 'simple amateur', but in this we believe he maligns himself. Is he not depriving himself of a good part of the authority he would need when addressing those authors whose assertions he questions? In addition, this bias of looking at a doctrine from the 'profane' point of view, that is, 'from the outside', seems to us to exclude all possibility of a profound comprehension. And furthermore, even if this attitude is only affected, it is no less regrettable since, although he has attained the aforesaid comprehension on his own account, he thus obliges himself to show nothing of it and so the interest of the doctrinal part will be greatly diminished. As for the critical part, the author will look more like a polemicist than a qualified judge, which for him is a manifest inferiority. Besides, two goals for one single work is probably one too many, and in Vulliaud's case it is very regrettable that, as noted above, the second of these goals too often causes him to forget the first, which is however by far the more important. Indeed, discussions and criticisms follow one another right through his book, even in chapters whose titles seem rather to point to a subject of a purely doctrinal order; one comes away with a certain impression of disorder and confusion. On the other hand, if among Vulliaud's criticisms there are some that are perfectly justified, for

example those concerning Renan and Frank and also certain occultists, the latter being the most numerous, there are others that are more debatable, in particular those concerning Fabre d'Olivet, toward whom the author seems to direct an echo of certain rabbinical hatreds (unless he inherited the hatred of Napoleon himself for the author of *Hermeneutic Interpretation of the Origin of the Social State of Man and of the Destiny of the Adamic Race*, but this second hypothesis is much less likely).² In any case, even for the most legitimate criticisms, those that can be held to destroy usurped reputations, would it not have been possible to say the same things more briefly, and especially more seriously and in a less aggressive tone? The work would certainly have gained by it, first because it would not have given the appearance of a polemical work, an aspect which he too often presents and which ill-intentioned people could easily use against him, and more seriously, the essential would have been sacrificed less to considerations that are really only secondary and of rather minor interest. There are still other regrettable faults: the imperfections of form are sometimes embarrassing; we do not mean only printing errors, which are quite numerous and of which the errata only rectify a very small part, but too frequent inaccuracies that are difficult, even with the best of goodwill, to impute to the typography. Thus, there are various 'slips' which are truly inopportune. We have noted a certain number, and, curiously enough, these are found especially in the second volume, as if it had been written more hastily. For example, Frank was not a 'professor of philosophy at Stanislas College' (P241), but at the College de France, which is something quite different. Also, Vulliaud writes 'Cappelle', and sometimes also 'Capele' for the Hebraist Louis Cappel, whose exact name we can establish with all the more certainty since, while writing this article, we have his own signature before us. Would Vulliaud have seen this name only in a latinized form? All this is nothing much, but, on the other hand, on page 26, it is a question of a divine name of 26 letters, and we find later that it has

42. This passage is truly incomprehensible and we wonder whether

2. For more on Fabre d'Olivet and his works, see *The Great Triad*, chaps. 21 and 22. ED.

there has not been some omission here. We will point out yet another piece of negligence of the same order, but one all the more serious in that it leads to a real injustice: criticizing an editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vulliaud ends with this sentence:

One could not expect sound logic from an author who in the same article maintains that people have underestimated the Kabbalistic doctrines (*absurdly overestimated*) and at the same time that the Zohar is *a farrago of absurdity* (vol. 2, P418).

The English words were cited by Vulliaud himself; now, *overestimated* does not mean 'sous-estime' (which would be *underestimated*), but on the contrary 'surestime', which is precisely the opposite, and thus, whatever may be the errors contained in that author's article, the contradictions for which he is reproached are in no way found in it. Assuredly, these things are only details, but when one is so severe with others and is ever ready to catch them out, should one not try to be above reproach oneself? In the transcription of Hebrew words there is a lack of uniformity that is truly annoying; we know very well that no transcription can be perfectly exact, but when one has adopted one, whatever it may be, it would be preferable to at least hold to it consistently. Moreover, there are some terms which seem to have been translated much too hastily and for which it would not have been difficult to find a more satisfactory interpretation. For example, on page 49 of volume two, there is an image of *teraphim* on which is inscribed, among others, the word *luz*. The author has reproduced the different meanings of the verb *luz* given by Buxtorf, following each of them with a question mark because it seemed to him to be inappropriate, but he did not think that there might also exist a noun *luz*, which ordinarily means 'almond' or 'kernel' (and also 'almond tree', because it designates the tree and its fruit at the same time). Now, in rabbinic language this same noun is the name of a small indestructible bodily part to which the soul remains bound after death (it is curious to note that this Hebrew tradition probably inspired certain theories of Leibnitz); this last meaning is certainly the most plausible and this is moreover confirmed for us by the very place which the word *luz* occupies in the figure given.

The author sometimes makes the mistake of taking up in passing subjects about which he is obviously much less informed than he is on the Kabbalah, and which he could well have refrained from speaking about, and this would have avoided certain errors which, however excusable they may be (given that it is hardly possible to have the same competence in all fields), can only be prejudicial to a serious work. Thus we found (vol. 2, P377) a passage involving a would-be 'Chinese theosophy' in which we had some trouble recognizing Taoism, which is not 'theosophy' in any sense of the word, the proffered summary of which, made on the basis of we know not what source (no reference being given), is eminently fanciful. For example 'active nature', *T'ien* = heaven, is put in opposition to 'passive nature', *Kouen* = earth; now *Κουέη* has never meant 'earth', and the expressions 'active nature' and 'passive nature' make us think much less of conceptions from the Far East than of Spinoza's 'nature naturante' and *natura naturata*. Two different dualities are here confused with the greatest naivete, that of 'active perfection', *Khien*, and 'passive perfection', *Kouen* (we say 'perfection' and not 'nature'), and that of 'heaven', *t'ien* and 'earth', *ti*.

Since we have come to speak of Eastern doctrines, we will make another observation on this subject: after noting quite rightly the disagreement that prevails among Egyptologists and among other such 'specialists', and which makes it impossible to trust their opinions, the author points out that the same thing holds true of Indologists (vol. 2, P363), which is correct; but how does he not see that this last case is in no way comparable to the others? Indeed, we obviously have no direct means of verification regarding peoples like the ancient Egyptians and Assyrians, who disappeared without leaving any legitimate successors, and we are certainly right in entertaining some skepticism as to the value of fragmentary and hypothetical reconstitutions. On the contrary, for India and China, whose civilizations have continued down to our own time and are still living, it is quite possible to know what to believe; what matters is not so much what Indologists say but what Hindus themselves think. Vulliaud, who is careful to refer only to Hebrew sources in trying to understand the Kabbalah, is absolutely correct on this point, since the Kabbalah is Hebrew tradition itself, but could he

not admit that one should not act otherwise when studying other traditions?

There are other things that Vulliaud does not know much better than he does the doctrines of the Far East, but which ought to have been more accessible to him, if only because of the fact that they are Western. Thus, for example, Rosicrucianism, about which he scarcely seems to know more than the 'profane' and 'official' historians, and whose essentially Hermetic character seems to have escaped him; he only knows that it is something altogether different from the Kabbalah (the occultist and modern idea of a 'Kabbalistic Rosicrucianism' is indeed a pure fantasy), but to support this assertion and not rely on mere negation it would still be necessary to prove precisely that Kabbalah and Hermeticism are two entirely different traditional forms. Still in regard to Rosicrucianism, we do not believe it possible to 'generate a little sympathy for the dignitaries of classical science' by recalling that Descartes tried to contact the Rosicrucians during his stay in Germany (vol. 2, P235), for this fact is quite well known. But what is certain is that he was unsuccessful in his attempt, and that the very spirit of his works, which are as contrary as can be to all esoterism, is both the proof and explanation of this failure. It is surprising to see quoted, as a sign of Descartes' possible affiliation with the Brotherhood of the Rose-Cross, a dedication (that of the *Thesaurus mathematicus*) which is obviously ironic and in which one senses on the contrary all the resentment of a man who was unable to attain the affiliation he sought. Stranger still are Vulliaud's errors concerning Freemasonry. Immediately after making fun of Eliphas Levi, who did indeed stack confusion upon confusion when he tried to speak of the Kabbalah, Vulliaud also says many no less amusing things when speaking of Freemasonry. We cite the following passage which was meant to establish that there is no link between the Kabbalah and Masonry:

On the limiting of Masonry to the European frontiers it can be observed that Masonry is universal, worldwide. Is it likewise kabbalistic among the Chinese and the Blacks? (vol. 2, P319).

Certainly the Chinese and African secret societies (of the latter particularly those of the Congo) had no connection with the Kabbalah,

but they had no more of a link with Masonry; and if this is not 'limited to the European frontiers' it is only because Europeans have introduced it to other parts of the world. And here is a statement no less curious: 'How does one explain such an anomaly [if it is admitted that Masonry is of Kabbalistic inspiration] as the Freemason Voltaire, who had nothing but scorn for the Jewish race?' Vulliaud seems unaware that Voltaire was received into the lodge 'The Nine Sisters' as a purely honorific gesture, and only six months before his death. On the other hand, even had he chosen a better example, this still would not have proven anything, for there are many Masons, we would even say the greatest number, and even those in the highest grades, to whom all real knowledge of Masonry is completely foreign (and we can include among them certain dignitaries of the *Grand-Orient de France* whom Vulliaud, doubtless letting himself be impressed by their titles, wrongly cites as authorities). Our author would have been better advised to invoke in support of his thesis the fact that in Germany and in Sweden there exist Masonic organizations from which Jews are strictly excluded; we believe that he knew nothing of this for he makes not the slightest allusion to it. It is interesting to extract from the note which ends the same chapter (p 328) the following lines:

Various persons may reproach us for having argued as if there were only one single form of Masonry. We are not unaware of the anathemas of spiritualist Masonry against the *Grand-Orient de France* but when all is duly considered, we feel that the conflict between the two Masonic schools is only a family quarrel.

We will observe that there are not just 'two Masonic schools' but a very great number of them, and that the *Grand-Orient de France*, like that in Italy, is not recognized by the other organizations because it rejects certain *landmarks* or fundamental principles of Masonry, which constitutes, after all, a fairly serious 'quarrel' (whereas among the other 'schools' the divergences are far from being so great). As for the expression 'spiritualist Masonry', it corresponds to absolutely nothing, seeing that it is only an invention of certain occultists whose suggestions he is generally less eager to accept. A little further on he quotes as examples of 'spiritualist

Masonry' the Ku-Klux-Klan and the Orangists (we suppose that this means the Royal Order of Orange), that is, two purely Protestant organizations, which no doubt can count some Masons among their members but which have no more connection with Masonry than the secret societies of the Congo mentioned previously. Assuredly, Vulliaud has every right to be unaware of all these things and many others besides, and we do not think we should reproach him for that; but again, who obliged him to speak of them, given that these questions lie outside his subject and that he could not claim to know absolutely everything about this subject? In any case, if he had stuck to it, he would have had much less trouble gathering, at least on certain of those points, fairly exact information, rather than looking up a number of rare and unknown books that he takes pleasure in quoting with some ostentation.

Of course, all these reservations do not prevent us from recognizing the real merits of the work or from rendering homage to the considerable effort to which it bears witness; quite the contrary, if we have dwelt on his errors so much it is because we think we are rendering a service to an author in criticizing him on very precise points. Now we must say that Vulliaud, in contrast to modern authors who question it (and among them, strange to say, there are many Jews), has done a good job in establishing the antiquity of the Kabbalah as well as its specifically Jewish and strictly orthodox character. Indeed, it is the fashion among 'rationalist' critics to set the esoteric tradition against rabbinic exoterism, as if they were not two complementary aspects of one and the same doctrine. At the same time, he has exploded a certain number of myths that have been broadcast too widely (by those same 'rationalists') and that lack any basis, such as that which tries to link the Kabbalah to Neoplatonic doctrines, that which attributes the Zohar to Moses de Leon (thus making it a work dating only from the thirteenth century), that which claims Spinoza was a Kabbalist, and others of greater or lesser importance. Moreover, he has thoroughly established that the Kabbalah is not at all 'pantheistic' as some have claimed (doubtless because they think it can be linked to the theories of Spinoza which are truly 'pantheistic'); and he very rightly observes that 'this term has been strangely abused' and that it has been used without rhyme

or reason for the most varied ideas with the sole intention of 'seeking to frighten' (vol. i, p42.9), and also, we might add, because one thus thinks oneself freed from any further discussion. This absurd accusation is gratuitously and very frequently raised against all Eastern doctrines; but it always produces its desired effect on certain timid minds, although by being used abusively the word 'pantheism' ends by no longer meaning anything. When will it be understood that names invented by systems of modern philosophy are applicable to them alone? Vulliaud further shows that a so-called 'mystical philosophy' of the Jews, different from the Kabbalah, is something that has never existed in reality, but on the contrary he is wrong to use the word 'mysticism' to qualify the said Kabbalah. Doubtless that depends on the meaning one gives to this word, and the one he indicates (which would make it almost a synonym of 'Gnosticism' or transcendent knowledge) would be tenable if one did not have to worry about etymology, for it is precisely true that 'mysticism' and 'mystery' have one and the same root (vol. 1, ppi24 and 131-132); but in the end it is necessary to take into account the established usage, which has modified and considerably restricted its meaning. On the other hand, it is not possible for us to accept in either one of these two cases the affirmation that 'mysticism is a philosophical system' (pi26); and if the Kabbalah too often takes a 'philosophical' appearance in Vulliaud's work, this is a result of the 'outside' point of view he wishes to maintain. For us, the Kabbalah is far more metaphysical than philosophical and more initiatic than mystical; one day we shall have a chance to expound the essential differences that exist between the way of initiates and that of mystics (which, let us note in passing, correspond respectively to the 'dry way' and the 'humid way' of the alchemists).³ However that may be, the varied results we have noted could henceforth be considered as definitely established if the incomprehension of some so-called scholars did not always come along to put everything in doubt again by going back to a historical point of view to which Vulliaud has accorded (we are tempted to say 'unfortunately', without however failing to recognize its relative importance) too great an importance compared with the

3. See *Perspectives on Initiation*, especially chap 1. ED.

properly doctrinal point of view. With regard to the latter, we will note as particularly interesting the chapters in the first volume concerning *Eii-Soph* and the *Sephiroth* (chap. 60), the *Shekinah* and *Metatron* (chap. 13), although it would have been desirable to find more elaborations and precision there, as well as in the chapter where the Kabbalistic methods are explained (chap. 5). Indeed, we wonder whether those who have no previous knowledge of the Kabbalah would be sufficiently enlightened by reading them.

With regard to what could be called the applications of the Kabbalah, which although secondary with respect to the pure doctrine are certainly not to be neglected, we will mention in the second volume the chapter devoted to ritual (chap. 14) and those devoted to amulets (chap. 15) and to Messianic ideas (chap. 16); these contain things that are really new or at least fairly little known; in particular, one finds in chapter sixteen numerous items of information on the social and political side which contribute in great part to give to the Kabbalistic tradition its clearly and properly Jewish character. Taken as a whole, Vulliaud's work seems to us particularly capable of rectifying a large number of false ideas, which is certainly something, and even a great deal, but perhaps not enough for such an important work and one which wishes to be more than a mere introduction. If the author one day brings out a new edition, it is to be hoped that he will separate the doctrinal part as completely as possible, appreciably curtail the first part, and expand the second, even if in doing so he runs the risk of no longer passing as the 'mere amateur', to which role he has been too keen to confine himself.

To end this discussion of Vulliaud's book we offer a few more observations on a question that particularly merits attention and that has a certain connection with what we have already explained more especially in our study *The King of the World*; we mean that concerning the *Shekinah* and *Metatron*. In its most general sense, the *Shekinah* is the 'real presence' of the Divinity; the first thing we must point out is that the passages of scripture which particularly mention it are especially those concerning the establishment of a spiritual center: the construction of the Tabernacle and the erection of the Temples of Solomon and Zorobabel. Such a center, established in regularly defined conditions, must be the place of divine

manifestation, always represented as a 'Light'; and although Vulliaud denies any connection between the Kabbalah and Masonry (even though he recognizes that the symbol of the 'Great Architect' is a metaphor customary among rabbis), the expression 'a regular and well-illuminated place' which Masonry has preserved really seems to be a memory of the ancient sacerdotal science that presided over the construction of the temples and that moreover is not peculiar to Jews. It is useless for us to tackle here the theory of 'spiritual influences' (we prefer this expression to 'benedictions' to translate the Hebrew berakoth, all the more because that is the meaning very clearly preserved in the Arabic word barakah), but even considering things from this point of view alone it would be possible to explain the statement of Elias Levita which Vulliaud reports: 'The Masters of the Kabbalah have great secrets on this subject.' Now the question is all the more complex because the *Shekinah* presents itself under multiple aspects. It has two principal aspects, one interior and the other exterior (vol. i, P495), but here Vulliaud could have explained himself a little more clearly than he did, all the more so because, in spite of his intention to treat only the 'Jewish Kabbalah', he has pointed out precisely 'the connections between the Jewish and Christian theologies with respect to the *Shekinah*' (p493). Now in the Christian tradition there is a phrase that very clearly describes the two aspects of which he speaks: *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra Pax hominibus bonae Voluntatis*. The words Gloria and Pax refer respectively to the inner aspect, with respect to the Principle, and to the outer aspect, with respect to the manifested world; and if one considers these two words in this way one immediately understands why they are pronounced by the Angels (*Malakim*) to announce the birth of 'God with us' or 'in us' (*Emmanuel*). For the first aspect, it would also be possible to recall the theory of the theologians on the 'Light of Glory' in which and by which is accomplished the beatific vision (*in excelsis*). For the second aspect, we will say further that 'Peace' in its esoteric sense is everywhere mentioned as the spiritual attribute of the spiritual centers established in this world (*terra*). On the other hand, the Arabic word *Sakinah*, which is obviously identical with the Hebrew word, is translated by 'Great Peace', the exact equivalent of the *Pax Profunda* of the Rosicrucians; and in this way

it would doubtless be possible to explain what they meant by the 'Temple of the Holy Spirit'. One could likewise precisely interpret a certain number of Gospel texts, all the more so as 'the secret tradition concerning the *Shekinah* would have some connection with the light of the Messiah' (p 503). Is it thus without meaning it that, in making this last remark, Vulliaud says that it is a question of the tradition 'reserved to those who follow the way which leads to *Parties*⁴ that is, as we have explained elsewhere, to the supreme spiritual center? This leads us to observe that when, a little further on, it is a question of a 'mystery relating to the Jubilee' (p506), which is related in a certain sense to the idea of 'Peace', he cites the following text from the Zohar (III, p586):

The river which flows out of Eden bears the name of *Jobel*, like that of Jeremiah (17:8): 'It will extend its roots by the river,' from which it follows that the central idea of the Jubilee is the return of all things to their primitive state.

It is clear that this involves the return to the 'primordial state' envisaged by all traditions and which we dealt with in our study *The Esoterism of Dante*; and when we add from Vulliaud that 'the return of all things to their first state will announce the Messianic era' (P507), those who have read that essay will recall what we said there about the links between the 'Terrestrial Paradise' and the 'Heavenly Jerusalem'.⁴ On the other hand, what is involved here, everywhere and always, in the different phases of cyclic manifestation, is the Panics, the center of this world, which the traditional symbolism of all peoples compares to the heart, center of the being and 'divine residence' (*Brahma-pura* in Hindu doctrine), like the tabernacle which is its image and which, for that reason, is called in Hebrew *mishkan* or 'abode of God' (p493), a word with the same root as the word *Shekinah*. From another point of view, the *Shekinah* is the synthesis of the *Sephiroth*; now in the sephirotic tree, the 'right-hand column' is the side of Mercy and the 'left-hand column' is the side of Rigor; we must therefore find these two aspects in the *Shekinah* also. Indeed 'if man sins and withdraws from the *Shekinah*, he falls under

4. See *The Esoterism of Dante, chap* ». Ed.

the influence of the powers (*Sarim*) subject to Rigor' (P507) and then the *Shekinah* is called the 'hand of rigor', which immediately recalls the well-known symbol of the 'hand of justice'. But if on the contrary man draws near to the *Shekinah*, he is freed, and the *Shekinah* is the 'right hand' of God, that is to say that the 'hand of justice' then becomes the 'hand that blesses'. These are the mysteries of the 'House of Justice' (*Beith-Din*), which is yet another name of the supreme spiritual center; and we hardly need point out that the two sides we have considered are those into which the elect and the damned are divided in the Christian representations of the 'Last Judgment'. One could likewise establish a parallel between the two ways which the Pythagoreans represented by the letter 'Y' and which were symbolized exoterically by the myth of Hercules between Virtue and Vice; by the two doors, celestial and infernal, which among the Latins were associated with the symbolism of Janus; and by the two cyclical phases, ascending and descending which among the Hindus were likewise associated with the symbolism of *Ganesha*. Finally, it is easy to understand what is truly meant here when we consider such expressions as 'right intention' and 'goodwill' (*Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis*, and those familiar with the numerous symbols to which we have alluded will see that it is not without reason that Christmas coincides with the winter solstice), when one is careful to leave aside all the outward, philosophical and moral interpretations that have been given them from the Stoics to Kant.

'The Kabbalah gives to the Shekinah a 'twin' [parere], which bears names identical to its own, and which accordingly possesses the same characteristics' (pp496—498) and which naturally has as many different aspects as the Shekinah; its name is Metatron, and this name is numerically equal to that of *Shadda'i*, the 'All Powerful' (which is said to be the name of the God of Abraham). The etymology of the word *Metatron* is very uncertain, and Vulliaud reports several hypotheses, one of which derives it from the Chaldean *Mitra* which means 'rain', and which through its root also has a certain connection with 'light'. Even if this is so, the resemblance with the Hindu and Zoroastrian *Mitra* does not constitute a sufficient reason to admit a borrowing by Judaism from foreign doctrines, any more

than the role attributed to rain in different Eastern traditions constitutes a borrowing; and on this subject we will point out that Jewish tradition speaks of a 'dew of light' emanating from the 'Tree of Life', by means of which the resurrection of the dead will be accomplished (p99), and also of an 'effusion of dew' which represents the celestial influence spread to all worlds (P465), and which curiously recalls the symbolism of the alchemists and Rosicrucians.

'The term Metatron includes all such meanings as guardian, Lord, envoy, mediator' (p499); he is the 'Angel of the Face' and also 'Prince of the World' (Sur ha-olam); he is the 'author of theophanies, of divine manifestations in the sensible world' (P492). We will readily admit that he is the 'Celestial Pole'; and since this has its reflection in the 'Terrestrial Pole' with which it is directly related along the 'World Axis', is this not the reason why it is said that *Metatron* himself was Moses' teacher? Let us further cite these lines:

His name is Mikael, the 'High Priest' who is holocaust and oblation before God. And all that the Israelites do on earth is accomplished in conformity with what happens in the celestial world. The Great Pontiff here below symbolizes *Mikael*, prince of Clemency.... In all the passages where Scripture speaks of the appearance of *Mikael*, the glory of the *Shekinah* is involved.' (pp500—501.)

What is said here of the Israelites can be said of all peoples who possess a truly orthodox tradition; all the more must it be said of the representatives of the primordial tradition, from which all the others derive and to which they are all subordinate. On the other hand, Metatron not only has the aspect of Clemency but also that of justice; in the celestial world he is not only the 'High Priest' (Koheii hagadol) but also the 'High Prince' (Sar ha-gadol), which amounts to saying that in him is found the principle of royal power as well as that of the sacerdotal or pontifical power to which the function of 'mediator' properly corresponds. It should also be noted that Melek, 'king', and Maleak, 'angel' or 'messenger', are really two forms of the same word; moreover, Malaki, 'my messenger' (that is to say, the messenger of God, or 'the angel in which is God', maleak ha-Elohim) is the anagram of Mikael. It is fitting to add that although as we have

seen *Mikael* is identified with *Metatron*, he represents only one aspect of him; besides the luminous face there is also a dark face, and we touch here upon other mysteries. Indeed, it may seem strange that *Samael* is also named *Sar ha-dlam*, and we are a little surprised that Vulliaud was content to register this fact without the least comment (p512). It is this last aspect, and this one only, that is in an inferior sense 'the guardian spirit of this world', the *Princeps jurus mundi* mentioned in the Gospel; and this relationship with *Metatron*, of which he is like the shadow, justifies the use of the same name in a double meaning, and leads one to understand at the same time why the apocalyptic number 666 is also a solar number (it is formed in particular from the name *Sorath*, demon of the Sun, and opposed as such to the angel *Mikael*). Moreover, Vulliaud remarks that according to Saint Hippolyte, 'the Messiah and the Antichrist both have for an emblem the lion' (vol. 2, p373), which is also a solar symbol; and the same observation could be made for the serpent and for many other symbols. From the Kabbalistic point of view it is again a question of the two opposite faces of *Metatron*; in a more general way one could develop on the basis of this question of the double meaning of symbols an entire theory that does not yet seem to have been clearly expounded. We will not dwell further, at least for the moment, on this side of the question, which is perhaps one of those where one encounters, in trying to explain it, the greatest difficulties.

But let us return to the *Shekinah*: this is represented in the lower world by the last of the ten *Sephiroth*, which is called *Malkuth*, that is to say the 'Kingdom', a designation quite worthy of comment from our point of view (as much as is *Tsedek*, 'the Just', which is sometimes a synonym of it); and *Malkuth* is the 'reservoir into which flow the waters which come from the river on high, that is, all the emanations (graces or spiritual influences) which it pours out in abundance' (vol. 1, P509). This 'river from on high' and the waters that come from it strangely recall the role attributed to the celestial river *Ganga* in the Hindu tradition, and one could also point out that the *Shakti*, of which the *Ganga* is one aspect, does not lack a certain analogy with the *Shekinah*, were it only by reason of the 'providential' function common to them both. We know well that

the habitual exclusivism of Judaic ideas is not at ease with such comparisons, but they are none the less real, and for us who are not in the habit of allowing ourselves to be influenced by certain prejudices, they present a very great interest because they are a confirmation of the essential doctrinal unity hidden under the apparent diversity of outward forms.

The reservoir of the celestial waters is naturally identical with the spiritual center of our world, from which well up the four rivers of *Parties*, making their way to the four cardinal points. For the Hebrews, this spiritual center is the holy Mt Zion, to which they give the name 'heart of the world', and which thus becomes for them the equivalent of the *Merit* of the Hindus or the *Alborj* of the Persians. 'The Tabernacle of the Holiness of Jehovah, the residence of the *Shekinah*, is the Holy of Holies which is the heart of the Temple that is itself the center of Zion (Jerusalem), as Holy Zion is the center of the Land of Israel, and as the land of Israel is the center of the world' (p 509).

It is also in this way that Dante presents Jerusalem as the 'spiritual pole', as we have explained elsewhere;⁵ but when one departs from the properly Judaic point of view, this representation becomes above all symbolic and no longer constitutes a localization in the strict sense of the word. All secondary spiritual centers, established in view of different adaptations of the primordial tradition to given conditions, are images of the supreme center. Zion may really be only one of the secondary centers, but despite this it can be identified symbolically with the supreme center by virtue of this analogy; and what we have already said regarding the 'Holy Land', which is not only the Land of Israel, will enable us to understand this more easily. Another very remarkable expression, as a synonym of 'Holy Land', is 'Land of the Living'; it is said that 'the Land of the Living comprises seven lands', and Vulliaud remarks in this connection that 'this land is Canaan, in which there were seven peoples' (vol. 2. pn6).

Doubtless this is correct in the literal sense; but would not these seven lands correspond symbolically to the seven *Dvipas* which,

5. See The Esoterism of Dilute, chap 8. Eo.

according to the Hindu tradition, have *Merit* as their common center? And if this is so, when the ancient worlds or the creations anterior to ours are represented by the 'seven kings of Edom' (the number is related to the seven 'days' of Genesis), is there not a resemblance, too strongly emphasized to be accidental, to the ages of the seven *Manus* that have elapsed from the beginning of the *Kalpa* up to the present time? We present these few thoughts only as an example of conclusions it is possible to draw from the information contained in Vulliaud's work; unfortunately, it is much to be feared that most readers may not be able to perceive this and draw conclusions from it on their own. But by following up our critique with more doctrinal considerations, we have done a little, within the limits we necessarily had to set ourselves, of what we would have hoped to find in Vulliaud himself.

5

THE *SIPHRA* *DI-TZENIUTHA*

As THE FIRST OF A SERIES of 'fundamental texts of the Kabbalah', Paul Vulliaud has just published a translation of the *Siphra di-Tzeniutha*,¹ preceded by a long introduction, much longer than the translation itself, or rather the two translations, for there are two successive versions of the text in this volume, one literal and the other paraphrased. This introduction seems intended especially to demonstrate that such a work is far from being useless, even after the *Zohar* of Jean de Pauly; thus, the greater part of it is devoted to a detailed account of the said French translation, an account containing, it seems, almost everything it is possible to know about the translator himself, a truly enigmatic personage whose origins are not yet fully clarified. This whole story is very curious, and it is not beside the point, in order to explain the gaps and the imperfections of this work, to know under what conditions it was realized and what strange difficulties the editor had with the unfortunate Jean de Pauly, who was afflicted by a persecution mania. Nevertheless, we feel that such details have been given too great a place; on reading them, one begins to regret that Vulliaud did not devote himself entirely to what can be called the lesser details of the story, for he surely would have brought to them an unusual zest; but the Kabbalistic studies would have lost a great deal had he done so.

Concerning the present state of these studies, this same introduction contains general considerations in the course of which Vulliaud attacks, as only he knows how, the 'Doctors', that is, the 'officials'

1. See *The King of the World*, chap, 10, n 4. Ed.

about whom he had already spoken some harsh truths in his *Kabbale juive*, and then a Jesuit priest, Fr. Bonsirven, whom some it seems are now trying to present as an incomparable authority on the subject of Judaism. This discussion is the occasion for some very interesting remarks, especially on the methods of the Kabbalists and on the manner—adjudged ‘astounding’ by the critics—in which they cite scriptural texts; in this connection Vulliaud adds:

Contemporary exegesis has shown itself particularly incapable of adequately analyzing Gospel ‘quotations’ because it is determined to ignore the procedures of Jewish hermeneutics; one must take oneself to Palestine, since the evangelical works were elaborated in this region.

This seems to accord, at least in tendency, with the works of another Jesuit Father, Marcel Jousse, and it is a pity that he is not mentioned, for it would have been interesting to have him thus confront his colleague... On the other hand, Vulliaud very properly points out that Catholics who scoff at the magic formulas, or what are called such, contained in Kabbalistic works, and who hasten to label them as superstitious, ought really to notice that their own rituals are filled with things of the same kind. Likewise for the accusation of ‘eroticism’ and ‘obscenity’ brought against a certain type of symbolism:

Catholic critics might reflect, before adding their voices to those of rationalist Jews and Protestants, that Catholic theology is susceptible, like the Kabbalah, of easily becoming an object of derision regarding what occupies us at present.

It is good that these things are said by a writer who himself professes Catholicism, and certain fanatical anti-Semites and anti-Masons ought to take profit from this excellent lesson.

There are also many other things to point out in the introduction, notably regarding the Christian interpretation of the *Zohar*. Vulliaud makes some apt qualifications regarding certain rather forced comparisons made by Drach and accepted by Jean de Pauly. He also returns to the question of the antiquity of the *Zohar*, which the adversaries of the Kabbalah are bent on challenging for very poor reasons. But there is something else that is a pleasure to point

out: Vulliaud states that 'to properly translate certain essential passages, it is necessary to be initiated into the mysteries of Jewish esoterism,' and that 'de Pauly undertook the translation of the *Zohar* without having this initiation'; further on he notes that the Gospel of St John, as well as the Apocalypse, was 'addressed to initiates,' and we could find still other similar statements. There is thus a certain change of attitude with Vulliaud for which we can only congratulate him, for until now he seemed to have a strange reluctance to utter the word 'initiation', or at least if he did, it was really only to mock certain 'initiates' whom he ought rather, to avoid all regrettable confusion, to have qualified as pseudo-initiates. What he writes now is the exact truth; it is indeed 'initiation' in the proper sense of the word that is in question, both in the Kabbalah and in every other esoterism worthy of the name; and we must add that this goes much further than the deciphering of a sort of cryptography, which is what Vulliaud seems to have especially in mind when he speaks as we have just seen. Doubtless this too exists; but this is still only a question of outward form, though the outward form is far from being negligible since one must pass through it to arrive at an understanding of the doctrine. But one must not confuse the means with an end nor place them on the same plane.

However that may be, it is quite certain that most often the Kabbalists may really be speaking of something very different from what they appear to be speaking of, and this is not peculiar to them, far from it, for one finds it also in the Western Middle Ages. We had occasion to examine this subject in connection with Dante and the 'Fedeli d'Amore', and we noted then the principal reasons for it, which do not all reduce to mere prudence as the 'profane' may be tempted to suppose.² The same thing also exists in Islamic esoterism, developed to a point that no one, we believe, could suspect in the Western world; moreover, the Arabic language as well as the Hebrew language lends itself to this admirably. Here we find not only the usual symbolism, which Luigi Valli has shown in the work we spoke of to be common to both Sufis and the 'Fedeli d'Amore', but much that is better still. Is it conceivable to Western minds that

2. See *Insights into Christian Esoterism*, chaps. 4 and 5. Ed.

a mere treatise on grammar or geography, or even on commerce, should at the same time possess another meaning that makes it an initiatic work of great importance? So it is nonetheless, and these are not chance examples; these three cases are from books that very really exist and that we actually have in our hands.

This leads us to express a slight criticism concerning Vulliaud's translation of the title *Siphra di-Tzeniutha*. He writes 'Secret Book', and not 'Book of the Secret', and the reasons he gives seem rather inconclusive. It is indeed puerile to imagine, as some have done, that 'this title recalls the flight of Simeon ben Yohai, during which time that rabbi is said to have composed this opuscle in secret'; but this is hardly what is meant by 'Book of the Secret', which really has a much higher and deeper meaning than that of 'Secret Book'. Here we allude to the important role played in certain initiatic traditions, precisely those which interest us now, by the idea of a 'secret' (in Hebrew *sod*, in Arabic *sirr*), which has nothing to do with discretion or dissimulation but is thus by the very nature of things;³ must we recall in this connection that the Christian Church itself in its first days had a 'discipline of the secret', and that the word 'mystery' in its original sense properly designates the inexpressible?

As for the translation itself, we said there were two versions, and they are not redundant, for the literal version, useful as it may be for those who wish to go back to the text and follow it closely, is often unintelligible. It is always like this, as we have said many times, in the case of sacred books or other traditional writings, and if a translation had to be 'word for word' in the scholarly and academic fashion, one would have to declare them really untranslatable. In reality, for us who place ourselves at a completely different point of view from that of the linguists, it is in truth the paraphrased and annotated version that constitutes the meaning of the text and allows it to be understood, while the literal version sometimes has the effect of a sort of 'word-puzzle', as Vulliaud says, or an incoherent rambling. We only regret that the commentary is not more extensive and explicit; the notes, although numerous and very interesting, are not always sufficiently 'illuminating', so to speak, and it is to be feared

3. See *Perspectives on Initiation*, chap. 13. ED.

that they may not be understood by those who do not already have a more than elementary knowledge of the Kabbalah; but doubtless we must await the sequel of these 'fundamental texts', which, it is to be hoped, will felicitously complete this first volume. Vulliaud owes it both to us and himself to provide a similar work on the *Iddra Rabba* and *Iddra Zuta* which, with the *Siphra di-Tzeniutha*, are as he says far from being simply annexes or appendices of the *Zohar*, but 'are on the contrary its central parts,' those which contain as it were in the most concentrated form all the essential part of the doctrine.

REVIEWS

Le Scorpion, symbole du peuple juif dans l'art religieux des XIVe, XVe, XVIe siècles, by MARCEL BUIARD (Paris: Editions de Boccard, 1935). Starting with an examination of paintings in the Chapel of St Sebastian de Lans-le-Villard in Savoy, the author has collected all the relevant documents he was able to discover and has made a very detailed study of them, accompanied by many reproductions. Under discussion are representations of the scorpion, either on the standard carried by the personified Synagogue, or more frequently in the representations of certain scenes of the Passion. In this last case, the scorpionic standard is generally associated with standards bearing other emblems, and especially the letters S P Q R, obviously to indicate the participation of both the Jews and the Romans. A rather curious thing that seems to have escaped the author's attention is that these same letters, arranged in another order (S Q R P), evoke phonetically the very name of the scorpion. As for the interpretation of this symbol, the author, basing himself on the 'Bestiaries' as well as on the dramatic poetry of the end of the Middle Ages, shows that it especially signifies falsity and perfidy; he quite rightly remarks, moreover, that during the period in question symbolism, far from being 'dogmatic' as it was previously, became principally 'moral', which amounts to saying that it was on the verge of degenerating into mere 'allegory', a direct consequence of the weakening of the traditional spirit. Be that as it may, we think that, originally at least, there must have been something more, perhaps an allusion to the zodiacal sign of Scorpio, to which the idea of death is attached; besides, we may note in this regard (that without such an allusion the very passage of the Gospel

where the scorpion is opposed to the egg (Luke 11:11-12) remains perfectly incomprehensible. Another interesting and enigmatic point is the attribution of the same symbols, in particular the scorpion and the basilisk, to the Synagogue and to Dialectic. Here the explanations considered, such as the reputation for dialectical skill that the Jews had, seem to us truly insufficient to explain such an association; and we cannot help but recall a tradition according to which the works of Aristotle, who was considered the master of Dialectic, must have contained a hidden meaning that cannot be penetrated and applied except by the Antichrist, who on the other hand, it is said, must be of Jewish descent. Is there not something to look for in this direction?

SIR CHARLES MARSTON, *La Bible a dit vrai*, tr. Luce Clarence (Paris: Librairie Pion, 1935) [orig. English, *The Bible is True: the Lessons of the 1925-1934 Excavation in Bible Lands Summarized and Explained* (London: The Religious Book Club, 1934)]. First and foremost this book contains, if one may put it so, an excellent criticism of biblical 'criticism', bringing out perfectly all that is partial in its methods and mistaken in its conclusions. Moreover, it seems that the position of this 'criticism', formerly so self-assured, is today seriously compromised in the eyes of many, for all the recent archeological discoveries only bring more refutations. Perhaps this is the first time that such discoveries serve for something that goes beyond mere erudition... It goes without saying moreover that those who truly know what tradition is have never had any need for this kind of proof; but it must be recognized that, being based on facts that are as it were 'material' and tangible, they are especially fitted to appeal to the modern spirit, which is sensitive only to things of this order. We will note in particular that the results obtained go directly against all the 'evolutionist' theories, and that they show 'monotheism' at the very origins and not as the final outcome of a long development starting from a so-called primitive 'animism'. Another interesting point is the proof of the existence of alphabetic writing at the time of Moses, and even earlier; and texts almost contemporaneous with him describe rites similar to those of the Pentateuch, which the 'critics' claimed to be of late institution. Finally, numerous historical facts reported in the Bible, the authenticity of which was challenged, are now found to be entirely confirmed. Of course, there still remain besides this many more or less doubtful points; and what we must be wary of is not to go too far

in the direction of a narrow and exclusive 'literalism', which, whatever one might say, has absolutely nothing traditional about it in the true sense of the word. It is questionable whether one may speak of a 'biblical chronology' when one goes back beyond Moses. The epoch of Abraham might well be more remote than is supposed. And as for the Deluge, the date that some assign to it would oblige us to reduce its importance to that of a local and very secondary catastrophe, comparable to the floods of Deucalion and Ogyges. As to the origins of humanity, it is necessary to be wary of the obsession with the Caucasus and Mesopotamia, which also has nothing traditional about it and arose solely from interpretations formulated when certain things were no longer understood in their true sense. We can hardly dwell here on certain more particular points, but let us nonetheless note this: how, while recognizing that 'Melchizedek was regarded as a very mysterious personage' in every tradition, can one bring oneself to make him merely the king of some small city, which moreover was not called Salem, but Jesus? And furthermore, if one wishes to place the country of Midian beyond the Gulf of Akaba, what does one do with the tradition that the location of the Burning Bush is to be found in the crypt of the monastery of Saint Catherine, at the very foot of Sinai? But of course, all this in no way diminishes the value of the really important discoveries, which will doubtless continue to multiply, all the more, since, after all, their first appearance goes back only some ten years; and we can only recommend the reading of this clear and conscientious account to all who wish to find arguments against this destructive and anti-traditional 'criticism'. But we are obliged to end with a 'warning' against another point of view: the author seems to rely on modern 'metapsychics' to explain miracles or at least to have them accepted, along with the gift of prophecy and in general links with what he rather unfortunately calls the 'Invisible' (a word which occultists of every category have used and abused all too much); moreover, he is not alone in this, and we have become aware recently of other examples of a similar tendency. This is a regrettable illusion, and there is even, from this perspective, a danger that is all the greater as one is less aware of it. It must not be forgotten that 'diabolical ruses' take all forms, according to circumstances, and attest to almost inexhaustible resources!

PART IV

1

THE HERMETIC TRADITION

UNDER THE TITLE *La Tradizione Ermetica net suoi Simboli, nella sua Dottrina e nella sua 'Ars Regia'*,¹ Julius Evola has recently published a work that is interesting in many respects, but which just once more illustrates, as if this were needed, the timeliness of what we wrote recently on the relationships between priestly initiation and royal initiation.² We find affirmed here the independence of the second, to which the author wishes precisely to link Hermeticism, and the idea of two distinct and even irreducible traditional types, one contemplative and the other active, which generally characterize of the East and the West respectively. Thus we make certain reservations about the interpretation given of Hermetic symbolism, in the measure that it is influenced by such a conception, although elsewhere it clearly shows that true alchemy is of the spiritual and not the material order, which is the exact truth, a truth too often misunderstood or ignored by modern writers who claim to deal with these questions.

We will take advantage of this occasion to further clarify some important ideas, first of all the meaning which should be attributed to the word 'Hermeticism' itself, which some of our contemporaries

1. G. Laterza: Bari, 1931. This work has since appeared in a French translation. [See the recent English translation, *The Hermetic Tradition: Symbols & Teachings of the Royal Art* (Inner Traditions International: Rochester, VT, 1995). Eo.]

2. Cf. *Perspectives on Initiation*, chap. 40. [Cf. also *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power. Ed.*

seem to use without rhyme or reason. This word indicates that we are dealing essentially with a tradition of Egyptian origin, later cloaked in a Hellenized form, doubtless in the Alexandrian epoch, and transmitted in this form during the Middle Ages to both the Islamic and the Christian worlds, and, let us add, to the second largely by the intermediary of the first, as is proven by the numerous Arabic or arabicized terms adopted by the European Hermeticists, beginning with the word alchemy' (*al-Kimia*) itself.³ It would therefore be quite illegitimate to extend this designation to other traditional forms, just as it would be, for example, to call 'Kabbalah' anything other than Hebrew esoterism; not, of course, that there exist no equivalents elsewhere, for these exist to the point that this traditional science of alchemy has its exact correspondence in doctrines such as those of India, Tibet, and China, although with modes of expression and methods of realization that are naturally quite different. But as soon as one says 'Hermeticism', one specifies a clearly determined form, whose provenance can only be Greco-Egyptian. Indeed, the doctrine thus designated is by this very fact related to *Hermes* insofar as he was considered by the Greeks to be identical with the Egyptian *Thoth*; and we will note immediately that this goes against Evola's thesis by presenting this doctrine as derived essentially from a sacerdotal teaching, for *Thoth*, in his role as preserver and transmitter of tradition, is nothing other than the very representation of the ancient Egyptian priesthood, or rather, to speak more exactly, of the principle of inspiration from which it held its authority and in whose name it formulated and communicated initiatic knowledge.

Now a question must be asked: does what has been preserved under the name of 'Hermeticism' constitute a complete traditional doctrine? The answer can only be negative, for strictly speaking the knowledge it represents is not metaphysical but only cosmological (understanding this in its double application, 'macrocosmic' and 'microcosmic'). It is therefore not admissible that Hermeticism, in the sense that this word has acquired since the Alexandrian period

3. This word is Arabic in its form but not in its root. It probably derives from the name Kemi or 'Black Earth' given to ancient Egypt.

and held constantly since then, represents the whole of the Egyptian tradition. Although the cosmological point of view seems to have been particularly developed here, and is in any case what is most apparent in all the vestiges that remain, whether it be texts or monuments, it must not be forgotten that it can never be anything but a secondary and contingent point of view, an application of the doctrine to the knowledge of what we can call the 'intermediary world'. It would be interesting, though no doubt rather difficult, to examine how this part of the Egyptian tradition could have found itself as it were isolated and yet remain apparently independent, and then be incorporated into the Islamic and Christian esoterisms of the Middle Ages (which a complete doctrine could not have achieved), to the point of truly becoming an integral part of both and furnishing them with an entire symbolism which, through a suitable transposition, could even serve on occasion as a vehicle for truths of a higher order. This is not the place to enter into these very complex historical considerations, but however that may be, we must say that, even if the specifically cosmological character of Hermeticism does not justify Evola's conception, it at least explains it in a certain measure, for sciences of this order are those which, in all traditional civilizations, have been pre-eminently the appanage of the Kshatriyas or their equivalents, whereas pure metaphysics was that of the Brahmins. This is why one sometimes witnesses as an effect of the revolt of the Kshatriyas against the spiritual authority of the Brahmins the formation of incomplete traditional currents, reduced to these single sciences separated from their principle, and even deviated in a 'naturalist' direction by a negation of metaphysics and the misunderstanding of the subordinate character of 'physical' science and (the two things being closely connected) the sacerdotal origin of all initiatic teaching, even that more particularly intended for the use of the Kshatriyas, as we have explained on other occasions.⁴ This is certainly not to say that Hermeticism in itself constitutes such a deviation or that it essentially implies something illegitimate (which would have made its incorporation into traditional orthodox forms impossible); but it is quite necessary to recognize that it

4. See in particular *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*.

can easily lend itself to this by its very nature, and this more generally is the danger of all traditional sciences when they are cultivated for themselves alone, something that exposes them to the danger of losing sight of their attachment to the principial order. Alchemy, which could be defined as the 'technique' of Hermeticism, is truly a 'royal art', if this is understood to be a mode of initiation particularly appropriate to the nature of Kshatriyas; but this itself marks its exact place in the ensemble of a regularly constituted tradition, and one must furthermore not confuse the means to initiatic realization with its final goal, which is always pure knowledge.

Another point in Evola's thesis that seems questionable is the assimilation he almost always makes between Hermeticism and magic. It is true that he seems to take 'magic' in a rather different sense from what is ordinarily understood, but we greatly fear that even this cannot but occasion some rather unfortunate confusions. Inevitably, when one thinks of 'magic', one thinks of a science meant to produce more or less extraordinary phenomena, notably (but not exclusively) in the sensible order. Whatever the origin of the word may have been, this meaning has become so thoroughly inherent in it that it ought to be left as it is. Thus it is nothing but the most inferior of the applications of traditional knowledge, we could even say the most despised, whose practice is left to those whose individual limitations make them incapable of developing other possibilities; we see no benefit to evoking the idea when it is really a question of things that, even though contingent, are nonetheless notably higher, and even if this is only a question of terminology it must be agreed that it still has its importance. Besides, something more may be involved here; this word 'magic' exercises a strange fascination on some people in our time, and as we have already noted in the preceding article to which we alluded in the beginning, the preponderance accorded to such a point of view, be this only in intention, is still linked to the alteration of traditional sciences separated from their metaphysical principle; and this is doubtless the rock which every attempt at reconstituting such sciences strikes against, if one does not begin from what is truly the beginning in all respects, that is to say with the principle itself, which is also the end in view of which all the rest must normally be ordered.

On the other hand, where we are entirely in agreement with Evola, and where we see the greatest merit of his book, is when he insists on the purely spiritual and 'interior' nature of true alchemy, which has absolutely nothing to do with the material operations of any 'chemistry' in the natural meaning of this word. Nearly all the moderns are strangely mistaken about this, both those who would make themselves defenders of alchemy as well as those who have made themselves its detractors. It is nevertheless easy to see in what terms the ancient Hermeticists speak of the 'puffers' and 'charcoal burners', in whom must be recognized the true precursors of present-day chemists, unflattering as this may be for them; even as late as the eighteenth century an alchemist like Pernity does not fail to stress the difference between 'Hermetic philosophy' and 'common chemistry'. Thus, what gave birth to modern chemistry is not alchemy, with which it has in the final analysis no relationship (any more than does the 'hyperchemistry' dreamed up by some contemporary occultists); it is only a deformation or deviation resulting from the incomprehension of those who, incapable of penetrating the true meaning of the symbols, took everything literally and, believing that only material operations were involved, embarked on a program of more or less disordered experimentation. In the Arab world too, material alchemy has always been held of little worth, sometimes even likened to a kind of sorcery, whereas spiritual alchemy, the only true alchemy, was held in high honor, being often designated by the name *Kimia-es-saadah* or 'alchemy of felicity'.⁵

This is not to say, however, that one must deny for this reason the possibility of the metallic transmutations that represent alchemy in the eyes of the common man; but we must not confuse things of wholly different orders, and we do not even see *a priori* why such transmutations could not be achieved through procedures belonging merely to profane chemistry (the 'hyperchemistry' to which we alluded earlier really amounts to no more than this). There is, however, another aspect to the question which Evola very correctly points out. Anyone who has realized certain inner states can, by virtue of the analogical relationship between the 'microcosm' and the

5. There exists a treatise of Al-Ghazzali bearing this title.

'macrocosm', produce outwardly corresponding effects. It is therefore admissible that the one who has reached a certain degree in the practice of spiritual alchemy may be thereby capable of accomplishing metallic transmutations, but this only as a wholly accidental consequence and without recourse to any of the procedures of material pseudo-alchemy, solely by a kind of outward projection of the energies he carries within himself. There is a difference here comparable to that separating 'theurgy', or the action of 'spiritual influences', from magic and even sorcery; if the apparent effects are sometimes the same in both cases, the causes which bring them about are totally different. We will add moreover that those who really possess such powers generally make no use of them, at least outside of very particular circumstances where their exercise is made lawful by other considerations. Be that as it may, what must never be lost sight of, and what lies at the very foundation of all truly traditional teaching, is that every realization worthy of the name is of an essentially inward order, even if it is susceptible of outward repercussions. Man can find its principles and means only within himself, and he can do so because he carries within himself a correspondence with all that exists. *Al-insamt ramzul-wujud* 'A man is a symbol of universal Existence'; and if he succeeds in penetrating to the center of his own being, he thereby attains total knowledge with all that it implies in addition. *Man yaraf nafsahu yaraf Rabbahu*, 'he who knows his self knows his Lord'; and he then knows all things within the supreme unity of the Principle itself, outside of which there is nothing that can have the slightest degree of reality.

2

HERMES

WHEN SPEAKING EARLIER about the Hermetic tradition we said that this properly refers to a knowledge that is not metaphysical but only cosmological, understanding this last in both its 'macrocosmic' and 'microcosmic' senses. Although this was only the expression of the strict truth, it was unfortunately enough to displease some who, viewing Hermeticism through their own fantasies, would like it to contain any and everything. It is true that such people hardly know what pure metaphysics is. However this may be, it must be understood that by saying that we in no way wished to depreciate the traditional sciences that belong to Hermeticism nor those that correspond to them in the other doctrinal forms of the East or West; but one has to know how to put each thing in its place, and these sciences, like any specialized knowledge, remain secondary and derivative with respect to principles, of which they are only the application to a lower level of reality. Only those who would give the 'Royal Art' preeminence over the 'Sacerdotal Art' can claim the contrary;¹ and perhaps this is at root the more or less conscious reason for the protestations just alluded to.

Without otherwise concerning ourselves with what anyone else may think or say, for we are not accustomed to taking into account such individual opinions which, for tradition, do not exist, it seems

1. We have considered this question in *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*. With regard to the expression 'Royal Art', which Freemasonry still uses, we may note here the curious resemblance between the names *Hermes* and *Hiram*; needless to say, this does not mean that these two names share a common linguistic origin, but their composition is nonetheless identical, and the combination HRM, from which both are essentially formed, also suggests other comparisons.

that it might not be useless to add some new details confirming what we have already said, by focusing more particularly on Hermes, for at least no one contests that it is from Hermes that Hermeticism takes its name.² The Greek Hermes has in fact characteristics that correspond exactly to the sciences in question and that are especially expressed by his chief emblem, the caduceus, the symbolism of which we will no doubt find some other occasion to examine more fully. Suffice it to say for the moment that this symbolism relates essentially and directly to what might be called 'human alchemy'³ that concerns possibilities of the subtle state, even if these are taken merely as the preparatory means to a higher realization, as the equivalent *Hatha-Yoga* practices are in the Hindu tradition. This can, moreover, be transferred to the cosmic order, since everything in man has its correspondence in the world, and inversely;⁴ here again, and by reason of this very correspondence, the domain in question is the 'intermediary world', where forces are brought into play whose dual nature is very clearly figured by the two serpents of the caduceus. We will also recall in this connection that Hermes is represented as the messenger of the gods and as their

2. We must emphasize that Hermeticism is really of Helleno-Egyptian provenance, and that one cannot without abuse extend this term to what under diverse forms corresponds to it in other traditions, any more than one can, for example, call 'Kabbalah' a doctrine that is not specifically Hebraic. No doubt, if we were writing in Hebrew, we would use *qabbalah* to designate the tradition in general, just as, writing in Arabic, we would call initiation under any form *tasawwuf* but transposed into another language the words in Hebrew, Arabic, etc., must be reserved for the traditional forms of which their languages of origin are the respective expression, whatever may otherwise be the comparisons or even the assimilations to which they may legitimately give rise; and one must not in any case confuse a certain order of knowledge, envisaged in itself, with some special form it may have taken on in particular historical circumstances.

3. See *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, chap. 21.

4. As is said in the *Rasa'Il Ikhwiin as-Safit*, 'The world is a great man and man is a little world' (*al-alam instill kabir wa'l-insan idam seghir*). It is moreover by virtue of this correspondence that a certain realization in the 'microcosmic' order can bring about, as an accidental consequence for the being that has achieved it, an outward realization relating to the 'macrocosmic' order without it having been especially sought for itself, as we remarked in certain cases of metallic transmutation in the preceding chapter, 'The Hermetic Tradition'.

interpreter (*hermeneutes*), that is, precisely, as an intermediary between the celestial and terrestrial worlds, and that he has in addition the function of a 'psychopomp' (guide of the souls of the dead) which, in a lower order, is clearly related to the domain of subtle possibilities.⁵

It might be objected that in Hermeticism, Hermes takes the place of the Egyptian Thoth, with whom he was identified, and that Thoth properly represents Wisdom, which relates to the priesthood as the guardian and transmitter of the tradition. That is true enough, but since this assimilation cannot have been made without some reason, it must be admitted that it is more particularly a certain aspect of Thoth that is considered here, one corresponding to a certain part of the tradition that includes the branches of knowledge relating to the intermediary world; and in fact, all that can be known of the ancient Egyptian civilization from its vestiges shows precisely that this kind of knowledge was much more developed there and had acquired more importance there than anywhere else. There is besides another comparison, we might even say another equivalence, which shows clearly that this objection has no real significance: in India, the planet Mercury (or Hermes) is called *Budha*, a name whose root means Wisdom; here again, it is enough to determine the order where this Wisdom, which in its essence is the inspiring principle of all knowledge, is to find its more particular application when it is related to this specialized function.⁶

As concerns the name *Budha*, it is curious to note that it is in fact identical to the Scandinavian *Odin*, *Woden*, or *Wotan*;⁷ it is thus not

5. Astrologically, the two functions of messenger of the gods and psychopomp can be respectively related to a diurnal and nocturnal aspect; on the other hand, the same correspondence can be found in them as between the ascending and descending currents symbolized by the two serpents of the caduceus.

6. The name *Budha* must not be confused with *Buddha*, the name of Shakyamuni, although both obviously have the same root meaning; moreover, certain aspects of the planetary *Budha* were later transferred to the historical *Buddha*, who is represented as having been 'illuminated' by the irradiation of this star, whose essence he is said to have absorbed. Let us note here that the mother of the Buddha is called Miyd-Devl and that, for the Greeks and Romans, *Ma't'a* was also the mother of Hermes or Mercury.

7. The change of B to v or w is a very common linguistic phenomenon.

at all arbitrary that the Romans assimilated Odin to Mercury, and in some Germanic languages the day of Mercury (in French *Mecredi*) is still called the day of Odin.⁸ What is perhaps even more remarkable is that this same name is found in the Votan of the ancient traditions of Central America, who moreover has the attributes of Hermes, for he is *Quetzalcoatl*, the 'bird-serpent', and the union of these two symbolic animals (corresponding respectively to air and lire) is also figured by the wings and the serpents of the cadueus.⁹ One must indeed be blind not to see in such facts a sign of the fundamental unity of all traditional doctrines; unfortunately, such blindness is only too common in our time, where those who truly know how to read symbols are now a tiny minority, and where we find on the contrary all too many 'profane ones' who think themselves qualified to interpret 'sacred science', which they fit to the measure of their own more or less confused imagination.

Another no less interesting point is that in the Islamic tradition the prophet Idris is identified both with Hermes and with Enoch; this double assimilation seems to indicate a continuity of tradition going back before the Egyptian priesthood, for this latter merely inherited what Enoch represented, and he manifestly relates to an earlier period.¹⁰ At the same time, the sciences attributed to Idris

8. 'Wednesday' has exactly the same connotation in English. Et>.

9. On this subject see 'The Language of the Birds' (*Symbols of Sacred Science*, chap. 7), where we pointed out that the serpent is opposed or associated with the bird according to whether it is envisaged in its malefic or benefic aspect. *We will add that a figure like that of an eagle holding a serpent in its talons (which is to be found precisely in Mexico) does not evoke exclusively the idea of the antagonism represented in the Hindu tradition by the combat of Garuda against the Naya.* On occasion, especially in heraldic symbolism, the serpent is replaced by a sword (a substitution that is all the more striking when the weapon in question has the form of a flaming sword, which can be linked to the lightning in the clutch of Jupiter's eagle), and the sword, in its highest signification, represents Wisdom and the power of the Word (see, for example. Rev. i:i6). — It may be noted that one of the chief symbols of the Egyptian Thoth was the ibis, destroyer of reptiles, which on this basis became a symbol of Christ; but in the caduceus of Hermes we have the serpent in its two contrary aspects, as in the figure of the medieval 'amphisbaena' (see *The King, of the World*, chap. 3,1120).

10. Should it not be concluded from this assimilation that the *Book of Enoch*, or at any rate what is known by this name, must be considered to be an integral part of

and placed under his special influence are not the purely spiritual sciences, which are attributed to the prophet Aissa, that is, to Christ, but the sciences that can be qualified as 'intermediary', among which alchemy and astrology belong in the first rank; these are indeed the sciences that can properly be called Hermetic. But this brings us to another consideration, which, at least at first glance, might seem to indicate a rather strange reversal of the usual correspondences. Among the principal prophets, a particular one, as we shall see in a future study, presides over each of the planetary heavens and is its 'Pole' (*al-Qutb*). Now, it is not Idris who presides over the heaven of Mercury, but Aissa [Jesus], whereas Idris presides over the heaven of the sun; and this naturally involves the same transposition in the astrological correspondences of the sciences that are respectively attributed to them. This raises a very complex question which we could not hope to treat fully here; perhaps we shall have occasion to come back to it, but for the moment we will confine ourselves to a few remarks which will perhaps enable us to glimpse the solution, and will in any case at least show that there is something altogether different here from a simple confusion, and which what might pass for such in the eyes of a superficial and 'outward' observer is in reality based on very profound notions.

First, this is not an isolated case among all the traditional doctrines, for one can find something similar in Hebrew angelology. Generally, *Mikael* is the angel of the sun, and Raphael is the angel of Mercury, but it sometimes happens that these roles are reversed. On the other hand, if *Mikael*, insofar as he represents the solar *Metatron*, is esoterically assimilated to Christ,¹¹ Raphael, according to the meaning of his name, is the 'divine healer', while Christ also appears as 'spiritual healer' and as 'restorer'; one could find also other connections between Christ and the principle represented by Mercury

the whole corpus of 'Hermetic books'? On the other hand, some also say that the prophet Idris is the same as the Buddha. What has already been said shows well enough how we are to understand this assertion, which really refers to *Budha*, the Hindu equivalent of Hermes. It could not refer to the historic Buddha, whose death is a known fact, whereas Idris is expressly said to have been transported alive to heaven, which corresponds precisely to the biblical Enoch.

11. See *The King of the World*, chap. 3.

among the planetary spheres.¹² It is true that for the Greeks medicine was attributed to Apollo, that is, to the solar principle, and to his son Asclepius (in Latin, *Aesculapius*), but in the 'Hermetic books' Asclepius becomes the son of Hermes, and we should also note that the staff that is his emblem has close symbolic connections to the caduceus.¹³ This example from medicine moreover allows us to understand how one and the same science can have aspects related to different orders, thus with equally different correspondences, even if the outward effects obtained are apparently similar, for there is a purely spiritual or 'heuristic' medicine, and there is also

12. Perhaps it is here that one must see the origin of the error committed by those who consider the Buddha to be the ninth *matara* of Vishnu; in reality this is a manifestation related to the principle designated as the planetary *Hudha*. In this case the Solar Christ would properly be Glorious Christ, that is, the tenth *avatara*, who is to come at the end of the cycle. *We will recall as a curiosity that the month of May takes its name from Maia, Mercury's mother (who is said to be one of the Pleiades) to whom that month was formerly consecrated in ancient times; now in Christianity it has become the 'month of Mary by an assimilation, doubtless not merely phonetic, between Maria and Maia.*

[In his translation of the present chapter included in *The Sword of Gnosis* (Boston: Arkana, 1986), Martin Lings provides the following expanded version of the above note, adding that 'it has been somewhat modified by the translator in the light of conversation that he had with the author many years after the article had been written':

If Hindu doctrine considers the Buddha as being the ninth *avatara* of Vishnu, that is the Mleccha (foreign) *avatara*, this does not necessarily exclude other divine interventions that have taken place on behalf of 'foreign' (non-Hindu) peoples during the same period. In particular, Christ might be said to share with the Buddha the ninth *avatara* function, since his first coming was, for the West, what the advent of the Buddha was for the Far East (and what the Koranic 'descent' was for the 'middle' region). Now, as we have seen in connection with the Buddha, the ninth *avatara* is a 'Mercurial' manifestation. It would seem that the two comings of Christ may be related to his 'Mercurial' and 'Solar' aspects, the Solar Christ being Christ Glorious, that is, the tenth or Kalki *avatara*, who is to come at the end of the cycle, the 'white horse' of this final descent being a solar symbol par excellence... ,]

13. Around the staff of Asclepius is coiled a single serpent which represents the benefic force, for the malefic force must disappear by the very fact that it is a question of the genius of medicine. *Let us note too the connection of this same staff of Asclepius, as an emblem of healing, with the biblical symbol of the 'brazen serpent' (see on this symbolism our study 'Seth', chap. 22 of Symbols of Sacred Science).*

Hermetic or 'spagyric' medicine; this is directly related to the question we are presently considering; and perhaps we will explain some day why from the traditional point of view medicine was considered as essentially a sacerdotal science.

On the other hand, there is nearly always a close connection made between Enoch (Idris) and Elijah (Dhul-Kifl), both of whom were taken up to heaven without passing through corporeal death,¹⁴ and Islamic tradition places both in the solar sphere. Similarly, according to the Rosicrucian tradition, Elias Artista, who presides over the Hermetic 'Great Work',¹⁵ resides in the 'Solar Citadel', which is the abode of the 'Immortals' (in the sense of the Chirajtuls of Hinduism, that is, beings 'endowed with longevity', whose life lasts throughout the whole cycle),¹⁶ and which represents one of the aspects of the 'Center of the World'. All of this is certainly worthy of reflection, and if one also adds the traditions, which nearly everywhere liken the sun itself symbolically to the fruit of 'the Tree of Life',¹⁷ one will perhaps understand the special relationship which the solar influence has with Hermeticism, insofar as this, like the 'lesser mysteries' of antiquity, has as its essential aim the restoration of the human 'primordial state'. Is this not the 'Solar Citadel' of the Rosicrucians, which is to 'descend from Heaven to earth' at the end of the cycle in the form of the 'Heavenly Jerusalem', realizing the 'squaring of the circle' according to the perfect measure of the 'golden reed'?

14. It is said that they are to appear on earth again at the end of the cycle; they are the two 'witnesses' mentioned in Rev. 11.

15. He incarnates as it were the nature of the 'philosophic fire', and one knows that, according to the Bible narrative, the Prophet Elijah was taken up to heaven on a 'chariot of fire'; this is related to the 'fiery vehicle' (taijasa in the Hindu doctrine) which, in the human being, corresponds to the subtle state (see *Man and His Becoming* according to the Vedanta, chap. 14).

16. See *Man and His Becoming* according to the Vedanta, chap. 1. Let us also recall, from the alchemical point of view, the correspondence between the sun and gold, which the Hindu tradition designates as 'mineral light'; the aurum potable of the Hermeticists is moreover the same as the 'draught of immortality', which is also called 'liquor of gold' in Taoism.

17. See *The Symbolism of the Cross*, chap. 9.

3

HERMES' TOMB

WHAT WE HAVE SAID about certain 'pseudo-initiatic' enterprises makes it easy to understand the reasons why we are very little inclined to address questions more or less directly touching upon the ancient Egyptian tradition. On this subject we can even add that the very fact that present-day Egyptians do not in any way preoccupy themselves with research concerning this vanished civilization should suffice to show that from the point of view that interests us there is no effective benefit in doing so. If it were otherwise, it is quite obvious that they would not have allowed it to be as it were abandoned to the monopoly of foreigners, who in any case have never made it anything more than a matter of erudition. The truth is that between ancient Egypt and present-day Egypt there is no more than a geographical coincidence without the slightest historical continuity; thus the tradition in question is even more completely foreign in the country where it formerly existed than is Druidism for the peoples now inhabiting the ancient Celtic countries;..and the fact that many more of its monuments still stand changes nothing in this respect. We insist on clarifying this point once and for all in order to cut short all the illusions entertained only too easily on this subject by those who have never had occasion to examine things more closely; and at the same time, this statement will destroy yet more completely the claims of 'pseudo-initiates' who, while relying on the evidence of ancient Egypt, would like to give us to understand that they are connected with something that still subsists in Egypt itself. Moreover, we know that this is not a purely imaginary supposition, and that some, counting on general ignorance, in which, unfortunately, they are not altogether wrong, push their claims to this point.

However, in spite of all this, it so happens that we find ourselves almost obliged to give, insofar as it is possible, some explanations that have lately been asked of us from different quarters as a result of the unbelievable multiplication of certain fantastic stories to which we have been obliged to refer while reviewing the books to which we were alluding just now. Moreover, it must be said that these explanations will not really relate to the Egyptian tradition itself but only to what relates to it in the Arabic tradition. There are at least some rather curious indications that can perhaps contribute in spite of everything to clarifying certain obscure points, although we do not at all intend to exaggerate the importance of the conclusions it is possible to draw from them.

We have pointed out previously that no one really knows what purpose the Great Pyramid served, and we could say the same thing of the pyramids in general. It is true that the most common and widespread opinion is that they were tombs; and doubtless there is nothing impossible in this hypothesis itself. But we also know that because of certain preconceived ideas modern archeologists are resolved to discover tombs everywhere, even where there has never been the slightest trace of them, and this is not without arousing in us some suspicion. In any case, they have yet to find a tomb in the Great Pyramid; but even if one were discovered, the enigma would still not be entirely resolved, for this would obviously not exclude its having other uses at the same time, perhaps even more important ones, just as could other Pyramids that have in fact served as tombs; and it is further possible that, as some have thought, the funerary use of these monuments was a more or less late development, and that this was not their original purpose at the time of their construction. If, however, one objects to this that certain ancient information of a more or less traditional character would seem to confirm that they were really tombs, we will say something which may seem strange at first glance but which is precisely what the considerations to follow will tend to make one admit: are not the tombs in question to be understood in a purely symbolic sense?

Indeed, some say that the Great Pyramid might be the tomb of Idris, that is, of the prophet Enoch, while the second Pyramid would be that of another personage who would have been his Master, and of whom we will speak again; but, presented in this way and taken in

a literal sense, the thing is manifestly absurd since Enoch did not die but was taken up living to Heaven; how then could he have a tomb? One should not, however, be too hasty to speak here in the Western manner of baseless 'legends', for here is the explanation given: it is not Idris' body which was buried in the Pyramid, but his science; by this some understand his books, but what likelihood is there that the books were purely and simply buried, and what interest could this have presented from any point of view?¹ It would assuredly be much more plausible that the contents of these books should have been carved in hieroglyphics on the inside of the monument; but unfortunately for such a supposition there are in fact neither inscriptions nor symbolic figurations of any kind to be found in the Great Pyramid.² Therefore there remains only one acceptable hypothesis, which is that Idris' science is indeed hidden in the Pyramid, but that it is embedded in its very structure, in its outer and inner arrangement and in its proportions; and everything that may be valid in the 'discoveries' that moderns have made or think they have made on this subject represent in the final analysis only a few minute fragments of this ancient traditional science.

This interpretation agrees quite well moreover with another Arab version of the Pyramids' origin, which attributes their construction to the antediluvian king Surid, who having been warned in a dream of the imminence of the Deluge had the Pyramids built according to the plan of the sages, and ordered the priests to place in them the secrets of their sciences and the precepts of their wisdom. Now we know that Enoch or Idris, also antediluvian, is identified with Hermes or Thoth, who represents the source from which the Egyptian priesthood held its knowledge, and so by extension this priesthood

1. We hardly need remark that the case of books ritually placed in a true tomb is completely different.

2. On this question we sometimes come across strange and more or less completely fanciful assertions; thus in the *Occult Magazine*, organ of the H. B. of L., we found an allusion to the 'seventy-eight leaves of the book of Hermes, which lies buried in one of the Pyramids' (Dec. 1885, p8;). This is obviously a reference to the Tarot, but this has never been represented as a Book of Hermes, of Thoth, or of Enoch, except in certain very recent conceptions, and it is only as 'Egyptian' as are the Bohemians, to whom this name has also been given. On the 'H B of L', see our book *Theosophy: History of a Pseudo-Religion*. [See also *The Spiritist fallacy*. Ed.]

itself as the continuator of the same function of traditional teaching. It is thus always the same sacred science which in this way too would have been placed in the Pyramids.³

On the other hand, this monument destined to assure the preservation of traditional knowledge in anticipation of the cataclysm, recalls yet another well-known story, that of the two columns raised, according to some, precisely by Enoch, and according to others by Seth, on which the essentials of all the sciences was inscribed; and the mention made here of Seth leads us back to the personage for whom the second Pyramid is reputed to have been the tomb. Indeed, if this was the Master of Idris, he could not have been any other than Shith, that is, Seth, son of Adam. It is true that some ancient Arab authors call him by the apparently strange names of *Aghafimtin* and *Adhimiin*, but these are visibly only deformations of the Greek *Agathodaemon*, which, relating back to the symbolism of the serpent envisaged under its benefic aspect, applies perfectly to Seth, as we have explained elsewhere.⁴ The particular connection thus established between Seth and Enoch is all the more remarkable in that both are also connected with certain traditions concerning a return to the Terrestrial Paradise, that is, to the 'primordial state', and consequently with a 'polar' symbolism that is not unconnected with the orientation of the Pyramids. But this is another question, and we will only note in passing that this fact, which implies clearly enough a reference to 'spiritual centers', would tend to confirm the hypothesis that makes of the Pyramids a place of initiation, which, moreover, would have been the normal way to keep 'alive' the knowledge enclosed in it, at least as long as this initiation subsisted.

3. Still another version, no longer Arab but Coptic, attributes the origin of the Pyramids to Shedad and Sheddad, the sons of Ad. We really do not know what conclusions could be drawn from this, and it does not seem that there is reason to attach any great importance to it, for besides the fact that it is a question of 'giants' here, we do not see what symbolic intention it could conceal.

4. See our study 'Seth', chap. 22 of *Symbols of Sacred Science*. The *Agathodaemon* of the Greeks is often identified with Kneph, also represented by the serpent in connection with the 'World Egg', which always refers to the same symbolism. As for the *Kakodaemon*, the malefic aspect of the serpent, it is evidently identical to the Set-Typhon of the Egyptians.

Let us add that it is said that Idris or Enoch wrote many inspired books after Adam himself and Seth had already written others;⁵ these books were the prototypes of the sacred books of the Egyptians, and the more recent *Hermetic Books* represent only as it were a 'readaptation' of them, as is also the case with the various *Books of Enoch* that have come down to us under this name. On the other hand, the books of Adam, Seth, and Enoch naturally have expressed different aspects of traditional knowledge, each implying a particular relationship with one or another of the sacred sciences, as is always the case for the teaching transmitted by the different Prophets. It might be interesting in these conditions to ask with regard to Enoch and Seth whether there ought not to be something corresponding to these differences in the structure of the two Pyramids we spoke of, and whether perhaps the third Pyramid would not likewise have some connection with Adam, for although we have not found any explicit allusion to this anywhere, it would after all be quite logical to suppose that it ought to complete the ternary of the great antediluvian Prophets.⁶ Of course, we do not at all think that these questions are resolvable at present; besides, all modern 'seekers' have, so to speak, been 'hypnotized' almost exclusively by the Great Pyramid, although it is really not so much larger than the other two that the difference is striking. And when, in order to justify the exceptional importance they attribute to it, they maintain that it is the only one which was oriented exactly, perhaps they are making the error of not considering that certain variations in orientation might well be due not simply to some negligence on the part of the builders, but reflect precisely something connected to different traditional 'epochs'. But how could one expect modern Westerners to be guided in their researches by even the least accurate and appropriate ideas on things of this sort?⁷

5. The numbers of these books varies and in many cases may be only symbolic, but this point has only a rather secondary importance.

6. It goes without saying that this does not mean that the construction of the Pyramids must be literally attributed to them, but only that it may have constituted a 'fixation' of the traditional sciences respectively linked to them.

7. The idea that the Great Pyramid differs essentially from the other two seems very recent. It is said that the Caliph Al-Mamun, wishing to ascertain what the Pyramids contained, decided to have one opened; this happened to be the Great Pyramid, but he does not seem to have thought it was at all special in character.

Another observation which also has its importance is that the very name Hermes is far from being unknown to the Arab tradition;⁸ should we see only a 'coincidence' in the similarity that it presents with the word *Haram* (*Ahram* in the plural), an Arab designation for the Pyramid, from which it differs only by the addition of a final letter that is not a part of its root? Hermes is called *Almuthalleh bil-hikam*, literally 'triple by wisdom',⁹ which is equivalent to the Greek epithet *Trismegistus*, although it is more explicit, for the 'greatness' which this last expresses is at root really only the result of the wisdom that is the proper attribute of Hermes.¹⁰ Moreover, this 'triplicity' has still another meaning, for it is sometimes found elaborated in the form of three distinct Hermes: the first, called 'Hermes of Hermes' (*Hermes Al-Haramesah*) and considered antediluvian, is properly identified with Idris; the two others, who would be post-diluvian, are the 'Babylonian Hermes' (*Al-Babeh*) and the 'Egyptian Hermes' (*Al-Misrt*). This seems to indicate quite clearly that the Chaldean and Egyptian traditions were derived directly from one and the same principal source, which, given its acknowledged antediluvian character, can hardly have been other than the Atlantean tradition.¹¹

Whatever one may think of all these considerations, which are certainly as far from the views of Egyptologists as they are from

8. In addition to the correct form *Hermes*, we also find in certain authors the form *Armis*, which is obviously a distortion of it.

9. *Hikam* is the plural of *hikmah*, but both the singular and the plural forms are used in the sense of 'wisdom'.

10. It is curious to note that the word *muthalleth* also designates the triangle, for one could, without forcing things too much, find in it a link with the triangular form of the Pyramid's faces, which must also have been determined 'by the wisdom' of those who designed them, and this without taking into account that the triangle is also linked to the symbolism of the 'Pole'; and from this last point of view it is quite evident that the Pyramid itself is in fact only one image of the 'sacred Mountain'.

11. It is easy to understand that all this is already rather remote from the primordial tradition, and there would in any case be very little point in specially designating the latter as the common source of two particular traditions, since it is necessarily the source of all traditional forms without exception. One could however conclude from the order of enumeration of the three Hermes that, insofar as it seems to have some chronological significance, the Chaldean tradition had a certain anteriority with respect to the Egyptian tradition.

those of the modern investigators of the 'secret of the Pyramid', it is permissible to say that this truly represents 'Hermes' tomb', for the mysteries of his wisdom and his science have been concealed in it in such a way that it is certainly very difficult to find them.¹²

12. While on this subject, we will point out yet another modern fantasy. We have noted that some attribute a considerable importance to the fact that the Great Pyramid was never finished; indeed the top is missing, but all we can say for certain here is that the most ancient authors whose testimony we have, and who are still relatively recent, always saw it truncated as it is today. To claim from this that the missing summit corresponds to the 'corner stone' spoken of in the Bible and in the Gospel is really going too far, all the more because according to much more authentically traditional information, the stone in question would not be a 'pyramidion' but rather a 'keystone', and if it was 'rejected by the builders', it is because these, being initiated only into *Square Masonry*, were ignorant of the secrets of *Arch Masonry*. Another curious thing is that the seal of the United States portrays a truncated pyramid above which is a radiating triangle which, while being separate and even isolated by the circle of clouds surrounding it, seems to replace the summit; but there are also in this seal, which certain 'pseudo-initiatic' organizations seek to profit from, other details that are, to say the least, bizarre. Thus, the thirteen courses of the pyramid are said to correspond to the thirteen tribes of Israel (counting the two half-tribes of the sons of Joseph separately), and this is perhaps not altogether unrelated to the real origins of certain contemporary ramblings about the Great Pyramid, which tend to make of it, for rather obscure reasons, a sort of Judeo-Christian monument.

REVIEWS

ENEL: *Les Origines de la Genese et l'enseignement des Temples de l'ancienne Egypte*. vol. i, 1^{re} et 2^e parties. (Cairo: Institut francais d'Archeologie orientale, 1935). It is assuredly very difficult, and perhaps even wholly impossible today, to know what the ancient Egyptian tradition, extinct for so many centuries, really was. Thus, the various interpretations and reconstructions attempted by Egyptologists are largely hypothetical and, moreover, often contradict each other. The present work is distinguished from the usual Egyptological works by a laudable concern for doctrinal comprehension which is generally absent from them, and also by the great importance it rightly gives to symbolism, which the 'official' scholars for their part tend to deny or to ignore purely and simply; but is this to say that the views expressed here are less hypothetical than the others? We rather doubt this, especially seeing that they are inspired by a sort of prejudice toward finding a constant parallelism between the Egyptian and Hebraic traditions, for although the basis is essentially the same everywhere, nothing proves that the two forms in question have truly been so close to one another, and the direct filiation which the author seems to imagine between them and which the title itself probably means to suggest, is more than contestable. From this result more or less forced assimilations; it must be asked, for example, whether it is really certain that the Egyptian doctrine considered universal manifestation under the aspect of 'creation', which seems so peculiar to the Hebraic tradition and to those that are linked to it. The testimony of the ancients, who ought to have known better than we what they believed, does not support it in any way; and on this point our suspicion increases further when we note that the same principle is sometimes called 'Creator' and sometimes simply 'Demiurge'; one must at least choose between these two obviously incompatible roles... On the other hand, the linguistic considerations put forward doubtless call for many reservations as well, for the language in which the Egyptian tradition expresses itself is no better known than is that tradition itself; and we should add that some interpretations are clearly too much influenced by occultist ideas. But despite everything, this is not to say that there is not in this volume, whose first part is devoted to the Universe and the second to Man, a fairly great number of remarks

worthy of interest, of which some could even be confirmed by comparison with the Eastern traditions, which unfortunately the author seems to ignore almost completely, much better than by biblical references. Naturally, we cannot enter into details here; to give one example, we will only point out, in this order of ideas, what is said concerning the constellation of the Thigh, a designation of the 'Great Bear', and the expression 'Master of the Thigh', which applies to the Pole. There would be some curious connections to point out here. Finally, let us note the opinion of the author on the Great Pyramid, which he sees as both a 'Solar Temple' and a monument to 'immortalize the knowledge of the laws of the Universe.' This supposition is at least as plausible as many others that have been put forward on the subject; but as for saying that 'the hidden symbolism of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures relates directly to facts which took place during the construction of the Great Pyramid,' this is an assertion which seems to us to lack plausibility in every respect!

ENEL: *A Message from the Sphinx* (London: Rider & Co., 1936). The reservations we expressed last year in connection with another work of the same author as to the purely hypothetical character of all attempts at the reconstitution and interpretation of the ancient Egyptian tradition apply equally to this one, where we find once again in the first part, treated more briefly, some of the same ideas. The book opens with a study of hieroglyphic writing based on perfectly sound principles, which are moreover quite generally known, concerning the plurality of meanings of this writing. But when these are to be applied in detail, how can we really be certain not to mix in a greater or lesser measure of fantasy? Let us also note that the term 'ideographic' does not apply, as is claimed, to the simple representation of sensible objects, and that when it is a question of writing it is in short synonymous with 'symbolic'; and there are many other improprieties of language which are no less regrettable. For example, it is quite certain that the Egyptian doctrine must have been at root 'monotheistic', for all traditional doctrines without exception are so in the sense that they cannot but affirm principial unity. But if the word 'monotheism' thus has an acceptable meaning, even outside of specifically religious forms, has one the right to call 'pantheism' what everyone else is accustomed to call 'polytheism'? Another more serious error concerns

magic, which the author clearly confuses in many cases with theurgy (a confusion which amounts in the final analysis to that between the psychic and the spiritual), for he sees it wherever the 'power of the word' is involved, which leads him to believe that it must have had a major role at the very beginning, whereas on the contrary its predominance, as we have often explained, could only have been in Egypt, as elsewhere, a more or less late degeneration also. Let us note before going further a rather unfortunate concession made to modern 'evolutionist' theories: if the men of those ancient times possessed the crude or rudimentary mentality ascribed to them, where could they ever have recruited those 'initiates' in whom, at the same time, one observes precisely the opposite? One must necessarily choose between anti-traditional 'evolutionism' and the acceptance of traditional facts, and any compromise can only lead to insoluble contradictions.

The second part of the book is devoted to the Hebrew Kabbalah, which might be surprising if we were not already familiar with the ideas of the author on this subject. For him the Hebrew tradition is directly descended from the Egyptian tradition; they are like 'two consecutive links of the same chain.' We have already said what we think about this, but we will clarify the point further: the author is certainly right when he says that the Egyptian tradition was derived from Atlantis (which, we can say more clearly than he does, was not therefore itself the seat of the primordial tradition), but it was not the only one. And the same thing seems true particularly of the Chaldean tradition; the Arab teaching on the 'three Hermes', of which we spoke elsewhere, shows this descent quite clearly. But, if the principal source is thus the same, the difference of these forms was probably determined by the meeting with other currents, one coming from the South in the case of Egypt, and the other from the North in that of Chaldea. Now the Hebrew tradition is essentially 'Abrahamic', hence of Chaldean origin; the 'readaptation' effected by Moses was no doubt able, because of circumstances of place, to make accessory use of Egyptian elements, especially as regards certain more or less secondary traditional sciences; but it could never have had the effect of causing this tradition to depart from its own lineage so as to transfer it into another lineage foreign to the people for whom it was expressly destined and in whose language it had to be formulated. Besides, as soon as one recognizes the common origin and foundation of all traditional doctrines, the observation of certain similarities does not in any way

imply a direct filiation; this is the case for example with links like those the author wishes to establish between the Sephiroth and the Egyptian 'Ennead', assuming that they are justified; and strictly speaking, even if the resemblances seem to be based on points too particular to go back as far as the primordial tradition, the kinship of the Egyptian and Chaldean traditions would in any case amply suffice to explain it. As for claiming that primitive Hebraic writing was derived from hieroglyphs, this is an entirely gratuitous hypothesis, since no one in fact knows exactly what this writing was; all the indications that one can find concerning them tend rather to make one think the contrary; moreover, it is not at all clear how the association of numbers with letters, which is essential for Hebrew, could really have been borrowed from the hieroglyphic system. What is more, the close similarities between Hebrew and Arabic, to which not the least allusion is made here, clearly runs counter to this hypothesis, for it would be very difficult to seriously maintain that the Arab tradition also had to come from Egypt!

We will pass rapidly over the third part, where we first find views on art which, if they do in spite of everything contain some truth, nonetheless still start from an affirmation that is questionable at the very least; it is not possible to say, at least without more clarification, that 'there is only one art', for it is obvious that the underlying unity, namely ideas expressed symbolically, in no way excludes the multiplicity of forms. In the chapters that follow the author gives a survey, not of authentic traditional sciences as one might wish, but of more or less distorted fragments that have survived until our time, especially under the 'divinatory' aspect; the influence of 'occultist' conceptions appear here in a particularly regrettable way. Let us state once again that it is wholly inaccurate to say that certain sciences taught in the temples of antiquity were purely and simply equivalent to modern 'academic' sciences; in reality, even where there is an apparent similarity of object, the point of view was still totally different, and there is always a veritable abyss between the traditional sciences and the profane sciences. Finally, we cannot refrain from pointing out some errors of detail that are truly astonishing; thus the well known image of the 'churning of the sea' is said to be that of a 'god, Samudra Multi' [sic]! But this is perhaps still more excusable than the errors about things which should be more familiar to the author than the Hindu tradition, particularly the Hebrew language. We will not speak of

mere errors of transcription, although this is terribly careless; but how can one continually call *Ain Bekar* that which is really *Aiq Bekar* (a cryptographic system that is as well-known in Arabic as in Hebrew, where one can find the prototype of the Masonic alphabets), confuse the final form of *kaph* with that of *nun* with regard to their numerical value, and even mention a 'final *samek*', which has never existed and which is nothing but a *mem*? How can one insist that the translators of Genesis have rendered *tehom* by 'waters', in a place where the word in the Hebrew text is *maim* and not *thedom*, or that *Ain Soph* literally means the 'Ancient of Years' when the strictly literal translation of this name is 'without limit'? Yetsirah is 'Formation' and not 'Creation' (which is Beriah); Zohar does not mean 'celestial Chariot' (an obvious confusion with the Merkabah) but 'Splendor'; and the author seems to be wholly ignorant of what the Talmud is, since he thinks it is formed from the Notarikon, the Temourah, and the Gematria, which however are not 'books', as he says, but kabbalistic methods of interpretation! We shall stop here, but it will be agreed that such errors hardly encourage one to blindly accept the author's assertions on less easily verifiable points and to grant an unreserved confidence to his Egyptological theories...

XAVIER GUICHARD: *Eleusis Altsia: Enquetesur les origenes de la civilisation europiene* (Abbeville: F. Paillart, 1936). Whatever one may think of the views expressed in this work, it is nonetheless fitting to pay tribute to the work it represents, and to the patience and perseverance shown by the author, who for more than twenty years dedicated to this research all the spare time left him by his professional duties. He has studied all the places, not only in France but in all of Europe, with a name that seems to be derived, sometimes under rather altered forms, from *Alesia*. He has found a considerable number of these, and has noticed that all share certain common topographical particularities: they 'occupy sites surrounded by more or less important water courses which isolate them almost into islands,' and 'all possess a mineral spring.' From a 'prehistoric' or at the very least 'proto-historic' epoch, these 'alesian sites' were chosen, because of their privileged locations, as 'meeting-places' (this is the original meaning of their name) and soon became centers of habitation, which would seem to be confirmed by the numerous traces generally found there. In short,

all of this is perfectly plausible, and only shows that in those regions what is called 'civilization' goes back very much further than is ordinarily supposed, and that since that time there has not been any real interruption. But we do have reservations about the assimilation of certain names; even that of *Alesia* with *Elensis* is not as obvious as the author seems to believe, and in general it is regrettable that certain of his speculations bear witness to insufficient or unsure linguistic knowledge on many points; but even leaving the more doubtful cases aside, there still remain enough, especially in Western Europe, to justify what we have just said. Moreover, it goes without saying that the existence of this ancient 'civilization' does not in any way surprise us, whatever its origin and characteristics may have been—questions to which we shall return later.

But there is still something else which seems even more extraordinary: the author has noted that the 'alesian sites' were regularly laid out according to lines radiating from a center and running from one end of Europe to the other; he has found twenty four such lines, which he calls 'alesian itineraries', and which all converge on Mount Poupet near Alaise, at the Doubs.¹³ Besides this system of geodesic lines there is even a second system formed by a 'meridian', an 'equinoctial', and two 'solstitials', whose center is in another point of the same 'alesia', marked by a place with the name of Myon. And there is even a series of 'alesian sites' (some of which coincide with the preceding ones) marking out lines that correspond exactly to the different degrees of longitude and latitude. All this forms a rather complex ensemble, and unfortunately it cannot be said that everything seems to be absolutely rigorous. Thus the twenty-four lines of the first system do not all form equal angles; moreover, one needs only a very slight error of direction in the starting-point in order to have a considerable deviation at a certain distance, something that leaves a rather larger degree of 'approximation'; there are also isolated 'alesian sites' outside of these lines, hence exceptions or anomalies... On the other hand, it is hard to see what the special importance of the central 'alesia' can have been; it is possible that it really did have one at some distant period, but it is rather astonishing that no trace of it has survived apart from a few 'legends' which are in no way exceptional, and which are also associated with many other places. In any case, this is

13. A river in eastern France. Ed.

an unresolved question that in the present state of things is perhaps even insoluble. Be that as it may, there is another more serious objection which the author has not considered and which is as follows: on the one hand, as we saw earlier, the 'alesian sites' are defined by certain conditions that relate to the natural configuration of the terrain; on the other hand, they are situated on lines which were traced artificially by the men of a certain age: how can these two things of a wholly different order be reconciled? The 'alesian sites' thus have as it were two distinct definitions, and it is hard to see how they can be reconciled; at the very least this calls for an explanation, and as long as one is looking it must be recognized that all of this has a certain air of improbability. It would be different if one were to say that most of the places showing 'alesian' characteristics were naturally distributed according to certain determinate patterns; this might be strange, but not impossible, for it is possible that the world is really much more 'geometric' than is thought; and in this case, people would only have had to recognize the existence of these lines and to transform them into roads linking their different 'alesian' establishments; if the lines in question are not a simple 'cartographic' illusion, we hardly see how they can be accounted for otherwise.

We have just spoken of roads, and it is really this which implies the existence on the 'alesian itineraries' of certain 'distance markers' consisting of places most of which bear names like Calais, Versailles, Myon, and Millieres. The distances of these places from the center are exact multiples of a unit of measure to which the author gives the conventional name 'alesian stadium'; and what is particularly remarkable is that this unit, which would have been the prototype of the Greek stadium, the Roman mile, and the Gallic league, is equal to the sixth part of a degree, which implies that the men who determined its length knew with precision the true dimensions of the terrestrial sphere. On this subject, the author points to facts indicating that the knowledge possessed by the geographers of 'classical' antiquity such as Strabo and Ptolemy, far from being the result of their own discoveries, represented the remnants of a much more ancient or even 'prehistoric' science, of which the greater part had by then been lost. What is astonishing is that in spite of such acknowledgments, he accepts the 'evolutionist' theories on which 'prehistory' such as is taught 'officially' is built. Whether he truly accepts them or simply does not dare risk contradicting them, there is something in his attitude which is

not entirely logical and which greatly weakens his thesis. In fact, this aspect of the question can only be clarified by the idea of traditional sciences, and this appears nowhere in this study; there is not the least suspicion that there even existed a science whose origin was other than 'empirical' and which was not formed 'progressively' by a long series of observations by means of which man is supposed to have emerged little by little from a so-called 'primitive' ignorance, which is here simply carried back a little further into the past than is common. Of course the same lack of any traditional information also affects the way the origin of the 'alesian civilization' is envisaged; the truth is that at the beginning, and even much later, all things had a ritual and 'sacred' character; thus there is no need to ask whether 'religious' influences (an inappropriate word in any case) affected this or that particular point, a question which comes from an all too modern point of view and sometimes even has the effect of completely reversing certain relationships. Thus, even if it is conceded that the designation 'Champs-Elysees' is related to the 'alesian' names (which seems rather hypothetical), one cannot conclude that the abode of the dead was conceived after the model of the inhabited areas near which the bodies were buried, but on the contrary, that these places themselves were chosen or arranged in conformity with the ritual exigencies governed by that idea, which at that time certainly counted for much more than simple 'utilitarian' preoccupations, even if these latter really existed as such at a time when human life was entirely regulated by traditional knowledge. On the other hand, it is possible that the 'elysian myths' were connected with 'chthonian' cults (and what we have explained about the symbolism of the cave would even explain in certain cases their relationship with the initiatic 'mysteries'), but again it would have been appropriate to explain more fully the meaning attributed to this assertion. In any case, the 'Mother-Goddess' was undoubtedly something quite different than 'Nature', unless by this are understood *Nature naturans*, which is no longer a 'naturalist' conception at all. We must add that a predominance given to the 'Mother-Goddess' does not seem to go back beyond the beginning of the Kali-Yuga, of which it is quite a clear characteristic; and this perhaps allows one to 'date' the 'alesian civilization' more exactly, that is, to determine the cyclic period to which it must be connected. Here there is assuredly something earlier than 'history' in the ordinary sense of the word, but nonetheless already very far removed from the true origins.

Finally, the author seems bent on establishing that 'European civilization' had its origin in Europe itself, apart from any foreign influences, especially Eastern ones; but this is not really how the question should be put. We know that the primordial origin of tradition, and accordingly of all 'civilization', was in fact hyperborean, and neither Eastern nor Western; but at the age in question, it is evident that one can envisage a secondary current that more directly gave birth to this 'alesian civilization', and in fact various indications make us think especially here of the Atlantean current during the period when it was spreading from West to East after the disappearance of Atlantis itself. Of course this is only a suggestion, but it is one that at least is able to include in the framework of traditional data all that can justifiably be based on the results of those investigations. In any case, there is no doubt that a question such as that of the 'alesian sites' can only be treated completely and accurately from the point of view of 'sacred geography'; but it must be said that among the ancient traditional sciences, the reconstruction of this science would today raise altogether insurmountable difficulties; and in the presence of certain enigmas encountered in this domain, one may wonder whether, even during periods where no notable cataclysm occurred, the 'countenance' of the terrestrial world has not sometimes changed in a very strange way.

NOEL DE LA HOUSSAYE: *Les Bronzes italiotes archaïques et leur symbolique*. (Paris: Editions du Trident, 1938). This study begins with a consideration of the origins of coinage in the Mediterranean basin, a rather obscure subject for which, as for so many other things, it does not seem possible to go back beyond the sixth century BC. In any case, the author understands well enough that 'for the ancients coinage was a sacred thing', contrary to the wholly profane conception that the moderns have of it—and that this explains the character of the symbols which it bore; one could go even further, we think, and see these symbols as the mark of control exercised by a spiritual authority. What follows more particularly concerns Rome and Italy, and is much more hypothetical: relating the name of Aeneas to the Latin name for bronze [aeneus], that even if not impossible, seems rather questionable; and it is perhaps a rather restricted interpretation of the legend of Aeneas to see in the different stages of his journeys nothing more than the spread of bronze coinage. Whatever importance this may

have had, however, it can only be a secondary fact, doubtless linked to an entire tradition. Be that as it may, what seems to us most improbable is the idea that the Aeneas legend can have any connection with Atlantis. To begin with, Aeneas's journeys from Asia Minor to Italy obviously do not have their starting-point in the West; next, they refer to a time which, even if it cannot be precisely determined, is in any event several thousand years after the disappearance of Atlantis. But this over-imaginative theory, as well as some linguistic fantasies on which we shall not dwell, must probably be attributed to the fact that the study in question first appeared in part in the journal *Atlantis*...

The enumeration of the symbols figuring on the coins seems to be as complete as possible, and synoptic tables have been added at the end of the work that allow one to see their distribution on the circumference of the Mediterranean basin; but there could have been much more to say on the meaning of these symbols, and in this respect there are indeed some quite astonishing gaps. Thus, we do not understand how one can say that the prow of a ship associated with the figure of Janus on the Roman <is,¹⁴ 'concerns Saturn, and him alone,' when it is quite well known that the ship or the barque was one of the attributes of Janus himself; and it is curious too that with regard to Saturn, what is called the 'pastoral era' is really the 'agricultural era', that is to say exactly the opposite, since the shepherds are essentially nomadic peoples while the farmers are sedentary. How then could the 'pastoral era' really coincide with the 'formation of towns'? What is said of the Dioscuri¹⁵ scarcely clarifies the meaning, and the same goes for the Kabiri.¹⁶ But above all, how is it that the author does not seem to have observed that the symbolism of the latter is closely related to metallurgy, and even more particularly to copper, something which would have had a direct bearing on his subject?

NOEL DE LA HOUSSAYE: *Le Phoenix, poëme symbolique*. (Paris: Editions du Trident, n.d.). We are not qualified to appraise a poem as such, but, from the symbolic point of view this poem seems to us less

14. A unit of money. Ed.

15. The twins Castor and Pollux. Ed.

16. A group of deities whose primary worship was in Samothrace, associated especially with Hephaestus as being master metal workers. Ed.

clear than might be hoped, and even the essentially 'cyclic' and 'solar' character of the myth of the phoenix does not emerge very clearly; as for the symbol of the egg, we confess that we have not managed to grasp how it is envisaged here. In spite of its title, the inspiration of the whole gives the impression of being more 'philosophical' than symbolic; on the other hand, the author appears to seriously believe in the existence of an organization called the 'Brothers of Heliopolis' and in its links with an Egyptian tradition. Europeans do have rather curious ideas about Egypt... Moreover, is he quite sure that it is the Heliopolis in Egypt with which the phoenix was originally associated? There was also a Heliopolis in Syria, and if one recalls that the region of Syria did not always coincide exactly with the country that bears this name today, this can bring us nearer to its origins. The truth, in fact, is that these various relatively recent 'Cities of the Sun' were only secondary images of the hyperborean 'solar earth', and thus, beyond all the derivative forms that are 'historically' known, the symbolism of the phoenix is directly linked to the primordial tradition itself.

Lettres d'Humanite (Paris: Society d'editions 'Le Belles Lettres', ser. 1942-45). Lettres d'Humanite, a publication of L'Association Guillaume Bude, contains in its third volume (1944) a curious essay by Paul Maury entitled *Le Secret de Virgile et l'architecture des Bucoliques*. The author in fact has discovered there a veritable 'architecture', almost as astonishing as that of the *Divine Comedy*. It would be difficult to summarize all this, but we shall try to point out at least its principal features. Firstly he has noticed a symmetry between eclogues i and ix (the ordeals of the Earth), ii and viii (the ordeals of Love), iii and vii (the liberating Music), and iv and vi (the supernatural Revelations); these eight eclogues form a double progression, ascending for the first four and descending for the last four, that is to say a sort of double ladder whose summit is occupied by eclogue v (Daphnis), which he calls 'the Bucolic major'. There remains eclogue x (Gallus), which is opposed to eclogue v 'as profane love is opposed to sacred love, as is the imperfectly initiated man of flesh to the ideal of man reformed'; these are 'the two limits between which the souls circulate, between the terraqueous globe and Olympus.' The whole thus forms the plan of a kind of 'chapel', or rather of a 'Pythagorean basilica', of which eclogue v constitutes the apse while eclogue X is at

the opposite extremity; between the two the other eclogues are ranged laterally on one side and the other, those which are in symmetry naturally facing each other. But this is not all, and the remarks which follow are even more extraordinary. These refer to the number of the verses of the different eclogues, in which are found other multiple symmetries which certainly can only be intentional. At first glance, it is true, a few of these numerical symmetries appear to be only approximate; but the slight differences thus noted have led the author to work out and 'localize' certain alterations of the text (verses omitted or added), but these are very few in any event and coincide precisely with those which had already been suspected for purely philological reasons. That done, the symmetries all become exact; unfortunately, it is not possible for us to reproduce here the various tables in which these symmetries are presented and without which they can hardly be comprehensible. We will only say, therefore, that the principal numbers evident here and which are repeated with an emphasis that is significant, are 183 (a number by which, according to a passage from Plutarch, 'the Pythagoreans represented the harmony of the great Cosmos itself'), 333, and 666; the last is also 'a Pythagorean number, a triangular number of 36, itself a triangle of 8, the double Ogdoad of the Tetrad'; we shall add that this is essentially a 'solar' number, and point out that the meaning attributed to it in the Apocalypse does not constitute a 'reversal of values' as the author says, but really represents an application of the opposite aspect of that number, which possesses itself, as do so many other symbols, both a 'benefic' and a 'malefic' meaning. It was obviously the first of these two meanings that Virgil had in view; now is it correct to say that he wished particularly to make the number 666 'the cipher of Caesar*', which would appear to be confirmed by the fact that, according to the commentator Servius, the Daphnis of the central eclogue v would be none other than Caesar himself? There is certainly nothing implausible in this, and other rather remarkable parallels are invoked in support of this interpretation. Let us add that this cannot be seen as a mere 'political' application in the ordinary sense of the word, if one thinks of the not even exclusively 'religious' side of Caesar (which the author recognizes) but of his truly 'esoteric' role. We cannot pursue this question any further, but we think we have said enough to show the value of this work, and we particularly recommend it to those interested in the symbolism of numbers.

In the same publication, other articles devoted to Hippocrates call for a few remarks. Much is presently being said in medical circles of a 'return to Hippocrates', but strangely enough this seems to be viewed in two different and even contrary ways, for while some understand it, and rightly so, in the sense of a restoration of traditional ideas, others, as is the case here, would like to turn it altogether into its opposite. The latter would attribute to Hippocratic medicine a 'philosophical' character, that is, according to the meaning they give to the word 'rationalist', even a 'secular' character (do they forget then that Hippocrates himself came from a priestly family, failing which he could not have been a physician?), and with this as justification oppose it to the ancient sacerdotal medicine, in which they naturally see, in conformity with the customary modern prejudice, only 'empiricism' and 'superstition'! We do not believe it pointless to draw this to the attention of the partisans of traditional Hippocratism and to urge them, when the occasion arises, to set things right and to react against this unfortunate interpretation. It would be truly regrettable to allow a movement which, even if as yet it indicates no more than a tendency, is certainly not lacking in interest from more than one point of view, to be diverted from its normal and legitimate aim.

Lettres d'Humanite, volume four (1945) contains a long study of Pierre Grimal's *Le Dieu Janus et les origines de Rome*, where there are found many interesting and little known historical facts, although unfortunately no really important conclusions can be drawn from them. The author is certainly right in criticizing the 'historians of religions' who wish to reduce everything to 'ideas' as 'simple and crude' as those of 'forces of nature' or 'social functions'; but are his own explanations, even if more subtle, really any more satisfactory? Whatever one might think of the more or less hypothetical existence of an ancient word *ianus*, meaning the 'action of going' and consequently having the meaning of 'passage', we do not see how this allows one to maintain that there was originally no relationship between this word and the name of the god Janus, for a simple difference of declension most certainly does not prevent their sharing a common root; in truth, these are nothing but philological subtleties with no serious import. Even if one admits that the name of Janus was initially not Latin (because, for Grimal, Janus would have been first and foremost a 'foreign god'),

why would the root i, 'to go', which is common to Latin and Sanskrit, not be found in other languages? Another rather plausible hypothesis could still be put forward: why could not the Romans, when they adopted this god, have translated his name, whatever it may have been, by an equivalent in their own language, just as they later changed the names of the Greek gods in order to assimilate them to their own? In sum, Grimal's thesis is that the ancient Janus could never have been a 'door god', and that this attribute would have been attached to him only 'belatedly', as a result of a confusion between two words which were quite different although quite similar in form. But all this does not seem at all convincing to us, for the assumption of a so-called 'fortuitous' coincidence never explains anything. Moreover, it is obvious that the deeper significance of the symbolism of the 'door god' escapes him; has he even noticed its close connection with the role of Janus in the annual cycle, which nevertheless brings him back quite directly to the fact that this same Janus was, as he says, a 'god of Heaven' as well as a god of initiation? This last point, moreover, is passed over entirely in silence; it is well said, however, that 'Janus was an initiator, the very god of initiators,' but this term is taken there only in an indirect and wholly profane sense which in reality has absolutely nothing to do with initiation... Some rather curious remarks are made on a god Bifrons existing elsewhere than in Rome, especially in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean, but it is very much out of proportion to wish to conclude from this that 'in Rome Janus is only the incarnation of a Syrian Uranus,' since, as we have often said, similarities between different traditions are very far from necessarily implying 'borrowings' from the one to the other. But can one ever make this understood to those who believe that the 'historical method' is applicable to everything?

In the same volume there is an article entitled 'Beatrice dans la vie et l'oeuvre de Dante' which does not present any interest from our point of view, but which does call for a remark: how is it possible, after the appearance of so many works on the *Fedeli d'Amore* written by Luigi Valli and many others, that one can be ignorant when dealing with Dante (or at least affect such ignorance) of the existence of an esoteric and initiatic significance? The only allusion here is to the theological interpretation by R.R. Mandonnet, which is certainly quite insufficient but which, although wholly exoteric, at least acknowledges a meaning higher than the crude 'literalism' which only sees in

Beatrice 'a woman of flesh and blood'. Nevertheless, this 'literalism' is still upheld as lending itself to 'a more psychological and more human explanation,' that is to say, in short, one more to the taste of the moderns and more in conformity with 'esthetic' and 'literary' prejudices which were quite foreign to Dante and his contemporaries!

GEORGES DUMÉZIL: *L'Heritage indo-europten a Rome* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949). Dumezil set out from an altogether secular point of view, but in the course of his researches he came across certain traditional data from which he drew conclusions which are not without interest but which are not always entirely justified and should not be accepted without reservations, all the more so as he almost always tries to support them with linguistic considerations of which the least that can be said is that they are very hypothetical. Furthermore, as the data is necessarily very fragmentary, he has 'fastened' exclusively and as it were systematically on certain things such as the 'tripartite' division, which he insists on finding everywhere, and which in fact does exist in many cases, but which is not the only one to be taken into account here, even if we confine ourselves to his specialized domain. In this volume he has undertaken to sum up the present state of his labors, for it must be recognized that he at least does not claim to have succeeded in reaching any final results, and moreover his continuing discoveries have already led him to modify his conclusions on several occasions. What is essentially involved here is the sifting out of those elements in the Roman tradition which appear to go back directly to the epoch when the peoples called by common consent 'Indo-European' had not yet split into distinct branches which thereafter existed independently of the others. The basis of his theory is the ternary of divinities consisting of Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus,¹⁷ which he regards as corresponding to three social functions; moreover, he seems to try rather too hard to reduce everything to the social point of view, which easily risks leading to a reversal of the real relationships between principles and their applications. With him there is even a certain rather 'juridical' turn of mind which obviously limits his horizon; we do not know whether he acquired this because he devoted himself primarily to the

17. A Roman god of war similar to Mars, but later identified with the deified Romulus. En.

study of the Roman civilization, or on the contrary because, already having this tendency, Roman civilization particularly attracted him, but in any case the two do not seem entirely unconnected. We cannot enter here into the details of the questions treated in this book, but we must at the very least point out a truly curious remark, all the more so because upon it a great part of these considerations rest. This is that many accounts of events presented elsewhere as 'myths' are found again, with all their principal features, in what is given as the history of the first days of Rome, whence it should be concluded that the Romans transformed into 'ancient history' what was really originally their 'mythology'. To judge from the examples Dumézil gives it does appear that there is some truth in this, although one should perhaps not misuse this interpretation by generalizing it beyond measure. It is true that one could also ask whether history, especially 'sacred history', may not in certain cases indeed reproduce the myth and offer a 'humanized' image of it; but it goes without saying that such a question, which in short is none other than that of the symbolic value of historical facts, cannot even occur to the modernist spirit.

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