

# SUFISM & HESYCHASM

Islamic Esotericism & Christian Esotericism



Michel Valsan

# **BERSERKER**

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## **BOOKS**

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## INTRODUCTION

eli *Claudio Mutti*

In a part of Mircea Eliade's Diaries that has remained inédita until now, the American scholar Mac Linscott Ricketts has included, under the date of 2 August 1946, the following judgements on Michel Valsan and Vasile Lovinescu (*alias* Geticus): "What would a Vasile Lovinescu or a Valsan have done without René Guénon? The former would have continued to be a mediocre essayist-journalist, a pedestrian commentator on the latest book on philosophy published by Cartea Româneasca, while Valsan would have remained a mediocre civil servant and would not even have allowed himself his pointed beard, so full of traditionalist allusions (with his conversion to Islam, Valsan grew a sort of Arab beard). Today, each of them holds the key to mysteries, and after each new issue of *Etudes Traditionnelles*, each of them feels closer to the Absolute. "I think", they say, "through Tradition"; that is to say, they do not think at all, but only refer to Guénon's last article. Anything else is of no interest or value. (...) They despise erudition, science, philosophy, and are quite content not to know how to operate in any of these fields, mediocre fields, yes, but which can be made productive by a genius or even a profound intellect" (1).

(1) Mac Linscott Rickett transcribed this passage, in English translation, in a letter dated 1 May 1999.



Michel Valsan and Vasile Lovinescu (2), who in this diary excerpt indirectly testify to the distance between the thought of their most famous compatriot and the doctrine expressed by the masters of the Tradition, are undoubtedly the best known of all those Romanian authors who have benefited from contact with the work of René Guénon or Julius Evola; among whom, however, must be counted Mircea Eliade himself, despite the ambiguous and contentious relationship he had with both Guénon and Evola (3). Of this contemporary and posthumous fortune of the two greatest exponents of "integral traditionalism" we have moreover dealt with in some recent monographs (4).

As for Mihail Valsan, he was born on 1 February 1907 in Bdiila, the birthplace of Nae Ionescu (1890-1940), the teacher of Mircea Eliade, Cioran and the whole of the "young inter-war Romanian generation" (5). Like many other contemporaries, Vatsan attended the logic courses taught by Professor Nae Ionescu at the University of Bucharest. Forty years later, Vatsan regretted that Nae Ionescu, 'A man who

(2) On Vasile Lovinescu (alias Geticus), see C. Mutti, *The Life and Books of Vasile Lovinescu*, in V. Lovinescu, *La Colonna Traiana*, Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, Parma, 1995, pp. 19-24.

(3) On Eliade's relationship with Guénon cf. C. Mutri, *Eliade, Valsan, Geticus and the Others. La fortuna di Guénon tra i Romeni*, Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, Parma, 1999, pp. 31-45 and related bibliography. On the Eliade-Evola relationship, cf. Gianfranco de Turris, *L'"Iniziato" e il Professore. I rapporti "sommersi" tra Julius Evola e Mircea Eliade*, in AA.VV., *Delle Ruins and Beyond. Essays on Julius Evola*, PeUicaiù Editore, Rome, 1995, pp. 219-249. On the relationship between Eliade and traditional thought in general: Paola Pisi, *'Traditionalists' and the Formation of Eliade's Thought*, in AA.VV., *Confronto con Mircea Eliade. Archetipi mitici e identità storica*, Jaca Book, Milan, 1998, pp. 43-133.

(4) C. Mutti, *Eliade, Valsan, Geticus and the Others*, op. cit.; *Julius Evola on/From the East*, Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, Parma, 1998.

(5) On Nae Ionescu, cf. C. Mutti, *Le penne dell'Arcangelo. Intelletuali e Guardia di Ferro*, S.E.B., Milan, 1994, pp. 39-51. See also: Nae Ionescu, *Il fenomeno legionario*, Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, Parma, 1998.

had some stuff and was worth something, especially in an age of painful intellectual poverty", had not been able to get to know Guénon's work; this, in his opinion, would have led him "down the path of pure metatistics and hesychasm" (6).

In 1935, Valsan went to Oltenia, to Maglavit, a local town of 5,000 inhabitants that has become a destination for real It was the scene of a sensational phenomenon: starting on 31 May of that year, a semi-literate shepherd named Petre (Petrache) Lupu (1908-1994) received messages from an entity he called *Mo-ul*, i.e. 'the Old Man', which appeared to be a kind of theophany. "The word of the shepherd of Maglavit - the chronicles of the time report it passed from mouth to mouth (...). In and around Maglavit a completely new spiritual state prevailed. People have accepted Petrache Lupu's exhortations to try to impose a different kind of life' (7). The vast echo that these events have throughout Romania (the 'Maglavit psychosis') leads

Emil Cioran to reconsider the scepticism of the Romanian people and to trust in the next great political phenomenon.

"One cannot know what it will be; but one can know that, if it is not born, we are a doomed country" (8).

Mihail Valsan receives from Petrache Lupu a sort of "good diction"; and, as the communications of the "Old Man" seem to foretell the Romanians that their country will become the seat of a spiritual centre as Dacia had already been in ancient times (9), Valsan believes that all this may have to do with the to do with the King of the World.

(6) M. VIUșan, Letter to Anton Dimitriu, Vanvcs, 16 October 1967. Photocopy of the original in our archive.

(7) H. Sanielevici, *Rasa lui Petrache Lupu din Maglavit* (The race of Petrache Lupu di Maglavit), *Realitatea / Iusrratli*, a. IX, no. 447, 14 August 1935.

(8) E. Cioran, *Maglavit e l'altra Romania*, *Vremea*, a. VIII, no. 408, 6 onobre 1935, p. 3; transl. it. *Maglavit e l'altra Romania*, *Origini*, monographic issue on Cioran. by C. Mutti, no. 13, February 1996, pp. 20-22.

(9) Cf. Geticus, *La Dacia iperborea*, Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, Parma, 1984.

Valsan acquired this notion by reading the work of René Guénon. His friend Vasile Lovinescu also read *Le Roi du Monde* in 1932, translated it into Romanian and asked the author if he could publish it in instalments in a magazine that he was planning to publish at the time; in 1934, then, between Lovinescu and Guénon began an epistolary correspondence that would last until the beginning of 1940. In 1935, also Marcel Avramescu (10) began to write to Guénon, an exponent of the literary avant-garde who would abandon Judaism to convert to Orthodoxy and would successfully receive priestly ordination. It was, however, in the first half of the 1930's, even though we are not able to indicate the precise year, that Valsan's correspondence with Guénon began.

The fact is that in 1936 Guénon announces to Jean Reyor *alias* Marcelle Cavelle (11) of the visit of his Romanian correspondent: taking advantage of a study trip he was making to France as an official of the Bucharest diplomacy; Valsan intended to make contact with the group of *Études Traditionnelles*. Clavelle-Reyor recounts that this Romanian, "intelligent and of ardent temperament, (...) came

(10) On Marcel (Miahi) Avramescu, see C. Mutti, Eliade, Vélisan, Geti cus and the others, op. cit., pp. 89-100 and Appendices III and IV.

(11) Marcel Clavelle (b. 1905) met Guénon in 1928, collaborated with the *Voi/e d'/sis* and became the editorial secretary of *Études Traditionnelles* after Guénon's departure for Egypt. From 1958 to 1971 he collaborated with *Symbolisme*, where he mostly signs his usual pseudonym of "Jean Reyor" or with that of "F. Sirius". At the time Valsan arrived in Paris, Clavelle-Reyor "serves as an intermediary for all the friends and pondents of Guénon in search of an effective initiation". (Marie-Fran ce James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et christianisme aux XIX' et XX' siècles*, Nouvelles Éditions Latines, Paris, 1981, p. 75). Marcel Clavelle drew up a 'document confidentiel inédit>> (53 typed pages written, photocopied in our archive), which on pp. 41-42 recalls the arrival Vrusan's arrival in Paris. This same document was used by both Marie-France James and, before her, Jean Robin, René Guénon. *Témoin de la Tradition*, Trédaniel, Paris, 1978.

in Paris in a rather bad condition" (12), because he was followed by the Petre Lupu affaire and "he felt literally obsessed by the 'Old Man', (...) he 'heard' Petre Lupu speak to him and lived in a state of real terror" (13), even though he had resumed practising the orthodox religion in the most scrupulous way, "with the rigour that is in his nature" (14).

(14). Jean Reyor again writes: "There was certainly something quite powerful in this affair and it happened to me, after spending a whole afternoon with Valsan (*sic*), that I too was obsessed, during the night, with "Moss" (15). However, having realised that under different aspects

Valsan (*sic*) was a subject of exceptional value, notwithstanding his momentary state of imbalance, I endeavoured to help him to the extent of my modest means, if only with a friendly presence that I gave him on a daily basis at that time. When he left Paris, after a few months, Valsan (*sic*) had regained his equilibrium' (16).

Arriving in the French capital in December 1936 (17), Valsan dedicated "all his time to praying and writing for Guénon an enormous report of this story" (18) of Maglavit, in which Guénon was taking an interest (19).

(12) Jean Reyor, Unpublished Confidential Document, op.cit., pp. 41-42.

(13) Jean Reyor, doc. cit., pp. 41-42.

(14) Jean Reyor, doc. cit., p. 41.

(15) Cosl Reyor transcribes the Romanian Mos, 'Old man'.

(16) Jean Reyor, doc. cit., p. 42.

(17) "Today, I receive a word from M. Vals(an), announcing his arrival in Paris; he will certainly write to me again soon about the events of Magl(avit), about which he tells me he spoke to you again before his departure from Bucharest": René Guénon, Letter to Vasile Lovinescu, Cairo, 30 December 1936. Photocopy of the original in our archive.

(18) Jean Reyor, doc. cit., p. 42.

(19) <<As far as the apparition of Maglavit is concerned, I recognise that the thing is really very strange from several points of view; I had also thought, as I believe I told you, of a juxtaposition of this figure with the ascetics of Mount Athos; it is true that, if these are what one may suppose. this does not imply that he is a "saint" in the ordinary sense of the word. It is certainly strange enough that the shepherd did not give



sent it to him in a couple of months (20).

(20) Informed by Jean Reyor about the possibility of an initiatory reconnection through the group of the Alaouite Order (*al-tarfqah al-calawiyyah*) formed in Lausanne around Frithjof Schuon, in May 1937 Vâlsan returned to Romania "laden with books on Islam, grammars and Arabic dictionaries" (21), determined to deepen his knowledge of Islamic doctrine and study the language of the Koran. A few months later, he left for Switzerland, where he entered Islam under the name of <Abd al-<Aziz Mustafa and received the ini ziatic investiture. In this choice Vâlsan was preceded by Vasile Lovinescu, who had rejoined Islam and the *tarfqah* in March 1936.

In March 1938 Vâlsan was still in Bucharest, where he met Julius Evola (22).

aJy his vision the name of any saint, because this is what usually happens in such cases; in Vu's article, it says he calls him "God", but this must undoubtedly be an error on the part of the journalist

On the other hand, what you note about the so important role of the word 'Old Man' deserves gr.mde consideration; evidently, this word must refer to the idea of 'primordiality'. The arrangement of the four elements in the centre may recall certain depictions of Christ surrounded by the four animals; but this does not contradict the explanations you con.sider, on the contrary.

yet; with the allusions to the 'end of the world', it is certain that a juxtaposition to the heavenly Jerusalem is required. But I wonder how the theolo gians definitively resolve, from their point of view, the question

of the nature of this apparition with such an unusual appearance...>>: René Gué non, Letter to Vasile Lovinescu, Cairo, 27 January 1936. Photocopy of the original in our archive.

(20) <<M. Vlils.(an) has already written to me several times since he has been in Paris and has sent me a voluminous work on Magl.(avit), which he has not yet had the time to examine in full detail, so that I do not yet have a clear idea of what may really be at the bottom of it all..." . René Guénon, Letter to Vasile Lovinescu, H Cairo, 16 March 1937. Photocopy of the original in our arehivio.

(2 l) Jean Reyor, doc. cit., p. 42.

(22) <<Evola writes to me that he will undoubtedly soon go to Buca rest, c he asks me to indicate to him some people he might meet there.

In the course of that same year he returned to Paris, as financial adviser to the Romanian Consulate. "He took up his post in that little hotel in the rue Brémontier which had belonged to the Duchess of Pomar (23) and where so many magic and spiritualist sittings had taken place and where the foundation of the Gnostic Church had been decided fifty years earlier" (24). As a member of the diplomatic corps of a country that was at first neutral and later an ally of the Third Reich, Valsan had the necessary freedom of movement during the German occupation to travel to Switzerland again, where he was assigned by Schuon *as muqaddim* for France. Thanks to the diplomatic suitcase, he was able to remain in correspondence with Guénon, who sent him the manuscript of the *Règne de la quantité* towards the end of the war and the authority to negotiate with publishers on his behalf.

Following the publication of Schuon's article on the "Mysteries eristic" (*Études Traditionnelles*, July-August 1948), in which it was argued that all baptised people were initiates without their knowledge, as the Christian sacraments had retained their value as initiatory rites to this day, and following other disconcerting news coming from the

There is only you and M. Val.(san), and I hope you will not object if I give him your addresses, so that he can ask you for an appointment

(I will give them to both of you, in case one of you is absent)>>: René Guénon, Letter to Vasile Lovinescu, n Cairo, 29 January 1938. Photocopy of the original in our archive. On Evola's meetings in Bucharest, see Claudio Mutti, Julius Evola sul fronte of the East, op. cit.

(23) Maria de Mariategui (1832-1895), widow of Duke Manuel de Pomar, married Lord James Barrogill, Earl of Caithness, in her second marriage. After the latter's death in 1881, she settled in France and presided over the Société théosophique d'Orient et d'Occident; in 1888 she was among the founders of the Église gnostique; in 1889 she was honorary president of the Spiritualist and Spiritualist Congress. His private hotel in the Wagram district was the meeting place for French occultists, spiritualists, and theosophists. Cf. P. Combes, Lady Caithness. duchesse de Pomar, Librairie Universelle, Paris, 1888.

(24) Jean Reyor, doc. cit., p. 42.

Switzerland (25), the *muqaddim* "Abd ei-"Aziz Mustafà, "who had long shown perfect submission towards Schuon, had ended up being frightened by the latter's pretensions; he endeavoured to keep the French group in a position of strict observance of the obligations of 'exotismo and refused to adopt the innovations preconized by Lausanne. He asked Guénon to intervene' (26). At a certain point, the latter was forced to sever relations with Lausanne and suggested to the *muqaddim* of Paris to declare its autonomy with regard to Schuon. On the other hand, Guénon himself refuted Schuon's theses on the "Heretical Mysteries" with the article "Christianity and Initiation", which appeared in *Études Traditionnelles*, September-October-November and December 1949 (later taken up in *Aperçus sur l'Esotérisme chrétien*).

On 17 September 1950, Valsan wrote to the "dearest and most revered Master" in Lausanne in the following terms: "Neither for me nor for you is there any longer a truly spiritual interest in maintaining relations that cause us uncertainty, dissensions and disturbances. (...) Evidently I cannot be your disciple and, since you realise this yourself, I beg you to consider me expressly disengaged from my personal initiatory relations with you, without this in any way prejudicing the reality of the path" (27). In the same lecture Schuon was also informed that some French disciples, including Pierre Ponsoye and Louis Caudron (1901-94), had been informed that Schuon had not been able to make a personal commitment to the way.

(25) "On the one hand, Schuon had taken on the leadership of Christians; on the other hand, he practised a policy of extreme tolerance towards his Muslim disciples with regard to the performance of rituals and obligations such as the Ramadan fast; finally, he introduced heterogeneous elements into the meditation exercises recommended to his disciples: in the morning they meditated on the Tao, in the evening on the Holy Virgin, etc... This led to a kind of syncretism, which was christened universalism, in which the Islamic character of the group gradually dissolved>>: Jean Reyor, doc. cit., p. 48.

(26) Jean Reyor, doc. cit., p. 48.

(27) Michel Valsan, Letter and Frithjof Schuon, Paris, 17 September 1950. Photocopy of the original in our archive.



1967), wished to remain at Valsan's side, "hoping thus to find a form of spiritual life more suited to their possibilities" (28).

To Schuon's reply, who declared himself in agreement about Valsan replied with twenty-five typewritten folders to Schuon's reply, in which he first of all reaffirmed the legitimacy of his own actions: "Your assent is manifested in a manner that far exceeds my expectations (...). Certainly this is welcome, because it eliminates any assumptions contrary to the legitimacy of this constitution.

of this constitution; but, to tell the truth, I had not thought it useful to ask you to take any action in this regard, because, if it is true that on the basis of my function I can validly constitute an independent branch, the quality that I already possessed in this way, under the relationship of *the silsilah* (the initiatory chain, ed.

initiatory chain, Ed.), is in itself operative to this effect and is not is subject to no new authorisation or special confirmation' (29).

After providing a whole series of arguments in this regard, Valsan expounded the reasons that justified the birth of an independent branch: in addition to the need for a close relationship with the magisterium of the *shaykh*

<Abd el-Wàhid Yahya (René Guénon), "there is the desire to have a more specifically Islamic way, both from a doctrinal and practical point of view, to promote a real spirit of poverty, to introduce a more ascetic rule of life and to use authentic initiatory means" (30). In other words, Valsan found that in the Schuonian magisterium and in the current situation of the *tarfqa* there dominated an "intellectualist universality of a generic and approximate nature, which took pleasure above all in considerations of order

{28} Ibid.

(29) Michel Valsan, Letter to Frithjof Schuon, Paris, November 1950, p. 1. Photocopy of the original in our archive.

(30) Michel Valsan, Letter to Frithjof Schuon, Paris, November 1950, p. 3.

This universalism had produced numerous violations of Islamic norms both in the rites of *tarfqa* and in exoteric practices and was manifested in Schuon's sorties into traditional domains beyond his competence: it reached its peak when Schuon enunciated the thesis of the "Mysteries of the Heretical", according to which initiation would be granted indiscriminately to all through Christian sacraments.

indiscriminately to all.

Valsan concluded his long letter as follows: 'Whatever your personal opinion of all this may be, I do not doubt that you yourself are convinced that the separation that took place between us was not only useful, but necessary. For my part, I am glad of your agreement, because compliments are thus avoided. On the other hand, I did not doubt that such should be your attitude, because if in other cases you consider that you can "authorise" exits from *the tariqa*, and even from Islam, in our case you must not take any such decision: we remain in Islam and the *tariqa*, we are faithful to traditional and initiatory principles, we abide by the covenant of the initiatory way and, while we seek the best conditions to fulfil it, we guard against any possible risk of a non-Islamic and pseudo-Islamic orientation. (...) I offer my best wishes in the hope that Allàh will guide us all on the path traced by His Prophet and the Sages of the initiatic line. *Amfn. Wa-l-hamdu lillahi Rabbi l-alamfn!* (32) Receive, dearest and revered Master, my best remembrance and best wishes for Peace, *Miseri cordia* and Blessing" (33).

(31) Michel Valsan, Letter to Frithjof Schuon, Paris, November 1950, p. 5.

(32) "Amen. And praise be to Allill, Master of the Worlds!

(33) Michel Valsan, Letter and Frithjof Schuon, Paris, November 1950, p. 25.

Thus was born, under the direction of Miche! Valsan, the first orthodox *tariqah* of 'gué noruana' expression.

In 1960 Miche! Viilsan succeeded Jean Reyor in the literary direction of *Études Traditionnelles*. Valsan, who started Valsan, who began collaborating with the journal in 1948, wrote for it until his death, publishing over fifty texts that can be divided into three groups (34): articles referring to the work and function of René Guénon (35), annotated translations of the writings of Muhyiddin Ibn cArabi (36) and other authors of Sufism (<Abd ar-Razzaq al-Qashani, Sadr ad-Din ai-QOnawi), a series of texts on different subjects (the "descendant rea lization" (37), the bonnet of Heraclius (38), the monosyllable Om, Joan of Arc (39) etc.). Outside of these collaborations, Miche! Valsan wrote an introductory essay to *Symboles jondamentaux de la Science Sacrée* (40). Charles-André Gillis (cAdb ar-Razzaq Yahya), Valsan's disciple, and his successor in the literary direction of the re-

(34) We follow the classification of Charles-André Gillis, who compiled a comprehensive bibliography of Michel Viilsan's writings for *Écudes Tradi tionnelles*, 447, January-February-March 1974, translated in: Miche) Viilsan, René Guénon, Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, Parma, 1985, pp. 81-85.

(35) Three of these theses (L'Islam e la funzione di René Guénon, L'affermazione di René Guénon e il destino dell'Occidente, L'opera di Guénon in Oriente) have been translated into Italian in: Michel Viilsan, La funzione di René Guénon, op. cit.

(36) In Italian see: Ibn al-'Arabi, Il Libro dell'Estinzione nella Contemplazione, Afterword and notes by Michel Valsan, SE, Milan, 1996.

(37) Writings translated in: Michel Viilsan. La realizzazione discendente degli (sic) ultimi tre gradi della freoneria scozzese, Arktos, Carmagno la, 1988.

(38) Writings translated into: Miche! Viilsan, The Hood of Heraclius, Veltro Editions, Panna, 1985.

(39) Writings translated in: Miche! Valsan, Joan of Arc, Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, Panna, 1986.

(40) René Guénon, *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée*, Gallimard, Paris, 1962. The Italian editions (Adelphi, Milan, 1975; 2' ed. 1990, 3' ed. 1994) do not include Valsan's introduction.

view, has written about the production vâlsaniana: "(.. .) the magisterial studies published by Michel Vâlsan on René Guénon and other topics relating to ini ziatic organisations and the conditions of metaphysical realisation, derive part of their truths and strength from a thorough knowledge, very elaborate on a technical level, of the doctrines of the Tasawwuf. This reference is not always formulated explicitly, so it may go unnoticed by those who have not personally had access to this privileged source of traditional teaching. Nevertheless, it has resulted, especially with regard to Guénon, in writings of incomparable quality and authority. In the great Vâlsani texts, everything essential has been said (... )" (41). In other words, according to Gillis, Michel Valsan "has been affirmed since 1948 as the best defender that Guénon's teaching has ever had and as the founder of Akbarian studies in the West" (42).

In April 1965, accompanied by his wife Geneviève Claire Roty (in Islam by the name of Ferida), his in-laws and a group of French Muslims, Valsan left Paris to make the Pilgrimage to the House of God. Having performed the canonical rites in Mecca, he went to Medina to visit the tomb of the Prophet; then he reached Jerusalem; then he went to Damascus and prayed beside the tomb of *Shaykh Akbar* (=Doctor Maximus), Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi. Finally he spent three weeks in Turkey: he visited Istanbul and Ankara and in Konya he prayed in the mausoleum of Mevlana Gelai ed-Din Rîimi.

He died on the night of 25-26 November 1974 in Antony (Hauts-de-Seine), leaving behind numerous offspring.

The year before, at the International Colloquium in Cerisy la-Salle, which Michel Valsan did not attend, Nadjmoud Dine Bamate had declared: 'the most direct, the most authentic representative, it seems to me, of Guénonian thought, is

(41) Charles-André Gillis, *Introduction à l'enseignement et au mystère de René Guénon*, Les Éditions de l'Œuvre, Paris, 1986, pp. 18-19.

(42) Charles-André Gillis, *op.cit.*, p. 29.



undoubtedly Valsan, and the work he is currently doing on Ibn <Arabi is an essential work(...); the great merit of men like Valsan is that they provide us with a *summa*, starting from the most secure texts of Ibn <Arabi' (43).

If we are to believe. Jean Robin, Miche! Vfùsan is said to have played an occult role with "that great Guénian who was General De Gaulle" (44), counted by Valsan himself – according to Jean Robin – among the "prefigurations of the Mahdi" (45) that manifested themselves in the 20th century. Reporting a piece of information that he claims to have gathered from "some of Miche! Valsan" (46), Jean Robin mentions an epistolary correspondence between the shaykh <Abd el-<Aziz Mustara and the General, as well as a <@hysterical initiation" that the former is said to have transmitted to the latter in the Elysée gardens; and adds that Valsan was able to anticipate

De Gaulle's decisions to his disciples, even the least pre-visible ones. All this recalls that sort of 'golli esoterism

sta' that also manifested itself in the phantasmagorias of another Romanian settled in France, Jean Parvulesco, according to whom there is "a veiled but very profound convergence between the teaching of René Guénon and the confi dential, let us even say occult, dimensions of historical action and

(43) René Guénon et l'actualité de la pensée traditionnelle, Actes du Colloque International de Cerisy-la-Salle: 13-20 juillet 1973, Éditions du Baucens, Braine-1e-Comte, 1977. p. 91.

(44) Jean Robin, René Guénon. La dernière chance t/e l'Occident, Guy Trédaniel, Paris, 1983, p. 9. In this regard, Robin relates the following excerpt from the letter that a "direct disciple" of the General would have written to him on 21 April 1982: "What I can assure you of is the particular esteem that he (De Gaulle) had for R.G. (René Guénon) and his work. In addition, there is reason to firmly believe that he did not betray him at all, on any occasion' (op.cit., p.30).

(45) Jean Robin, Les sociétés secrètes au rendez-vous de l'Apocalypse, Guy Trédaniel, Paris, 1985, p. 211. See Jean Robin, Hitler, l'élù du Dra gon, Guy TrédanJe, Paris, 1987, p. 116.

(46) Jean Robin. Les sociétés secrètes au rendez-vous de l'Apocalypse, op. cit., p. 335.

trans-historicism undertaken by Charles De Gaulle in France and the world' (47).

We are unable to say what is true about Jean Robin's assertions nor what influence Michel Valsan and his *entourage* may have had in the birth of what has been called, precisely in relation to Robin, 'fanta Gaullism' (48). It would be very strange if Michel Valsan, who in the 1960s invited Vasile Lovinescu to be wary of Romanian petty-nationalism (49), had adhered, in the same period, to French 'petty-nationalism'. But even more strange would be if the "fantagollist" development of the old theme of the "Great Monarch", against which René Guénon had warned his readers (50), had been contributed by the very man who had called René Guénon the "Infallible Compass" and the "Impenetrable Armour" (51).

\* \* \*

Apart from the introduction to R. Guénon's *Symboles fondamentaux de La Science Sacrée* (not translated in the Adelphi Italian edition), Miche) Vlllsan's essays and translations

have all appeared in *Études Traditionnelles*. A complete bibliography of Miche/ Va/san's publications, compiled by Charles-André Gillis, can be found on pp. 81-85 of: M. Vlllsan, *Lafunzione di René Guénon*, Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, Parma. 1985. The following have appeared in Italian

(47) Jean Parvulesco, *La spirale prophétique*, op.cit., p. 76.

(48) Giorgio Manara, *Sui parasites dell'opera di Guénon: qualche aggiornamento*, in *Rivista di Studi Tradizionali*, 60, January-June 1984, pp. 40-44.

(49) 'Méfie-toi d'un certa in "nationalisme": Michel Valsan, Letter to Vasile Lovinescu, Vanves, 13 August 1967. Photocopy of the original in our archive.

(50) René Guénon, *Le Règne de la Quantité et le Signes des Temps*, ch. xxxvn. *La duperie des "prophéties"*.

(51) Miche! Valsan, René Guénon, op. cit., p. 72.

volumes: *The Function of René Guénon*, op.cit. (containing: *The Islam and the Function of René Guénon*, *The Function of René Guénon and the Destiny of the West*, *The Work of Guénon in the Orient*); *The Bonnet of Heraclius* (contains, in addition to the title paper, *On a Study of Muhammad Hamidullah* and *The Bonnet of Heraclius and the Tradition of the Adamic "Tabat"*), Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, Parma, 1985; *Giovanna d'Arco*, Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, Parma, 1986; *La realizzazione discendente degli ultimi tre gradi della massoneria scozzese* (the title, due to the publisher, intends to translate *Les derniers hauts grades de l'Écossisme et la réalisation descendante*; in appendix, *A text by Sahykh al-Akbar on "descending realisation"*), Arktos, Carmagnola 1988; Ibn al-Arabi, *The Book of Extinction in Contemplation*, afterword and notes by Michel Valsan, SE, Milan, 1996. Finally, a letter from Michel Valsan to Anton Dumitriu was published as an appendix to: C. Mutti, *Eliade, Valsan, Geticus and the Others*, op.cit.

The following essays and articles, all of which appeared in *Études Traditionnelles* and related to Sufism and Hesychasm, are translated and collected in this volume:

- *Un symbole idéographique de l'Homme Universel (Données d'une correspondance avec René Guénon)*, *Études Traditionnelles*, no. 364, March-April 1961; reprinted as *Annexe III* in *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée*, Paris, 1962.

- *Le triangle de l'Androgyne et le monosyllabe "Om"*, *Études Traditionnelles*, no. 382, March-April 1964; no. 383, May-June 1964; no. 386, November-December 1964; no. 387, January-February 1965.

- *Références islamiques du "Symbolisme de la Croix"*, *Études Traditionnelles*, nos. 424-425, March-April and May-June 1971; no. 428, November-December 1971.

- *Un texte du Cheikh al-Akbar sur la "réalisation descendante"*, *Études Traditionnelles*, no. 307, April-May 1953.

- *Notes de lecture. Sur le Cheikh Al-Alawf (1869-1934)*, *Études Traditionnelles*, no. 405, January-February 1968.



– *Mise au point, Études Traditionnelles*, nos. 406-407-408, March-April, May-June, July-August 1968.

– *Études et Documents d'Hésychasme, Études Traditionnelles*, nos. 406-407-408, March-April, May-June, July-August 1968.

The importance of these pages, substantially unknown to the Italian reader, is due to the fact that their author is not only the most authoritative European exponent of esotericism islarnicism of "Guenonian" expression, but is at the same time one of the of the most qualified personalities to deal with hesychasm, given his access to first-hand sources concerning this reality and given his qualification in framing its data from the perspective of traditional thought.

CLAUDIO MUTI!

## I. AN IDEOGRAPHIC SYMBOL OF MAN UNIVERSAL

*(Data from a correspondence with René Guénon)*

At the end of the article entitled *La Montagne et la Caverne* (*Études Traditionnelles*, January 1938) (1), René Guénon, who based his considerations on the triangular patterns corresponding to these two symbols, wrote: "If one wants to quickly present the cave as being located within the very interior (or in the heart, we might say) of the mountain, it will be sufficient to place the inverted triangle inside the right triangle- so that the two centres coincide [figure 1]; the first triangle will then necessarily have to be smaller than the second, in order to be contained in its entirety.

this difference, the whole of the figure thus obtained is manifestly identical with the symbol of the "Seal of Solomon", where the two opposite triangles also represent two complementary principles, in the different applications of which they are susceptible. On the other hand, if the two sides of the inverted triangle are drawn equal to half of those of the straight triangle (we have drawn them a little smaller), then the triangle is the same.

On the other hand, if the two sides of the inverted triangle are drawn equal to half of those of the straight triangle (we have drawn them a little smaller, so that the two triangles appear to be entirely detached from each other, but in fact it is evident that the entrance to the cave must be on the surface of the triangle), then the two sides of the inverted triangle must be equal to half of those of the straight triangle.

(1) The Mountain and the Cave, in R. Guénon, *Symbols of Sacred*

Science, Adelphi, Milan, 1994I, pp. 189-192.

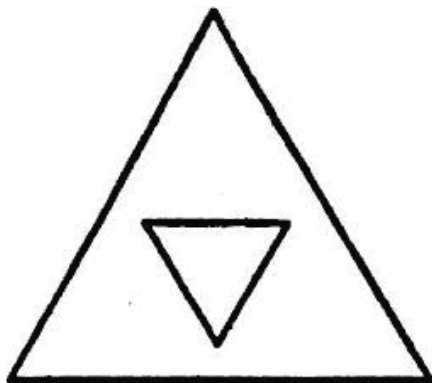


Figure I

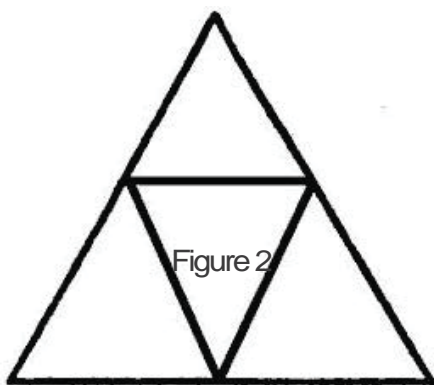
cie itself of the mountain. therefore that the triangle that the rap presents should really touch the contour of the other) (2), the lesser triangle will divide the surface of the greater into four equal parts, one of which will be the same triangle One of which will be the same inverted triangle, while the others will be straight triangles; this last consideration, like the one on certain numerical relations connected with it, does not, to tell the truth, have a direct relation to our subject, but we will certainly have the opportunity to return to it later, in the course of other studies)).

11 our late master, in fact, did not have such an such an occasion in his books or articles. It was only in his correspondence with us that he was induced, on several occasions, to provide some unpublished clarifications on certain topics of our correspondence. For his other readers, therefore, there is no other way of knowing what he meant in this regard than by taking cognizance of certain passages of his letters from the posthumous note. We will accompany them with detailed explanations and some personal commentary.

(2) "On the basis of the same scheme, it may be noted that, if the mountain is replaced by the pyramid, the inner chamber of the latter is the exact lens of the cave)) (Note by René Guénon).

These issues were first evoked in the proposition of the numerical symbolism of certain Arabic names and terms; to better situate this, it is worth recalling how in the *Symbolisme de la Croix*, chap. II (1931), René Guénon had already written that, in Islamic esotericism, "it is taught that the 'Universal Man', insofar as he is represented by the couple 'Adam-Eva', has the number of Allah, which constitutes an expression of the 'Supreme Identity'". In a footnote, the author pointed out: "This number, which is 66, is given by the sum of the numerical values of the letters forming the names *Adam wa Hawtt*. According to the Hebrew Genesis, man "created male and female", i.e. in an androgynous state, is "in the image of God"". Having pointed out to him some other correspondences (which cannot be recalled in the present context), there was an initial allusion in his reply, not explicit enough, however, to the extent that it matters to us:

"For the number 45 of the name *Adam*, it should be noted that it is not only a multiple of 9, but that it is properly the "triangle" of 9, i.e., in other words, the sum of the first 9 numbers. On the other hand, *Hawtt*'s number is 15, which is the "triangle" of 5; the relationship of these two triangles may also give rise to some curious considerations; I have long had the intention of mentioning this in some article, but have not yet found the opportunity" (Letter of 30 March 1940).



In replying to him, we observed, among other things, that the relationship between 45 and 15 was particularly interesting in the arrangement of the first nine numbers in the so-called "magic square" of 9, where each line, whether vertical, horizontal or diagonal, gives a total of 15 and the whole has as its centre the number 5, the numerical symbol of the human microcosm (cf. the arrangement of the regenerated man on the Blazing Star). This earned us a new clarification on the point that concerns us here:

"His observations about the "magic square" of 9 are exact (3); but the relationship between the numbers of Adam and Hawa is also that of the two triangles of which I spoke in proposing the symbolism of the mountain and the cave (figure 2). If one considers the sum of the two names without the conjunction intervening, i.e. 60, Adam represents three quarters and Hawa a quarter; this could perhaps be compared to certain Hindu formulas (a quarter, in Sanskrit, is called a 'foot', *pilda*), at least to the extent that these formulas are susceptible of an application to Universal Man" (Letter of 21 April 1940). 1940).

In this last regard, here is what we feel we can mention, with regard to the Hindu data cited elsewhere by René Guénon himself. The *Mandukya Upanishad* (shruti I and 2) has recourse to the unit of measurement called *pada* to propose the conditions of *Atma*: <<Atma (of whom all things are the manifestation) is *Brahma*, and this *Atma* (in relation to the different states of being) has four conditions (*padas*); in truth all that is *Brahma*>>. After quoting this text in chap. X of *L'Homme et son devenir selon le Vedânta*, in chapters XI, XIV and XVI René Guénon shows that, according to the correspondences established by the *Upanishad* itself between the elements (matras) of the sacred monosyllable Aum (pro-

(3) The question of the symbolism of this "square" was later taken up by Guénon himself in *The Great Triad* (chap. XVI: The "Ming-Tang"). which appeared in 1946.



nounced Om) and the conditions (padas) of Atma, of which it is the ideographic symbol, these four conditions are:

1) the waking state (jagaritasthina), which is that of the most external manifestation, the corporeal world, represented by the letter A of the monosyllable;

2) the dream state (swapnasthana), which is that of the subtle manifestation, represented by the letter U;

3) the state of deep sleep (sushuptasthana), the princely degree of being, represented by the letter M;

4) the supreme, total and absolutely unconditioned state, represented by the monosyllable itself, considered in its princely and 'unspoken' aspect, by means of an ideographic character (amarra).

But, on the other hand, the Maitri Upanishad (7th prapathaka, shruti 11) says: "Waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and what lies beyond: these are the four states of Atma, the greatest (mahattara) and the Fourth (Thrfya). In the first three, Brahma rises with one of his feet; he has three feet in the last one'. René Guénon comments: "Thus the proportions established previously according to a certain point of view are reversed according to another point of view: of the four "feet" (padas) of Atma, the first three as to the distinction of states are only one as to metaphysical importance, and the last one is worth three alone under the same ratio. If Brahma were not 'without parts' (akhanda), one could say that only a quarter of Him is in Being (including all that depends on it, i.e. the universal manifestation of which it is the principle), while His other three quarters are beyond Being. These three quarters can be considered in the following way:

(1) the totality of the possibilities of manifestation insofar as they are not manifested, thus in the absolutely permanent and unconditioned state, like everything that relates to the 'Fourth' (insofar as they are manifested, they belong to the first two states; insofar as they are 'manifested', to the third, principled in relation to these two);

2) the totality of the possibilities of non-manifestation (of which we speak in the plural only by analogy, since they are



evidently beyond multiplicity and also beyond unity);

3) finally, the Supreme Principle of the one and the other, which

is the Universal Possibility, total, infinite and absolute>>.

Of course, it is possible to find correspondences between the four padas of Brahma and the four small triangles into which the big one is divided (just as, on the other hand, it should

(Just as, on the other hand, it should be possible to make a new transposition of the monosilabo Aum): in this case the inverted triangle, applied to the principal orine, symbolises Being as it manifests itself (4); the three straight triangles then correspond to the three

aspects of Brahma beyond Being: the upper triangle, origin of the graphic ensemble, is naturally equivalent to a symbol of the Supreme Principle of all possibilities, while the two triangles on the right and left correspond respectively to the possibilities of non-manifestation and the possibilities of manifestation as they are not manifested (5).

to the possibilities of non-manifestation and to the possibilities of manifestation as they do not manifest (5).

On the other hand, when one considers the correspondences with the four padas of Atma, they are as follows: the upper triangle corresponds to the principled and unmanifested pétā, while the other three triangles correspond to the three pildas of the domain of manifestation, which are also related to the matras of Aum. Nonetheless, for a precise application nevertheless, for a precise application, one must also consider an interpretation according to the symbolism of the centre, the right and the left, i.e. reordering the vertical hierarchy of the degrees of existence (principal, intermediate and corporeal) on a horizontal plane

(4) By way of a more specific application, in Buddhism the inverted triangle is the mercy symbol of Avalokiteshwara, "the Lord, king who looks down".

(5) This is so, let us be clear, when one considers the manifestation in a "negative" sense; but, if one were to consider it in a "positive" sense, i.e. as the fulfilment or perfecting of existential possibilities (conformity with the Fiat), then the symbolism of the "right" and the "left" would be unheard of.

corresponding to the point of view of 'road directions', or even of 'distributive justice'.

Intine, if one were to take a more cosmological point of view (close to that of the Sankhya), but in the terms of the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, the upper triangle would be the 'One and Colourless Being' (interpreted as Shiva), and the other three triangles would be the three 'unborn' ones. One, of feminine character, would be the "red, white and black unborn" that generates the particular beings and corresponds to the Primordial Nature principle of the three Gunas or, also, to Shiva's Shakti, and is logically represented by the inverted triangle (6). The other two 'unborn' are male in character, but one

"remains satisfied with it, while the other abandons it after having enjoyed it"; they are respectively the uncreated but passive and bound soul in the first case, active and detached in the second (Shvetashvatara Upanishad, IV, 1 and 5) (7). However, this text speaks properly of four distinct entities, and not of four parts of the same being. Now, in truth, these are modes of one and the same essential reality that is none other than Atma; but these modes, for didactic reasons, are here personified in typically characterised hypostases, which can involve not only the multitude of existing beings, but also the multiplicity of states of one and the same being (8).

(6) This identification is in perfect accord with the symbolism proper to the feminine principle; incidentally, such is the position of the triangle as a symbol of Shakti.

(7) The order of mention in the cited Upanishadic text thus corresponds to the symbolism of the centre, the left and the right.

(8) Similarly, <<the two birds, closely united companions, clinging to the same tree, one in the act of eating the fruit, the other motionless but in the act of gazing intently', represent vamentejivdmta and Atma respectively, i.e. two degrees of the same Self. On the other hand, in the Shvetashvatara Upanishad the verse concerning these two birds (IV, 6) immediately follows the passage mentioning the four entities we are talking about.

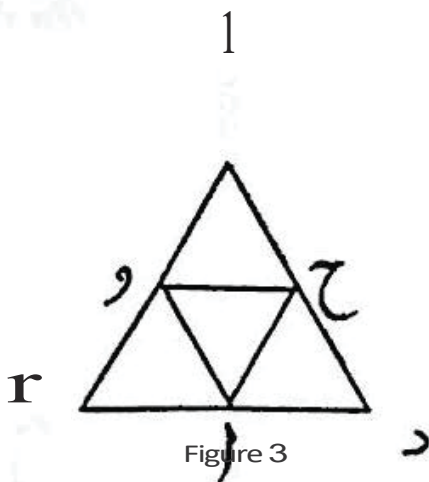
But let us return to our correspondence with Guénon. At another time, much later, when our letters repeatedly touched upon the question of the *mantra* Aum in relation to the names and formulas of the Islamic *dhikr*, R. Guénon told us:

"In connection with what I had said to you, I will ask you again to examine carefully what is evident from the arrangement of the letters around the perimeter of the figure beside it [figure 3], in which the largest triangle is to be considered as equivalent to 45-Adam, and the smallest triangle upside down as equivalent to 15

inverted as equivalent to 15 Hawd. This figure is that which I had given, but without the letters and without even alluding to it, because I had the intention of returning to it later, in my article on the mountain and the cave" (Letter of 4 August 1945).

Circumstances at the time only allowed us to thank him for this important communication; therefore we cannot report any appreciation on his part regarding the observations we could make in this regard, nor any other considerations that he would not have failed to add. We also hoped that he would sooner or later decide to write the article he had been thinking about for some time.

Here, now, is what can be said at first glance about this figure.



The surrounding letters are Arabic. On the upper vertex, an alif; on the right-hand corner, a dtil; on the left-hand corner, an mfm; we thus have, for the largest triangle, the name Adam. On the midpoint of the right-hand side, where the vertex of one of the angles of the inverted triangle is located, there is a hli; on the midpoint of the left side, where the vertex of the angle adjacent to the same side is located, we have a waw; finally, on the midpoint of the base of the greater triangle, where the lower vertex of the lesser triangle is located, there is another alif; we thus have, for the lesser triangle, the name Hawa (9). The effect produced by the interference of the letters of the two names on each side of the greater triangle is as follows: on the right side we have alif, hél, from Ahad, meaning "One"; on the left side we have alif, waw, mfm—Awm, Arabic transcription of the sacred monosyllable of the East; finally, on the base, according to the normal order of the Arabic script, we have dal, alif, mfm—dam, a verb meaning <<He is permanent>>, but which should be read as the present participle Da'im—

"Permanent, Eternal". In Da'im, which is one of the divine names, the letter i in the Latin transliteration corresponds, in the Arabic script, to a simple *hamzah* (a vowel sign that is not a letter and has no numerical value either). We thus have three terms of a fundamental importance in the doctrinal order: the divine name of the Pure Unity (cf. Qur'an, CXIT, 1), the primordial word that according to Hindu doctrine encompasses the essence of the threefold Veda and is thus a symbol of the universal Word and, finally, a term that expresses the permanence of the One Principle as much as that of the First Revelation of the Word. Nevertheless, these three divine aspects, insofar as they appear here in the structure of the Form of the human Androgyne, are properly theophanic aspects of the Universal Man.

(9) Since the name Haw/1 expresses the idea of life (Itayilt), one can immediately see its relation to the heart, the seat of the "life centre", of which the inverted triangle is the geometric symbol.



Under this relationship, it is interesting to note that the alif of the upper vertex, which in itself expresses the ideas of "principle" and "unity" (the numerical value of this letter is 1) or even of "polarity" (the value of the letters that make up the name alif is 111, the number of the "pole", *Qutb*), enters as the initial letter both in *Ahad*— "One", and in *Awm*— Om. This also accords with the princely position this letter occupies in both the "numerical" and "literal" order; the idea is thus suggested that we are here in the presence of a kind of "Seal" of the two sacred sciences of Numbers and Letters. These sciences are in fact the two main branches of the more general Science of Names (applicable both in the divine order and in the creature order), a Science that Allah taught to Adam as his privilege (*Qur'an*, Q, 31; cf. Genesis, Q, 19-20). The fact that in our scheme this aliphany is first and foremost the initial of the name Adam, perfectly illustrates the truth that these two sciences are complementary and integral attributes of the Universal Man. At the same time, since their origin is divine, as we have said, the alif that symbolises their principle must be considered as the initial of the name Allah itself, "conferred" on Adam through that Primordial Theophany which is his creation "according to the Fanna of Allah". This alif is then a symbol of the intelligible essence of this total Form, just as the straight sign of the first letter of the sacred alphabet is considered the constituent principle of all the others; just as the sound a that runs parallel to it (this can be seen in writing, when the letter contracted from *aphathah*, i.e. from the sound a, "saturated" is necessarily prolonged with an *ali*) is the primordial voice of which all possible sounds are only modifications; just as unity, which is the numerical value of this letter, is the principle of all numbers (10).

(10) We cannot insist here on the various ways in which this conception could also be "verified" by means of certain technical operations of a literal and numerical order.

Finally, this upper alif, which occupies the initial position in the name Adam, has as it were a "projection" in the lower alif with which the name Hawél ends. The relationship between these two alifs is, moreover, strictly that of two simultaneous and polar opposite existential degrees of the same being, just as Hawél is but an intimate part of the primordial and androgynous Ada mo and, distinctively, its complement produced by a simple inner reflection of the male aspect (11). From a more analytical microcosmic point of view, the place occupied by the alif in the upper vertex is that of the ray sent by the spiritual Sun, which is the descending Self, a ray that strikes first of all the centre of the "lotus of a thousand petals" (sahasriira) (12), symbolically situated on the crown of the head. In turn, the alif at the bottom represents, we might say, the lower point of arrival of the same ray (through the subtle artery Sushumna); and its position, which is the point of contact between the lower vertex of the lesser triangle and the base of the greater one, expresses a relative and apparent "immanence" of the Self in the bottom of the <<cave of the heart>> (13), while, according to its pure essence, the Self remains unconditioned, as does the original alif, that of Alléih,

(11) In our figure, this reflection must be considered as 'threefold', because each straight triangle having one side in common with the inverted triangle projects its own reflection into the latter. This could be related, in the principled and non-manifest order, to the threefold potentiality of Prakriti (the three gunas); in the order of productions, for example, to the three sons of the primordial couple mentioned in Genesis (Cain, Abel, Seth), who represent three fundamental types of humanity.

(12) The fact that alifderivi from a root that, vocalised alf, means 'thousand', favours this assimilation to some extent.

(13) It is therefore an equivalent of Avatîra <<born in the Cave>>, as well as of Shiva, engaged in becoming and called <<he who is in the nest>>. This cannot fail to remind us, from another perspective on the constitution of the human being, of the location of the serpentine Kundalini force at the base of the spinal column, in the triangle called Traipura which is the seat of Shakti. It is virtually superfluous to mention that the Serpent, al-hay yah, is both etymologically and mythologically connected to Eve.

is not assignable according to its true nature to any given position on this symbolic scheme, the elements of which, however, all proceed from it. From the macrocosmic point of view, the 'descent' relationship that exists between these two *alifs* is, after all, an expression of the manifestation of the Dominical Command (*al-Amr ar-Rabbînf*), which descends from the Heavens to the Earth, rearranges the world and ascends back to Allah (14).

On the other hand, if we refer to the symbolism of the mount and the cave as the "Seats" of the spiritual Pole, the upper alif represents the latter's dominant and manifest position at the beginning of the cycle, and the lower alif its central and inner residence in the phase of concealment.

In fine, to conclude our supplementary considerations, we will say that it is probable that, if we insisted a little more, we could make other significant observations, both numerical and literal and verbal; but, since our aim was above all to report the opinion of René Guénon, we will end our personal intervention on this point here for the moment.

It remains, however, that the most astonishing fact in this figure is the appearance of Aum; one may ask what value the presence of this Vedic word has in an Arabic context. This question orients us towards another field of study, so we propose to consider it in another article, in which we will again recall some passages from our correspondence with René Guénon.

(14) This takes place "on a Day whose measure is 1.00 years of the ordinary computation" (Qur'an, XXXII, 5), which evokes the meaning of the radiance from which the term alif derives.



## 2. THE ANDROGYNE TRIANGLE AND THE MONOSYLLABLE "OM"

At the end of our article entitled *An ideo-graphic symbol of the Universal Man (Data from a correspondence with René Guénon)*, we announced a more specific sequel

to account for the presence of the Vedic word *Awm* (= *Om*) in the Arabic context given by the figure representing the symbolic proportions between Adam and Eve in the constitution of the primordial Androgyne. We reproduce here again the drawing provided at the time, with a trans

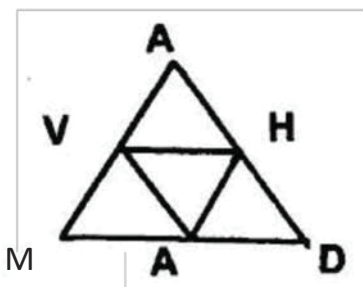
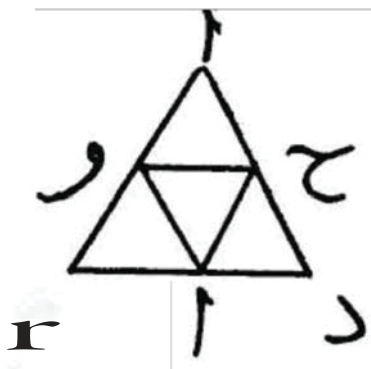
litteration in Latin characters for ease of reference. At the same time, we specify the correspondences between the Arabic and Latin letters, remembering that, in the two drawings, reading must be done according to the sense of the Arabic script, i.e. from right to left.

### *1. Complementarism of ideographic symbols*

In reality, it will now be a matter of deriving rather the sense of the presence of the three Arabic letters corresponding to the three

**mdtras** or constituent elements of the monosyllable *Om*, because Arabic, as indeed all Semitic languages, does not posit, at least explicitly, this same invocatory vocabulary; instead, it possesses (an equivalence to which we shall return)

mo) the word *Amfn* (= amen), which has a more or less analogous sacred usage.



LETIERE  
COSTITUDE  
ARAB

TRANSLITERATION  
LATINA

NAMES  
ARABI

alif-dlil·mfm

WMD

Adam

hli-waw-alif

HVA

Hawa (Eva)

alif-M-dal

AHD

Ahad(One)

alif-waw-mfm

A W M (I)

Awm (Om)


d!il-alif-mfm

DAM

Dilm (He is  
permanent)

The three Arabic letters *alif*, *waw* and *mim*, as elements of a specific thematic group located within the symbolic framework of our scheme of the Universal Man (1), can be interpreted as follows: *alif*, which is a symbol of unity and the first principle, naturally represents AlJah, whose name also has alif as its initial letter; on the other hand, the last of the three letters, *mfm*, designates Allah's Envoy, *Mohammad*, whose name begins with this letter (2). The ini-

(1) See above, An ideographic symbol of the Universal Man.

(2) With regard to the Latin transcription of *Aum*, it can be noted that the outline of the triangular design can be broken down into A V M, as well as as can the symbol  found among the Cannelitans of Loudun and ~~sub~~ by René Guénon in *Le Roi du Monde* (chapters II and IV).

nal and final of this **Awm** thus correspond to the two attestations (ash-shahadatan) of Islam: the one concerning **AlHih** as the one God and that of the divine mission of the **Pro feta Mohammad**. Between these two extreme terms, the **waw** constitutes the conjunction (**waçl**), this letter being on the other hand de the conjunction 'and' (**wa**) (3); at the same time, metonymically **waw** is the **Wahdah**, the pure essential Unity **the Principle** and the **Mohammadi Reality** (4).

Interpreting the ideographic relationship between the three letters in

a theo-physical perspective, it can be said that the **Word**, which in the **l'alif** remains in the princely state, develops as a holy rite in the spiral movement of the **waw**, to finally coil up in the all-embracing and occulting form of the **mfm**

(3) **U mfm**, regardless of the place it occupies in a scheme like the one studied here, is a symbol of **Mohammad** and at the same time **Adam**. Here is a passage from **Ibn 'Arabi** in this regard: "The **mfm** (taken by its name consisting of **m+ y+ m= mfm+ yd+ mfm**) refers to **Adam** and **Mohammad**, upon the two of them be unifying grace and peace! The **ya** between the two **mfm** is the tr.unite of their bond, because the **yd** is a 'weak' or 'causal' letter (**harfu illatin**). By means of it, **Mohammad** (one of the two **mfm**) exerts a spi.ritual action on **Adam** (the other **ml'm**). from which derives **Adam's** spirituality as well as that of every being in the universe; this is in accordance with the hadith of the Prophet who says: "I was pro feta when **Adam** was still between water and clay". For his part, **Adam** exerts a bodily action on **Mohammad** through this same interme dia. from which, moreover, the corporeality of every man existing in the world, including that of **Mohammad**>> (**The Book of the Mfm. of the Waw and the Nun**, Hayderabad, 1948).

(4) In the economy of prophetic revelation, this role is that of the **Angel Gabriel**. It is well known that, according to the commentaries on the island letters te>> placed at the beginning of certain Surahs of the **Qur'an**, the **Angel** corresponds to the letter **liim** of the **Alif-LO.m-Mfm** group, a theme that represents **Allih-Jibrélil-Mohammad** in a hierogrammatic manner. Cf. **I.S interpréw tions ésotériques du Quran**, in **Études Traditionnelles**, November-December 1963, p. 263. It is also possible to say that, with regard to the conjunctive function of **waw**, **Ulm**, as a preposition 'to' or 'for', expresses the at tribution and tinaliât, which, in a certain sense, disposes **Allih** to an integral theophany in **Mohammad** and, in the reverse sense, brings back to **Allah** all of **Mohammad's** reality and function.

Mohammadan; thus, the Mohammadi Reality constitutes the mystery of the supreme and universal Word, because it is simultaneously the integral Theophany (of the Essence, Attributes and Acts) and its concealment under the veil of the absolute and total Servitude (5). This is why the Prophet said: "He who sees me, sees the Truth itself" (man ralinfa *faqad* raa-l Haqq). The series of these three letters can be seen as constituting the complete cycle of the universal Breath: in Hindu terms, *Brahma* as *Prilna* (6).

It is noteworthy that this symbolism of totality which is proper to the group of the three Arabic letters *alif-waw-mim* coincides exactly with that of the Hindu monosyllable according to the *Mandukya Upanishad* (*shruti* I): "Om, this syllable (aksha *ra*) is all that is!

(5) From the same point of view, *wiiw* is also considered a 'letter of love' (*harfu-t-wadd*) and is used as such in operations based on the virtues of letters. The word *wad* (which has only two letters, the last of which is pronounced 'strengthening' and is transliterated with a double) is also found in our drawing if one joins the *wiiw* with the *dal* of the right vertex. This last letter is itself considered in the same order of ideas as the 'letter of permanence or constancy' (*harfu-d-dawlim*), which also gives it a special application to the *wad*

(6) Ivi, pp. 264-265. This simultaneous act of theophany and servant concealment is enunciated by the Christian scripture in the case of Jesus (who, however, had quite specifically manifested the attributes of the Lordship, in Arabic *ar-RubUbiyah*): "Although he was in the Form (*Mor phé= ēarah*) of God, he did not eagerly judge himself equal to God, but emptied himself by taking the form of a slave, making himself similar to men etc." (Phil., p. 264-270).

men etc.' (Phil., II, 6-9).

(7) We also note that, under these conditions, it is not surprising that an Arabic word consisting of three letters arranged in this order has a similar meaning, of 'breath', for example. Indeed, there is an Arabic word *awm*, with a meaning very close to that of "strong breath", "human breath altered by thirst", but without any technical meaning and, above all, divorced from any function comparable to that of the Vedic monosyllable *Om*. However, if we mention it, it is simply to point out that the symbolic virtues of the constituent letters subsist at the base and may possibly manifest themselves. Such is precisely the case with



Moreover, the alife the *mfm* can be considered in the perspective of the cycle of prophetic manifestations. These letters, which are also the initial and final of the name *Adam*, represent present then, respectively, Adam himself as the primordial holder of the divine Science of names (*Ilmu-l asma*) and Mohammad as the Seal of the Prophets receives the Synthetic Words (*Jawami'u-l-Kalim*) and is entrusted with "perfecting the noble customs" (*tatmimu Makarimi-l-Akhlaq*) (8).

Thus, it is clear that the role of this Arabic *Aum* is simply ideographic, and it is under this relationship that we will make a few more observations.

In our figure, the Arabic letters corresponding to the characters A, U, M follow one another in descending order, which corresponds to the hierarchy of the truths they symbolise, whereas in Hindu symbolism the order of the *matras* of *Om* is ascending (9).

this word as an Arabic word that occurs in the graphical arrangement we have studied and occupies a place that is only clarified by reference to the corresponding Sanskrit monosyllable. Regarding the Breath universal, we could have quoted here the specific Islamic doctrine of *Nafasu*

*r-Rahmiln*, the Breath of the Omnimisericordious, producer of beings in the cosmic order and of letters in the human vocal order. But certain parts of this doctrine would lead us to developments that we cannot introduce here.

(8) A curious coincidence makes the group of isolated letters at the beginning of the Sura of the Heifer, mentioned in an earlier footnote, is also interpreted in this sense by AJ-Qashlani: "...Alif-/Am-Mtm constitute the symbol by which God has designated all that is, etc. >> (ibid., p. 263).

(9) In this perspective, the letter *dal* of the triangular scheme is for its exceptional significance. Among the prophets, it designates David (David), of whose name it is the initial; this prophet-king, as Ibn Arabi (Futuhfit, ch. 515), is in a very special position between Adam and Mohammad in terms of the relationship of the constituent letters: of the three letters of the name Adam (*alif-dal-mim*), two appear in that of David (consisting of five letters: *dal-alif-waw-waw-dal*, but spelled with only one *waw*) and two in that of Mohammad (consisting of four letters: *mim-hi-mim-dal* << *raffor zata'-dal*). This takes us a little away from our main objective, but as the occasion is rather rare, we will mention here a confa-



## MAIN CORRESPONDENCES OF THE MATRÀS OF OM

	ATMA	"WORLDS	VEDA
Matras	Microcosmic conditions	Macrocosmic conditions	
M	State of "deep sleep" (Sushuptasthiina)	Prajna "Sun" (degree not manifested)	Sarna-Veda
u	State of "dream" (Swapnasthiina)	Taijasa "Moon" Veda (sonile manifestation)	Yajur-
A	State of "wakefulness" (Jtigaritasthiina)	Va hwiinara "Earth" se s (crude manifestation)	Rig-VMa

cente: Adam, having obtained from All!lh to see his descendants in germs, noticed among the prophetic lights that of DawOd and yet found the life allotted to him too short. Decise to èèdegr there a sixty years of his own life, but. when the end of his life shortened in this way came, Adam reconsidered his gift and had a dispute with the Angel of Death. Allah, it is said, nevertheless prolonged DllwOd's life, but without shortening Adam's. Ibn Arabi says about this tradition (Futlihfit, op. cit.): <<The sixty years offered to DiiwOd corresponds to the length of Mohammad's life; when Adam's life (qualified in its successive stages by the letters of his name) reached the mim of his own name, Adam saw Mohammad's Form in the mfm and reconsidered the gift given to DiiwOd". (Note that the mfm is also the letter of death, mawt, which establishes a rather curious relationship with the aforementioned turning back before the Angel of Death). Adam agl sol because, in the deviation of his life, he found himself removed from the vision of the alife of the dill (which also appear in the name of Diiwùd). But by thus withdrawing his gift to DiiwOd, he came under the Bandier-.1 of Mohammad (and this alludes to the hadfth of the Prophet:

'Adam and those who come after him are under my Flag'). The correspondence of the letters Alif-Diil-Mim with the three personages mentioned in the total prophetic cycle makes it possible to consider the ADM triangle as that of the Caliphate par excellence, since the respective prophets are the only ones designated in the Qur'an and the haïdith with the title of Caliph (Vicar) of Allah.

This reverse order of the *matras* is explained by their arrangement according to the order of sound reabsorption, which starts from the state of complete manifestation in the sensible realm, rises through a movement of internal involution in the subtle realm, and re-enters, through total extinction, the unmanifested (10).

Nevertheless, the *matras* of the sacred monosyllable also have a written representation.

also have a written representation. Now, under this relationship, on both the Arabic and the Sanskrit side, the geometric elements corresponding to the characters of the transcription seem to be the same; a rectangular line is the same.

be the same; a straight line for the character A, a curved

A straight line for the character A, a curved or spiraloid element for the character U, a dot for the character M. In this case one would have to account, under the ideographic relationship, for the resulting inversion, at least apparently, in the order of the respective characters. In this regard, as far as the Sanskrit part is concerned, we shall

resort to the clarifications that René Guénon provided in *L'Homme et son devenir selon le Vedanta* when he first had to deal specifically with the sacred monosyllable

Hindu, all the more so since nowhere, apart from

his writings, the indication of a geometrical symbolism of the *mūtras* of Om:« ...the geometrical forms that correspond respectively to the three *matras* are a straight line, a semi-circular semi-circumference (or rather a spiral element) and a point: the first symbolises the complete unfolding of the manifestation; the second, a state of envelopment relative to this unfolding, but nevertheless still developed or manifested; the third, the state informed and "without

dimensions" or special limiting conditions, i.e. not

manifested. It will also be noted that the point is the primordial principle of all geometric figures, as the non-manifest state is of all states of manifestation, and that it is, in the

(LO) Cf. René Guénon, *L'Homme et son devenir selon le Vedanta*, ch. XVII of the two first editions, XVI from the third; *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. IV.

its order, the true and indivisible unity, which makes it a natural symbol of pure Being' (II).

We have quoted this passage from Guénon *in extenso* because it contains the correspondences of which we speak and, simultaneously, an indication of the particular sense in which these are to be understood when dealing with the Sanskrit part. We thus know that the straight line in question symbolises 'the complete unfolding of the manifestation'; now, if this sense must be found in the character A of the Hindu transcription to which Guénon refers without specifying anything else, it cannot, however, be found in the vertical of the alif arabo; the latter, to use here the terms that Guénon himself used on another occasion, because of its form corresponds to the "amr, affirmation of pure Being and formulation prior but of the Supreme Will" (12), which assigns to it a principal and axial symbolism. On the contrary, the idea of <<the complete unfolding of the manifestation" refers to a figuration opposite to that of the vertical tract, a figuration which, having to be here always rectilinear, cannot be but horizontal.

But as the ordinary or even more specific forms of transcription of the akshara in devanagari do not show, at least at first glance, all these basic geometric elements (13), we think that Guénon had a particular hieroglyphic form of the monosyllable *Om*, of a more

(II) As for the Latin letters A, V, M, in which one can analyse the outline of the Androgyne, as we pointed out in a previous note, they correspond in a certain way to the descending order of the Arabic letters alif, waw, mfm: the A that coincides with the top of the figure corresponds to the a/if, the V that touches the two ends of the median bar at the top and only once the base corresponds to the waw inscribed at the median level, while the M, which rests on the base of the figure touching in three places and touching the median bar only in two places, corresponds to the mfm placed at the level of the base.

(12) Ibid.

(13) Er-Ruh, in *Études Traditionnelles*, August-September 1938, p. 288.

simple and more primordial, made to correspond graphically to the phonetic properties of the word. In any case, in his work we find even more precise indications in the same sense, when he speaks of the symbolism

of the shell (*shankha*), which is one of the main attributes of *Vishnu*. The conch is considered to contain the primordial and imperishable sound (*akshara*), i.e. the monosyllable *Om*, which is the name par excellence of the Word manifested in the three worlds, just as it is at the same time, by another correspondence of these three elements or *mūltras*, the essence of the threefold *Veda*. Moreover, these three elements, traced back to their essential geometric forms and graphically arranged in

a certain way, form the very pattern of the shell; and, by a rather singular concordance, we see that this pattern is also that of the human ear, the organ of hearing, which must indeed have, in order to be suitable for the perception of sound, a disposition in accordance with the nature of the latter. This to this evidently has to do with some of the deepest mysteries of cosmology...'. Now it will be better understood what the author means in the following passage: <<The scheme of the shell can on the other hand

be completed as if it were that of the *akshara* itself, for the straight line (*a*) covers and closes the shell (*u*), which contains within itself the point (*m*), the essential principle the essential principle of beings; the straight line then represents at the same time, because of its horizontal direction, the "surface of the Waters", that is, the substantial environment in which the development of the germs will take place (represented in oriental symbolism by the opening of the lotus flower) after the period of intermediate obscurity (*sandhyā*) between two cycles. Then, continuing in the same schematic representation, we will have a figure that can be described as the reversal of the shell, which opens to let the germs out, according to the straight line now oriented in the descending vertical direction, which is that of the development of the manifestation starting from its unmanifested beginning". Here a precise note: 'This new figure is that which is given



by the Archéomètre for the letter **heth**, zodiacal of Cancer".

t\ (14).

Now, the figure thus given is more exactly that of the corresponding letter in the **Vattan** alphabet, i.e. **!** ; put it back in the position of the shell before its

"overturning" and its "opening", when it contains the germ, this figure must be **:-:-** . In this position, which can be regarded as normal, the straight line is horizontal. However, the order of succession of the elements is new; but the author warned us that, to obtain the

shell scheme, the **three** elements (or **métras**) were not only not only "brought back to their essential geometrical forms", but also "graphically arranged in a certain way", and it is certainly this arrangement, special and not ordinary, that explains the changes observable here in the order of the succession of the basic elements (15).

of the basic elements (15).

Finally, in **Le Roi du Monde**, ch. IV, explaining that "the word **Om** immediately gives the key to the hierarchical division hierarchical distribution of functions between the **Brahmta** and its two axi

which governs the "three worlds", Guénon adds: "To make use of another symbolism, no less rigorously exact, we would say that the **Mahéinga** represents the

base of the initiatory triangle, and the **Brahéitma** its vertex; between these two, the **Mahéitma** embodies in some way a mediating principle (the cosmic vitality, the **Anima Mundi** of the hermeti sti), whose action unfolds in "intermediate space"; and all this is represented very clearly by the corresponding characters of the sacred alphabet that Saint-Yves calls **vattan** and

(14) J.\_a hieroglyphic phoneme known as specifically reserved for Om is this **i50**. The other current transcriptions of this word, more character syllabism of the devanagari, are the following (in them the large horizontal bar is not a literal element, but a simple support of the writing, the 'power>> on which all the characters are suspended):

. **?** . 3ft.

(15) **Symboles fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée**, ch. XXII: **Quelques aspects du Symbolisme du poisson**, pp. 169-170.

Ossendowski *vatannan*, or, which is then the same, from the geometric forms (straight line, spiral and point) to which the three *matras* or constituent elements of the monosyllable Om are essentially related'. Of course, even here it is only a correspondence, but it is of the greatest importance.

I refer to the *Vattan* script, this time explicitly, in order to make it clear that the respective characters in this 22-letter solar alphabet are at least related, if not entirely identical, to those more specifically implicit in the symbolism of *Om's matras* according to the *Mandūkya Upaniṣhad* and René Guénon's commentary. Now, in the aforementioned alphabet, as we know it through *the Archéomètre* of Saint Yves, the character A corresponds to a horizontal straight line, U to a spiral pointing upwards, M to a dot (located on a horizontal straight line like a pearl on a flolo) (16).

In any case, now the line that corresponds to the *matril* A must be considered as horizontal and then it is, we might say, in a complementary relationship with the vertical line of the *alif*, rather than in a relationship of similarity. On the other hand, on closer inspection, an analogous relationship can also be observed in the case of the other two geometric forms in question, the spiraloid element and the "point": in fact, the spiral that represents the U-mark is involutive and ascending, since it is defined in the *Mandūkya Upaniṣhad* as *utkarsha*, "elevation" (17), while that of the Arab *waw* is evolutionary and ascending.

(16) Symholes, op. cit., ch. XIX: L'hiéroglyphe du Cancer.

(17) Despite our direct and indirect research, we have been unable to find anywhere an indication of the existence of an

Om similar to the drawing we have reconstructed thus. But, by a curious concurrence of events, very significant after all, we have been able to obtain an information coming indirectly from Guénon himself, which sufficiently verifies the conclusion of our symbolic deductions.

Martin Lings, who frequented René Guénon in Cairo for many years, appreciates it from him, at the end of 1939 (in relation to the fact that Guénon wore on his

right hand a ring with the engraving of the sacred monosyllable on it, but in one of the known forms, the one we first indicated in a previous note.

descending (17a); finally, on the Sanskrit side the dot corresponding to *the mītrī M* is a dot proper, "without ilimensions" (18), while on the Arabic side *the mtm* is in

dent as specifically reserved for Om), that "the rather geometrical hieroglyphic of the monosyllable the one he speaks of often enough in his works, is the following :>. It may be added that this refinement of Om seems to have been made on purpose in order to link the monosyllable to the symbolism of the "shell of Vishnu"; by reversing it, one has the signs of the mlītras, after all, in their normal ascending order, since the dot is in any case the final end of the spiral. On the other hand, it should be noted that, according to Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, who received the Vattan alphabet from Brahmanas and published it in the West, it is normally written from bottom to top (it is also written from left to right, i.e. in reverse order to Arabic).

(17a) This only concerns the graphic layout of the letters, since waw, in its (17a) This only concerns the graphic layout of the letters, because the waw, in its function of developing the vowel breath, itself implies a sense of "elevation", in Arabic *raf*; this is how, moreover, the vowel sign u is designated in this language, connatural in some way to the consonant wliw and characteristic of the nominative of nouns.

{18} With regard to the vaUCIn alphabet, which was also called watan, we reproduce an interesting passage from a long study on L'Archéomètre published by LA Gnose: "The most important of the alphabets that we shall consider here is the alpha beto watan. This alphabet, which was the primitive writing of the Atlanteans and the red race, whose tradition was transmitted to Egypt and India after the catastrophe in which Atlantis disappeared, is the exact transcription of astral alphabet. It comprises three constituent letters (corresponding to the three persons of the Trinity, or the three first Sejiroth, which are the first three numbers from which all the others came), seven planetary and twelve zodiacal, i.e. twenty-two characters in all... This alphabet, which Moses learned about in the temples of Egypt, became the first Hebrew alphabet, but then changed over the centuries, only to be lost altogether during the Babylonian captivity. The primitive alphabet of the Atlanteans was preserved in India and has come down to us through the Brahmanas; as for the Atlantean language, it was divided into several dialects, which may have become independent languages in the course of time; it was one of these languages that passed into Egypt and this Egyptian language was the origin of the Hebrew language, according to Fabre & Olive> (LA Gnose, July-August 1910, p. 185). This study was signed T., pseudonym of Mamès, editor-in-chief of LA Gnose; but it, as well as most of the notes, naturally benefited from the contribution of editor Palingenius (René



actually a closed curl or knot made by winding, a form that, at least in theory, involves a small empty space in the middle. It could also be pointed out that the fonts in the two series combined give the following three fundamental symbols: the Cross, the two snakes of the Caduceus and the Egg of the World.

Furthermore, it can be seen that, in a certain sense, the authentic symbolic equivalences

authentic symbolic equivalences are not to be found in the characters themselves, whose order is reversed, but, at every level, in the symbolic functions of their basic geometric elements. Thus, the constitutive point of the M-mark, located at the top, where it represents the main state, actually corresponds to the upper point of the alif, which is that 'original point' (*an-nuqtatu-l*

*açliyyah*) which, flowing under the gaze of Allah, produces the vertical stroke of the first letter (19). The two spirals, involutive and evolutive, of the median element naturally correspond to each other because of their functions, equally "mediating", mercurial and "mediating".

"mediating", mercurial, between a princely state and a state of total manifestation. Finally, at the lower degree, the horizon of the miṭṭri A expresses in a rectilinear form the same idea of the compact form of the mfm: a state of completeness which on the one hand is the starting point of a reabsorbing process, on the other is the end point of a cyclic consummation.

Thus, to conclude this examination, the reverse order in which the geometric forms follow one another in the two series of characters appears as a logical consequence of their actual hieroglyphic tracing. Now this tracing, with the complemen-

Guénon), whose style we recognise. In addition, we intend to reproduce in *Éwdes Traditionnelles*, in its entirety, the text published at that time, which unfortunately lacks the final part (a final issue of 1912, which contained the end of all studies in progress and had already been prepared, was already missing).

and had already been prepared, never saw the light of day).

(19) Cf. René Guénon, *L'Homme et son devenir selon le Véddnta*, ibi dem. Even in Om's ordinary traces this orientation of the spiral is recognisable in the element that appears to refer more specifically to the mam1 U.



tarianism that we discern in it, cannot be an isolated and accidental fact, nor is it without a more general traditional meaning, because we find ourselves in a sacred sphere par excellence, where the forms are the direct symbolic expression of the realities they are meant to express. We will recall here that René Guénon has already made a similar observation in the case of the Sanskrit *na*, traced back to its fundamental elements, and the Arabic *nan* – two semi-circles, upper and lower, each with its point – whose reunion gives rise to the "circle with its central point, a figure of the complete cycle that *is* at the same time the symbol of the Sun in the astrological order and of gold in the alchemical order" (20). He also says that one must see in this an effect of the "relations that exist between the alphabets of the different traditional languages" (21).

(21) His cosmological developments on this point of symbolism also led to a certain idea of final traditional integration: "Just as the lower half-circle is the figure of the ark, the upper half-circle is that of the rainbow, which is its analogue in the strictest sense of the word, i.e. with the application of the "inverted sense"; they are also the two halves of the "Egg of the World", one "terrestrial", in the "lower waters", the other "celestial", in the "higher waters"; and the circular figure, which was complete at the beginning of the cycle, before the separation of these two halves, must reconstitute itself at the end of the same cycle. - It could therefore be said that the reuniting of the two figu-

(20) Same observation already made for the previous fluke, in ordinary traces.

(21) On the Hindu side, the Prapanchsara Tantra (cf. Arthur Avalon, *La Puissance du Serpent*, p. 138), where it is said that "the three dévatas Brahmli, Vishnu and Rudrd (Shiva), with their three Shakti, arise from the letters A. U, M of the Omkara>>, he adds that the character M "as bindu (dot) is the Sun or Anna between the letters>>. Moreover, Saint-Yvcs d'Alveydre reports, from the Braltmanas who communicated the Vattan alphabet to him, that the "eighty letters or signs of the Veda are derived from the point of Aum, i.e. the character M>> (Notes sur la tradition cabalisrique).

king in question represents the completion of the cycle, through the reconnection of its beginning and its end, all the more so since, if one relates it more particularly to 'solar' symbolism, the figure of the Sanskrit *na* corresponds to the rising Sun and that of the Arabic *nun* to the setting Sun.... This makes it possible to glimpse that the fulfilment of the cycle as we have considered it must have a certain correlation, in the historical order, with the meeting of the two traditional forms that correspond to its beginning and its end, and which have Sanskrit and Sanskrit and Arabic as sacred languages: the Hindu tradition as the most direct inheritance of the primordial tradition and the Islamic tradition as the "seal of Prophecy" and therefore the ultimate form of traditional orthodoxy for the current cycle>> (22).

Finally, to return to our symbolic considerations initial considerations, we can say that what we have noted above regarding the three characters of the monosyllable *Om* comes to confirm the first consideration made by Guénon, and the this is all the more significant because, in the case in question, we are dealing with letters that express the symbol par excellence of the primordial Word. Under this relationship we can therefore also see the existence, on both sides, of elements that have a certain complementarity and a final integration. But such an integration is, of course, only possible insofar as it is the reconstitution of an original prefiguration of the harmony existing between the different elements and factors of the total transnational order; the sacred languages proper and the essential alphas that correspond to them.

the essential alphas that correspond to them, participate, according to-

(22) Symboles fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée, ch. XXIII: Les mystères de la lettre Nwt, p. 175. As an example of the difficulty of finding primitive symbolic forms in the devanagari, one can cite the case of the *na*, whose central point is united in the same movement with the semi-circle, which is stretched out to resemble a horizontal segment. On the other hand, in the Vattana alphabet, already mentioned in this order, the shape of this letter is exactly an upper semi-circle with a point.

their mode and on their plane, to a primordial synthesis that *is* both their *raison d'être* and their supreme purpose. Reducing the sacred alphabets to their founda

the symbolic characters traced on one side and on the other in the traditional forms defined between them according to complementary relationships, they must let their belonging to such a synthesis appear.

In this regard,' however, an observation must be made, especially after the peculiarities observed in our research. On the Sanskrit side, *it is* not in the fifty or so characters of the devanagari syllabary, a script intended for the

It is not in the fifty or so characters of the devanagari syllabary, a script intended for the most perfect phonetic recording of the oral tradition, that one must look for the complementary schematic forms of the 28 Arabic consonantal letters, but in a hieroglyphic alphabet, such as the *vattan* alphabet, which must also be itself at the origin, near or far of the writing.

devanagari and most of the syllabic scripts of Asia (23). Certainly, the *Vattan* alphabet is a "Solar)) alphabet, consisting of 22 letters like the Hebrew alphabet (24), while

on the Arabic side, there is a "lunar)) alphabet of 28 letters, but the latter can easily be brought back to the 22 letters of its solar base by the simple suppression of the diacritical dots of 6 of its letters (25); *it is* under this

(23) This operation of 'reconstitution' cannot but recall a traditional practice a you know characteristic that lies at the origin of the word "symbol': in Greek, *symbolon* designated the card cut in two, of which two people linked by a relationship of mutual hospitality each kept one half, transmissible to their descendants; these two parts, 'joined together' (this is one of the meanings of *symbollo*) allowed the two bearers to recognise each other. However, this is only one of many

cases of exoteric application of tennine. In the esoteric order, particularly among the-

In the esoteric order, particularly among the **Pythagoreans**, it designated a certain 'convention', which likewise implied the idea of 'pooling', but for something of a deeper order.

(24) Ibid., pp. 175-176.

(25) A Semitic origin, Phoenician to be exact, is generally accepted for the practical alphabets of India; this implies that at their basis

form, moreover, that one would have to consider the Arabic letters for an attempt at "synthesis" with the Vattan, something we cannot undertake within the framework of the present study (26). Let us also add that, of all the Semitic alphabets, *it is* the Arabic

one, with its considerably geometric -schematism, to appear as the best predisposed for a reconstructive rapprochement such as the one we are discussing (27).

## 2. Complementarism of traditional forms

Underlying all of the above is what might be called a relationship of traditional polarity between Hinduism and Islam (28). This relationship, Islamic tradition designates it, in the first place, with the symbol of the "kin

kinship' or, more precisely, the 'filiation' that unites the founders of the two ethno-traditional currents. Curious as it may seem, these are respectively

Abraham (in Arabic Ibrahfm), to whom 'Brahmanism' (in Arabic Ibrahfm) is linked.

'Brahmanism' (manifested outwardly through the phonetic similarity of the names) and his son

there is a consonantism comparable to that of the Hebrew and Arabic scripts.

(26) In such an alphabet, as has already been observed on the basis of the note extracted from La Gnose, there are first of all 3 fundamental letters (corresponding to unity, duality and plurality), then 7 planetary and 12 zodiacal letters.

(27) They are the last 6 in the order that leads to qualify this alphabet as "oriental" (sharqi); their place is a little different in the order of the so-called <<western alphabet>> (gharbf) and this is due to substitutions in which the letter dl1d plays an important role, the famous letter exclusively Arabic, which is why Arabic has been designated as "the language of diid" (lughatu-d-dad).

(28) This aspect of things is found in the planetary correspondences of two traditional philosophies: Hinduism is ruled by Saturn, which is in the last planetary sky, and Islam by the Moon, which occupies the first.



Ishmael (in Arabic *Ismi'īl*), 'the father of the Arabs'; or rather, it is the spiritual entities and intellectual aggregates represented by these two patriarchs (29).

In this regard, here is first of all how a great master of Islamic esotericism, Abdu-1-Karim Al-Jili (d. 832/1428), identifies the Hindu tradition, in its metaphysical and non-idolatrous essence, with the Abrahamic heritage:

"The Brahmana (*al-Barā'ihima*) worship Al-Hi in an absolute manner

absolute manner, not according to some prophet or divine envoy. Or rather, they profess there is nothing that is not the creation of Allah: thus they recognise the uniqueness of Allah in existence, but they absolutely refuse to admit prophets and envoys (as if these were to be the creation of Allah).

and envoys (as if these were to bring something that is not already found in man). In their worship of the Truth is a kind of worship comparable to that of the "divine envoys"

in their worship of Truth is a kind of worship comparable to that of the 'divine envoys' (*rusul*) before they are entrusted with their mission (*qabla-1-irsāl*) (i.e. according to a conception of total universality and autonomy of being).

The Brahmanas claim to be the sons of Abraham; they also claim to hold a Hbro drawn up for them by him by himself; they do not say that Abraham received it from his Lord. This book contains the fundamental truths (*al-Haqīq*) and comprises five parts: four, the reading of which is accessible to everyone and a fifth which is accessible only to a few because of its depth. Now, it is well known among them that he who reads this fifth part of their scripture necessarily comes to Islam and enters into the reli-

(29) Qur'an, 16, 120, also expressly states that <<In truth, Ibrahim was a "community" (ummah) that worshipped Allāh in a pure manner and did not belong to the order of polytheists. This way of designating a "collective entity" by means of the name of a more or less historical personage has already been noted, for other traditional causes, by René Guénon, in Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues, Third Part, chapters I and IX. The same idea contained in the Qur'anic verse quoted is found, after all, in Genesis, XII, 2, where Jehovah says to Abraham: "I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you and make your name great".

the people of Mohammad. This category of people is mainly found in the countries of the Hind (30). But there are others who assume the appearance of the latter and claim to be Brahmanas too, when in fact they are not; they are those whom we know as idol-worshippers' (*al-Insil nu-l-Kilmil*, ch. 63).

There is no need to insist in a special way, in order for certain peculiarities of the presentation of things in this text by a Muslim author to be understood. Moreover, it is evident that it is the identification of Abraham with Brahmij that can explain why, in Abdu-1-Karim Al-Jili's account, it is specified that Abraham would have left the Brahmanas a book 'compiled for them by himself' and not 'by his Lord'; in Hindu terms, when he formulates the Veda, Brahma does so in his own name: "the Veda is Brahmii; it came out of him as his breath", says a formula (*Pranatoshini*, 19); and it is because it has no human author and is 'heard' only, that it is called *Shruti* ('That which is heard') (31). This intimate connection in the case of Abraham, between the divine and the human aspect, is signified in Arabic by the fact that the patriarch is called *Kha lflu-lilh*, a qualification that is normally translated as 'the A-

(30) At the time of Abdu-1-Karim Al-Jili (14th and 15th centuries), Islam occupied the north-western parts of India called Sind; the textual expression *bi/idu-1-Hind*, 'the countries of the Hind', thus designates the parts, purely dional and eastern, not subject to Islamic rule.

(31) Cf. Arthur Avalon, op. cit., p. 220. This does not detract from the fact that the Vedic hymns are tradi- tionally attributed to different Wisemen, designated by name, who did no more than "listen to them" and "refer to them": the technical notions of "intellectual aggregate" and "collective entity", which can also be evoked in this case, do not oppose such an organic plurality, since the texts in question are believed to come from an originally unitary and coherent inspiration. Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, for his part, also establishes a relationship between "BRaHMa and aBRaHaM" and adds: "Abraham is, like BrahmI, the Patriarch of the Limbi and Nirva na... The Brahmi say "estinguesri in Brahmi", just as the Hebrews say "to fall asleep in Abraham's bosom", i.e. to return to the Limbi' (L'Archéomèrre, p. 199). See also La Gnose, May 1911, p. 147.

intimate friend of Allah'; the root *khalla*, which intervenes here, expresses the idea of 'interpenetration' and the *khullah* represents the final degree of Love (32).

The identification or correspondence between the Moorish patriarch and the formulator of the Vedic doctrine is a widespread fact in the Islamic East. *Amratkund*, who is now known only through Arabic translations (*Hawdu-l-Hayat*— the Basin of Life) and Persian translations (*Bahru-l Hayat*= the Ocean of Life), also attests to this, in another form, when he relates the story of the Brahman yogi Bhfijar, who eventually had to enter Islam (33). After obtaining edifying answers, particularly concerning AlHih, adopted in Islam as "invisible" (*bi-l-ghayb*, cf. *Qur'an*, 2, 3) and concerning the Spirit (*ar-Ruh*— Atnu'i) as proceeding "from the divine order" (*min amri Rabbt*, cf. *Qur'an*, 17, 85),

he declared: This is what we have seen for ourselves in the Collection (*Muḥaf*) of the two Brahmanas (transcribed *Brahfman*)

which are Abraham and Moses (association to be founded

(32) Ibn Arabi (Fuṣṣuṣ-i-Hikam, The Abramic Wisdom) says in this sense: "The intimate Friend (al-khalīl) derives his name from the fact that on the one hand he 'penetrates' and on the other he 'encloses' all that qualifies the divine Essence. In the first sense, one has the poet's verse:

You have penetrated me (takhallalta) as my own spirit  
And that is why the inūmo friend was called khalīl.

It is in this same way that colour penetrates the coloured object, so that "accident" coincides with "substance". In the second sense, it is God who penetrates the existence of Abraham's form>>. (It is possible to follow the development of this idea in the text translated by T. Burckhardt, *La Sagesse des Prophètes*, pp. 68-69). The relationship of the two 'natures' in this process of interpenetration is that of the two triangles in the 'seal of Salo mone>>, or that of the fields of two colours in the symbol of yin yang. Let us add that the Prophet Moh:unmad, who ūpologically is f!ab!bul!fih (the Beloved of Allah), according to traditional data also reached the degree of Khu/lah.

(33) Cf. the Version arabe de l'Amratkund, published by Yusuf Husain in *Journal Asiatique*, October-December 1928.

on *Qur'an*, 87, 19: "The First Pages, the Pages of Abraham and Moses") (34).

As for the book attributed, according to Al-Jlli, to Abraham, its four parts that are accessible to all seem to correspond to the four Vedas proper, while the fifth, due to its strictly confidential character, would evoke not what is called 'the fifth Veda' (to which the Tantric texts usually correspond. or even the Art of the Theatre), but rather *the Vedàra*, "the fine of the Veda", i.e. its purely metaphysical part, which, in fact, concerns an *elite*, even if it does not have the esoteric "position" suggested by the quoted text.

In any case, from Al-Jlli's text one will first of all derive the idea of an "Abrahamic" source for Hinduism, which is to be assumed more in an analogical sense, because we are dealing with a document with a strictly Semitic form. What we mean is that what constitutes the characteristic of this "source" is not defined in itself as Semitic, but that a Semitic thought, especially of the Rnohamadic fonna, must ascribe it, for symbolic reasons, to the type of Abraham. It is for this reason, we might say, that if we consider the same things from the Hindu point of view, the relationship between the two traditional forms in question could be interpreted, quite naturally, in a sense opposite to this (35).

But it is to a common source that one should think here.

Be that as it may, Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek, from whom the patriarch receives the blessing and to whom he pays the tithe, an encounter that has been explained by René Guénon (*Le Roi du Monde*, ch. VD as "the point of conjunction of the Jewish tradition with the great primordia le tradition", clearly indicates the subordination of Semitic Abrahamism (which must be considered in its

(34) Note that the term *çuhuf* (sheets, pages) comes from the same root as *muçhaf*(collection), used in the text.

(35) It is in this way that Hindus believe that both the Buddha and the Christ himself constitute the ninth *avarara* of their Vishnu.



together and not restricted to the Jewish tradition) to a spiritual authority of a primordial character, from which the eponymous patriarch receives investiture (36).

However, we do not at all exclude the idea of a direct relationship between what is represented by the Semitic Abraham and Brahmanism. Of course, this thesis may seem as complex as it is difficult to prove; nevertheless, there is nothing impossible about it, because it is commonly accepted that the oldest of the known civilisations of north-western India has a Sumerian origin; now, Sumer is lower Mesopotamia, the original country of Abraham (37). But, sticking to a strictly traditional and initiatory point of view, it is enough for us to say the following here: in the Koran, which contains <<the synthesis of all traditional doctrines>> (this is one of the most exact meanings of the already mentioned *Jawami'u-l-Kalim*, privilege of the Seal of Prophethood), the doctrine that can correspond to Vedantic Hinduism is in every way that inscribed under the name of the patriarch Abraham. If in fact Hinduism, thanks to its antiquity and its relative formal continuity, as well as the free character of its metaphysics and its openness to universality, represents, as René Guénon said, "the most direct inheritance of the primordial Tradition" (38), it is precisely the Abrahamic conception of the tradition that is the most direct.

(36) One may take this opportunity to note that even in the words of blessing of Melchizedek one finds that relationship of "interpenetration" that we have previously emphasised in the <sup>case of</sup> Abraham: "Blessed be Abraham by the Most High God who created heaven and earth! Blessed be the Most High God who has delivered into your hands your enemies>> (Gene si, XIV, 19).

(37) We can also observe that the Abraham-Sara couple presents a certain analogy with the Hindu divine pair Brahma-Saraswati, an analogy that is perhaps not only phonetic in origin; Brahmtl's Shakti presides over Wisdom and he himself as the supreme Knower reveals the Vedas.

(38) It is also useful to know that, according to Islamic esotericism, in the planetary hierarchy of prophets, it is Seyyidnli lbrlihEm who is the pole (qutb) of the heaven of Satumo, to whom we have already mentioned that Hinduism refers. Abdu- 1-Karirn Al-Jili also narrates that, when on his celestial journey he arrived

the one that corresponds to it among all the rules of wisdom enunciated in *the Qur'an* and attested as practicable in the Mohammedan cycle. We thus refer, without

can dwell more specifically on the notion of *the Hanfjīyah* - the pure, non-associationist Religion, permitting any mode of non-idolatrous worship - the

which is traditionally linked to Abraham (39). Here

it suffices to know that, according to the Prophet's saying, "the most exalted of religions is *Hanfjīyah samhah*, the Pure and Generous Religion", "with which", he also says, "he himself was sent".

himself'. Besides, Allah says of him in the Book: "Who could be of a better religion than he who submits his face to Allah, acting according to excellence, and

follows the Rule of Abraham (*millata lbrahima*) in a pure way (*hanifan*)? Indeed, Allah had taken Abraham as a close friend (*khalīl*)' (*Qur'an*, 4:124). Let us, however, point out that,

according to metaphysical and initiatory interpretation, submit-

submit one's face to Allah" means "to conform, or adapt one's being to the Absolute Being'. The **Koran** insists

The Qur'an insists again in the same sense: "Who would seek other than the Rule of Abraham, if not he who has lost his wits, since We have chosen Abraham here below and in the Hereafter he is among the pious?

is among the pious?" (2:130) (40).

Furthermore, of the text of Abdu-1-Karim Al-Jili, one must consider the statement that the deeper teaching of Brahmanism is in direct agreement with the truth proper to the-

the seventh planetary heaven. there he found this prophet reciting the following Qur'anic verse: 'Praise be to God, who in the age of old age has given me Ishmael and Ishmael! Verily my Lord hears the supplication! >> (14:41).

(39) From a lexical point of view. Hanfīyyah is a noun of adjectival derivation and designates the rule of life of the Hu1U1fa (sing. hanfj), the pure and unified Sages, consecrated to an absolute and unlimited worship of metaphysical Truth.

(40) One of the specific functions of Abraham in the Limbi consists in the guardianship of children who died in infancy, thus remaining of their original nature (al-Fitrah).

the 'Mohammedan' Islam (41). Now the latter, according to the same Qur'anic terms, is specifically based on the characteristic tradition of Abraham. It is Allah who tells the Prophet: "We have inspired you (*awhayna ilayka*) to follow the rule of life (*millah*) of Abraham, who was *hanif* and not of the acegivers" (16:123). The Prophet is committed to explicitly attest this himself: "Say: Verily, my Lord has guided me on a straight path, according to a steadfast religion, in the rule of Abraham who *was* hanif *he* was not of the associates" (*Qur'an*, 6, 162).

Finally, Allah declares: 'Verily, Abraham was neither a Judean (*yahadf*) nor a Christian (*naçranf*), but he was *hanif muslim* and was not of the associates. Verily, those who before anyone

who before anyone else can call upon the patronage of Abraham are those who followed him and this Prophet (Mohammad), as well as those who have faith. And Allah is the patron of

believers' (*Qur'an*, 3:67-68). Unlike the other spiritual figures of the traditional past, Abraham is the only sage explicitly proposed as a model par excellence in Islam: 'You have an excellent model in Abraham and in those who were with him etc.'. You have in them an excellent model, for those who hope in Allah and the Last Day, etc.'. (*Qur'an*, 60, 4-6) (42).

(41) Let us remember that Islam is the name of the true religion in a general sense, but in the proper sense, it implies more specifically the <<obedient submission>> (this is the exact translation of the term *islàm*) to a sacred legislation and that, as such, it applies to any tradition based on a divine order; its Mohammedan form is only its most recent and expressly definitive definition. nition in the traditional cycle of our world. our world.

(42) Of course, in a general sense, all the prophets and sages mentioned in the Koran appear as examples of spiritual virtues; but none of them, apart from Abraham, has apart from Abraham, has a synthetic and total character nor is he proposed as the model par excellence. Let us add that the relationship between Abraham and Mohammad is constantly evoked and actualised in formulas such as the one that is recited in the last posture of the daily prayers <<Alliihumma, grant Thy unifying grace (*ēalli*) to our Lord Mohammad and to Jia Family of our Lord Mohammad, as well as





As for the second tennine of the traditional "kinship" of which we speak, Ishmael, who was himself a "divine envoy" (*rasat*) and was thus, according to initiatory truth, a theophanic form, we would like to highlight here a characteristic role, which has a certain relationship with the initial object of our study.

of our study. This patriarch is the origin of the Arabic language, the language in which *the Qur'an* was to be revealed and the Mohammedan teaching forged. According to some

*hadfth*, "Ismael received by inspiration (*ilhîm*) this

Arabic language'; furthermore, 'the first whose language articulated clear Arabic (*al-arabiyyatu-l-mubtnah*) was Ishmael when he was a boy of fourteen'. These data show how

Arabic is from the very beginning a revealed language of heavenly origin, not a natural language more or less suitable for traditional use, whatever the human relationship between the Arabic of co

ranic revelation and the Arabic spoken by the Prophet's contemporary tribes. Moreover, another *hadfth* says that the Prophet Mohammad himself received knowledge of this language from the Angel Gabriel, who came down to teach him: "Truly, the language of Ishmael had lost its purity.

came with this language and made me learn it". It is impor

It is important to note that we are dealing here with a teaching concerning only the prophetic means of expression, which must be considered as different and distinct from the revelation of the Koran.

revelation of the *Koran*; the latter was to come only after the verbal basis (43). Finally, insofar as

between the respective epochs of Ishmael and Mohammad, separated

thou hast granted it to our lord Abraham and to the family of our lord king Abraham etc.'. [In the fixed date rites of the annual pilgrimage (hajj) and in those of the ordinary visitation (umrah) permitted throughout the year, the remembrance of Abntmo is particularly vivid and operative, because it is implied in certain places and in the rites that correspond to them.

(43) Let us remember, however, that the beginning of relations with the Angel

Gabriel involved the revelation of these first verses of the Sura of the Coagulated Blood (Qur'an, 96, 1-5): "Recite in the name of your Lord

for four millennia (44), there would, however, have to be considered a readjustment of this language to the changed conditions cycles, which, it should also be noted, would itself be a heavenly and not a human work (45).

The prophetic type of Ishmael, "the father of the Arabs", pre has a special relationship with the Truth as the "spoken Word", a characteristic that will also be that of the Mohammedan revelation at the end of the prophetic cycle. Ishmael's name, which enunciates the idea of "divine audition)), itself prepares and inaugurates a whole thematic set of "invocation)) and "word)).

Who created! Who created man from a drop of coagulated blood. Recite, for thy Lord is most bountiful, He who taught by means of the Chalamus. He has taught man what he did not know". We cannot dwell further on this point; but in these first words and in what is reported about the circumstances of their revelation one might find references to a formulation of the verbal organ at a time before the revelation itself.

(44) This is probably a much greater distance than that of the literal and exoteric chronology of the biblical texts.

(45) Undoubtedly, it is possible to conceive of a providential arrangement of natural things themselves in this order of language, because the prophet revelator of the Qur'an formally attested to it: 'I am the most Arab of Arabs; I was born in the tribe of the Quraysh and was brought up in the milieu of the BanO Sa'd ben Bakr. How could I, therefore, make mistakes in language'!>>. The specific tradition of Ismael had persisted as a pure form, but in a rather exceptional way, until the eve of the historical Mohammedan event. This is how we see it in the case of the famous Qiss ben Si'idah, the Arab sage whom the future prophet Mohammad, in his youth, had heard preaching and exhorting the people in the annual market of Ikâzh. He would later say of him:

"May Allah have mercy on Qiss ben Sà'idah! He was de'ja religio (din) of my father Ishmael son of Abraham!". What is astonishing is that in the text of the aforementioned sermon, recalled from memory by AbO Bakr. who was also present on that occasion, Qiss announced to the Arabs, in the purest Arabian incantatory style, "a religion that Allàh loved more than that practised allom by the Arabs and a Prophet whose time was coming, imminent for the **listeners**

To begin with, the angel of Jehovah said to Hagar who was fleeing the severity of Saray: "Behold you are with child and you will bear a son and you will give him *the name of Ishmael, because Jehovah has heard your affliction*' (*Genesis*, XVI, 11). Later, when Ishmael was thirteen years old, Jehovah, while announcing to Abraham the forthcoming birth of Ishmael, also said: "As for Ishmael, *I have heard thee*; I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him. I will make him fruitful and I will multiply him much, much! He shall beget twelve princes and I will make of him a great nation' (XVII, 20). Finally, when after the birth of Hagar was expelled with her son into the desert, "*Elohim heard the voice of the child*, and the angel of Elohim, from heaven above, called Hagar, saying to her: What is the matter with you, Hagar? Fear not, for *Elohim has heard the voice of the child*, in the place where he is! >> (XXI, 17). It is in this last moment that one must col

locate the heavenly revelation of the "clear Arab" made to Ishmael, who was then indeed the fourteen years old indicated by the *hadfth* quoted above; the event then corresponds to a second meaning that has the name of

Ishmael in Arabic: "the act by which God makes one hear>>, an meaning which is correlative to the first and which can make one understand the causal relationship between the "invocation" and the "response» (46).

Si osserverà inoltre che il significato di «ascoltare», che abbiamo fin qui posto in risalto, non si riferisce unicamente all'attributo divino dell'«udire», ma anche e soprattutto a quello dell' «esaudire», dunque del «rispondere»; e ciò potrebbe essere inteso sia nel senso generale di «soddisfare» (47), or in the more specifically oracular sense of "answering".

(46) Ismll'fl is morphologically analysed in ismii' (nomen actio nis of the 4' form of verbs)= "act of making one listen>> and El, the bilite ra form of the divine noun; it can be translated both with "the act of making God listen", which corresponds to the meaning of the Hebrew yishma'-el= "God listens>>, and with "God's act of making one listen".

(47) According to the data of initiatory knowledge, the immediate positive response takes place only when the invocation is made by a means of inexorable efficacy, i.e. by means of the secret name, also called the "Supreme Name", whose operative effect is automatic, or by means of the "State".

elocation'. As to the latter sense, which is best suited to the circumstance, we shall make another one.

The reference to "the place where the child was" makes it clear that the divine "response" had a sensible and external support, a place that was to successfully preserve the trace of the event. Such a place, which is a point of heavenly influence, could also become a sacred centre, the centre of the new traditional form that was to proceed from Ishmael (48). This perspective of things is opened by the aforementioned divine words addressed to Abraham: "Ishmael ... will beget twelve princes and I will make of him a great nation" (cf. *Genesis*, XXV, 12-16), thus heralding a spiritual centre with its traditional community (49).

Nevertheless, the actual establishment of the centre of this new tradition will actually take place later, and under the direction of Abraham. Father and son are brought together in a very characteristic way in the construction of the Kaaba, sim-

of moment' or the 'strength of conviction' (aṣ-ṣidq) of the invoker. (Cf. the mention in this regard in the *Livre de l'Extinction dans la Contemplation* by Ibn Arabi, translated by us in *Etudes Traditionnelles* of 1961 [transl. it. Milan, 1996]).

(48) The events, which according to Islamic data take place in Mecca, are located by the Bible in "Bersheba", which is made to correspond with a place of the same name in the Negeb desert in southern Palestine. It can be observed, however, that, at least symbolically, it is something similar: Bersheba is Beersheba= 'Well of the Seven' (which in *Genesis* is linked to a septuple oath, accompanied by an offering of seven lambs and made by Abraham when he consecrated the place); now, in Mecca, things have as their theatre the place where the well of Zemzem was born under the heel blows of Ishmael, when his mother, in despair, had run seven times between the heights of Za'afa and Marwah. (These facts are ritually commemorated in the Pilgrimage and Visitation when one makes seven runs between the aforementioned heights and drinks the water of Zemzem, which, according to the hadith, "is effective for everything one has felt when one drinks it").

(49) On this symbolism, see René Guénon, *Le Roi du Monde*, chap. IV, part finale.



Islamic symbolism of the Centre of the World. After all, in this institution one essentially had the adapted restoration of the primordial temple, which Adam had founded after leaving the earthly Paradise. A long passage from the Sura of the

Sura of the Heifer (*Qur'an*, 2, 124 ff.) speaks of their work; we cite the part of it that reports the

We quote the part that relates the formal invocation: "When Abraham and Ishmael laid the foundations of the House, they said: Our Lord, accept this from us! Verily Thou art the Hearer and the Omniscient! Our Lord, make us

*Our Lord*, make *us* subject to Thee (*muslimayni laka*) and make our descent a community subject to Thee (*muslimayni laka*).

dence a community submissive to Thee (*ummatan muslimatan laka*)! Indicate to us our sacrificial rites and turn to Thee! In true- tity You are the One who always turns, the Most Merciful!

Our Lord, raise up from among them an envoy to recite unto them Thy Signs, to teach them the Book and Wisdom, and to purify them! Verily Thou art the Strong, the Wise

the Wise. The realisation of this vow on the historical plane was a little further on in the same Surah: "It is thus that We send among you an envoy from among yourselves, who recites over you Our Signs, who recites over you Our Wisdom and the Book of Wisdom, and purifies them.

you Our Signs, who purifies you, who teaches you the Book and Wisdom, who teaches you what you did not know" (v. 151).

One can immediately see how Mohamad, for it is of him that it is We can immediately see how Mohamad, for it is him that we are talking about, himself constitutes a point of confluence of those two complementary ethno-traditional currents that correspond, in Mohammedan terms, to the two great traditions of Hinduism and Islam. The Seal of Prophecy, who as an Arab is descended from Ishmael and as a wise salt unives proceeds from Abraham, thus brings together in his personal heritage: that of the sacred language that becomes the organ of the eternal *Koran* and that of the immutable doctrine, the universal and absolute *Tawhfd* (50).

(50) In support of these correspondences we may add that, just as the name /sma 'i refers to the idea of "hearing" and hence of language, that of Ibrahim phonetically evokes (cf. the roots abraha ibrah and barluma-burhdn) the idea of "definitive demonstration" and "doctrinal proof" and hence of "doctrinal proof".

doctrinal proof>> and therefore of science.



However, he does not receive these two inheritances through simple terrestrial and human transmissions, but through directly celestial interventions, which at the same time re-actualise and reform the pre-existing traditional supports and data: the Mohammedan message is properly divine and the references to Abraham and Ishmael are strictly typological and technical. It could also be said, in other words, that the two prophetic figures reflect the correlative functions of the read Intel and the Word, which are the two aspects of a single Logos, with which, moreover, Mohamad himself is ultimately identified. Thus the complementarity of the two traditional forms and their consequent connection, considered by us in an end-of-cycle perspective, according to the indication provided by René Guénon, are already included in a certain way in the constitutive realities of Islam and outlined in its structural lines; this also means that the corresponding fulfilment on the historical plane must appear from the Islamic point of view as a circumstantial but regular development of possibilities that are properly Mohammedan. Things should, of course, present themselves in a different but correlative way from the Hindu point of view. Hindu point of view and we will have to return to this subject a little later (51). The final reconnection we are dealing with cannot (51) The final reconnection in question cannot, of course, constitute, either from the Islamic or Hindu point of view, something like an esteemed and syncretistic combination; because of the ultimate unity of the traditional domain as a whole and the profound constructive analogy that exists between the particular traditional forms (and this despite the apparently irreducible differences that they may present externally), everything found in one of these forms necessarily has, in some way and to some degree, its correspondent in the other forms, and especially in the one with which it is cyclically coordinated in a given relationship.

(51) In any case, it is thus that the Messiah expected by Islam with a purely Islamic function in its second advent will be for Hinduism the Kalkin-avazara or the tenth "descent" of Vishnu.

Nevertheless, the question arises as to what the role of this special connection between two traditional foundations in the traditional world as a whole might be, and what the position of the other existing foundations might be. The answer to such a complex question is to be found in another text by Guénon, which first of all discusses the characteristic position occupied by the Hindu tradition under the relationship of the constitutive Law of the total cycle of humanity today, i.e. under the relationship of the *SaniUana Dhanna*, and which then indicates the reason why it is associated with the Islamic tradition. Let us note at this point that it is particularly valuable in this type of observation to be able to find, in the data coming from Guénon himself, the complements of certain cyclical considerations of which he held the key and which he had initially presented in a more limited form and in the most diverse contexts. We will take the following excerpt from an article that appeared in another magazine and which **many** of our readers are still unaware of:

"...the notion of *Sanatana* Dhanna presents itself more particularly linked to the Hindu tradition: the fact is that the latter, of all the traditional forms currently living, is the one The fact is that the latter, of all currently living traditional forms, is that which derives in the most direct way from the primordial Tradition, although it is in some ways its external continuation, always taking into account, of course, the conditions under which the human cycle takes place, conditions of which it itself gives a more complete description than any that might be found elsewhere, so that it participates in its perpetuity to a higher degree than all other traditional forms. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the Hindu and Islamic traditions are the only ones that explicitly affirm the validity of all other traditions.

cally the validity of all other orthodox traditions; if this is so, it is because, being chronologically the first and last in the course of *Manvantara*, they must equally integrate

If this is so, it is because, being chronologically the first and the last in the course of *Manvantara*, they must equally integrate, albeit in different ways, all those different forms that have been produced in the interval, in order to make possible that "return to the origins" by which the end of the cycle must be reunited with its beginning and which, at the point of the cycle, must be reunited with its beginning.





of the beginning of another *Manvantara*, will again manifest outwardly the true *Saniitana* Dharma" (52).

It follows from the quoted passage that it is the integration of all the traditional forms that must be the goal of the final reunion of Hinduism and Islam, since these two traditions play an axial role in relation to the others; and it is their manifest spirit of oneness that qualifies them for this role. However, the integration that they must achieve will take place, it is also said, in different ways; and certainly, as a result of the correlation in which these two traditions find themselves, these ways will be complementary to each other. In this regard, a characteristic difference can be noted: while on the Hindu side there is rather – and it is first and foremost the wise who manifest it according to historical opportunities – a general and permanent disposition of spirit, but without any formal character, which allows for the legitimate existence of a plurality of traditional forms, in accordance with the richness of the spiritual modes that the Hindu world bears within itself, on the Islamic side there is, first and foremost, a sacred legislation that recognises the legitimacy of other religions or traditional ways by assigning them a particular status in relation to Islam (53). relation to Islam (53).

The traditional functions implied by these two cyclical positions with their characteristic perspectives can be understood even better through the symbolism of the corresponding *ni* and *nun*: we have seen above that, according to one of its applications observed by Guénon, the Arabic *nūn* depicts the Ark of the Flood, which contains "all the elements that will serve the restoration of the

(52) Cahiers du Sud ( 1949), Approches de l'Inde, pp. 45-46.

(53) .We have already reported (L'Islam et /a fonction de René Gué110n, in Études Traditionne/les, January-February 1953 (transl. it. Parma, 1985)) that 'the Islamic legal basis is providentially arranged for a broad view of traditional unity and universality, both in succession and in simultaneity' and that 'there is no revealed text so explicitly universalist as the Qur'an'.

world and that they are also the germs of its future state' (54). Islam, the traditional form that has come to conclude the pro-faith cycle and is destined to remain the only form practised on Earth before the closure of the cosmic cycle of prehumanity, will perform such a function, because *it* has been constituted with those characteristics of human generality and spiritual universality that are required for this purpose. The Seal of Prophethood has received the Synthetic Words (*Jawéimi 'u-l-Kalim*) corresponding to the previous prophet-legislators, and these constitute as many spiritual types that can be realised in the Mohammedan formula (55); and *it is* by virtue of this totalising character that it falls to Islam to collect and integrate elements belonging to the whole of traditional humanity. The Ark of the end of our cycle is the *Sharf'ah* (*Qur'an* and *Sunna*) of Islam (56).

(54) René Guénon, *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. XI.

(55) We have already mentioned, on other occasions, the existence in Islam of initiatory categories related to the earlier prophets mentioned in the *Cora no* and the *Swma*. (See in particular Ibn Arabi, *La vénération des maîtres spirituels*, in *Études Traditionnelles*, July-August and September-October 1962, pp. 166, footnote 2 and p. 169, footnote 12; see also, by the same author, *Les états des initiés au moment de leur mort*, in *Études Traditionnelles*, November-December 1964).

(56) We point out some concordant applications of this symbolism. Al-Qiishàni, interpreting the symbol of Noah's Ark "made of table (alwlih) and nails (dusur)>> (*Qur'an*, 54, 13), says that it is the *Sharf'ah* (the Law) of Noah, as it respectively comprised prescriptions of actions (a'miil) and doctrinal conceptions (aqil'id). Moreover, it is important to note that the word alwah (sing. lawlr) in the *Qur'an* also applies to the Tablets of the Law (in Hebrew *LCthOt ha-Berith*), i.e. the *Sharf'ah* of Moses; this is the basis of the analogy between the Ark of the Deluge and the Ark of the Covenant, two forms assumed in the course of the cycle by the absolute Ark, i.e. the primordial *TabUt*. Nevertheless, one difference must be noted: while in the former the alwlih constitute the container, in the latter they are the content par excellence, because in the Ark of the Covenant were placed the Tablets of the Law. Let us add that in *Qur'anic* symbolism these two aspects are found principally united in the *Iwh Mahfûz.h*, the Guardian Table located above the Heavens, which preserves the *Qur'an* and is itself preserved. On the other hand, the verse that

n Sanskrit for its part, according to a meaning correlative to that of the *nan* as an ark and corresponding to the arc baleno, a celestial and luminous phenomenon, refers in a natural way to transcendent knowledge. n role pertaining to the Hindu tradition must indeed be informational

The role of the Hindu tradition must indeed be informative and purely contemplative; in short, it must coincide with the reserved teaching mentioned by Abdu-1-Karim Al-Jill,

teaching that we have identified in *Vedanta*, to which on the Islamic side corresponds that of the *Taçawwuf* and more precisely still that of the Supreme Identity or the

metaphysical and initiatory *Tawhfd* (57). In any case, in the final intergration at issue, Hinduism cannot play any role on the formal level of tradition. On this level, its definition, conditioned by the caste regime, not only cannot be extended outside the present Hindu world, but *is* also destined to disappear in India itself: its specific social and cultic fashions will unfortunately not be able to survive the dissolution taking place in our era.

era. Since in the current phase of Kali-Yuga things must come to the situation foretold by the Sacred Books of India, "where castes will be mixed and the family will no longer exist", the same indispensable basis of tradition

mentions (85:22) has a second <<lection>> referring the qualified vo mahfUzh (read mahjUzIrun) to the Qur'an: "This is a Glorious Qur'an. enshrined in a Tablet>>. This Tablet, considered identical to the Evident Prototype (al-/mtImu-1-Mubin, Qur'an, 36, 12), is the transcendent model of all sacred scriptures and thus of all legislative tablets.

(57) Here it is interesting to note an element that, in the Arabic flUll, virtually corresponds to this order of knowledge: it is the dot of ml11, which, according to Ibn Arabi (FIQMt, ch. II, § 1), implies the complete circumference and itself testifies to the existence of the upper and invisible half of it. The same author also says (Book of the MCm,

of the Wdw and Nfin) that the lower half of the flUll, i.e. the corporeal and visible nl211

and visible, proceeds from the proffered Word (alfalnvàniyyah), while the upper half, the spiritual and intelligible nun, proceeds from the transcendent Idea (al-ma'ltl) of the proffered Word; this polarisation corresponds evidently to the two senses of the Logos.

This polarisation evidently corresponds to the two senses of the Logos and, in Islam, to the two Ishmaelite and Abrahamic inheritances we spoke of earlier.



Hindu, the caste regime, will disappear (58) and, when a traditional correction becomes possible, it can only be in the formula of brotherhood of a sacred legislation such as that of Islam (59).

Without wishing to speculate presumptuously as to how this integration should in fact take place under a dual relationship, we will only point out that the traditional data themselves suggest a certain understanding by way of symbolism. In this regard, it must be borne in mind that there is always, within the traditional cycle properly so called, a septenary of principal traditional forms

(60) that represent on Earth the septenary of planetary influences planetary influences (61). The relationship between these two orders is evidently comparable to that which exists between the Ark and the cobalt. Now there is precisely in these two symbols a septenary implication that is susceptible to complete the previous symbolic considerations: as in the rainbow there are seven colours (62), so the Ark of the Flood bears seven beings.

(58) According to the hadith, 'the ruin of India will come from China'.

(59) Since the 8th century, Islam has continuously gained new positions in the Hindu space.

(60) Traditions may not only change in formal modalities and geographical situation, but also disappear and be replaced by new forms; or, even, they may fade away and subsist in secondary important conditions; in the latter case, they are inscribed in the influential zone of time of the main foundations.

(61) This law of sectorial division also applies within of each of the traditional forms: in Islam there is a division of the traditional domain into seven climates, each of which is ruled by one of the seven Abdill; these are specific representatives of the seven Aqtab that govern the planetary spheres. (See our endnote to the translation of Ibn Arabi's *La Parure des Abdal*).

(62) It will be noted, possibly, that the correspondences that could It will be noted, perhaps, that the correspondences that could be established between the colours of the rainbow and the planetary heavens cannot coincide with the arrangement of colours known from astrology, where they depend in reality on the metals that are made to correspond to the *pianeti*: white, for example, corresponds to the Moon, because it is considered the colour of the corresponding metal, which is silver; to the Sun, on the other hand, whose metal is gold, corresponds yellow etc. Now, it is evident that this <<white-

humans of positive value: Noah, his three sons (Shem, C and Japheth) and their wives (63). We can therefore say that to every formal and earthly aspect found in the Ark corresponds an informal and heavenly aspect in the rainbow. È

therefore logical to deduce from this that each of the seven traditional worlds will be found inscribed by analogy, in some way, on the one hand with its formal and sensible modalities, on the other

with its informal and intelligible modes (64).

In addition, two cases attested by the history of the initiatic tradition and concerning the western world in particular can be cited here as examples of the historical process of reintegration of traditional forms: one is the definitive transfer of the Grail by Perceval to India and the re-construction of the Temple, again in India, where the custody of the Holy Vase is entrusted to the mysterious Priest Gianni (65); the other is the retreat of the Rosicrucians to Asia shortly after the Thirty Years' War (66). On the other hand, Guénon says *that*, according to the as-

co and this <<yellow>> are not properly denier colours, but simple analogies.

(63) Noah's wife, who was the eighth human being saved in the Ark, does not enter into this calculation of positive values, because in Qur'an, 66:10, she is mentioned, like Lot's wife, as an example of a wife who <<tmiditO>> her husband (in relation to the latter's function, the commentaries explain).

(64) The analogy could also be seen in the details: just as in the Ark there are three limes of Noah and their three wives, as complementary elements, so there are three fundamental colours (blue, yellow and red) and three complementary colours (orange, violet and green). It is well known that indigo is only a hue between violet and blue, as there are in each of the intervals between two colours, so it does not form part of the septenary of colours.

white, the origin of the **other** six. (Cf. René Guénon, *Symbolesfondamen taux de la Science Sacrée*, LVII: Les sept rayons et l'arc-en-ciel).

(65) Cf. René Guénon, *Le Symbolisme de Dante*, ch. IV, penultimate note.

(66) Cf. René Guénon, *L'Homme et son devenir selon le Véd!mta*, last chapter, last footnote; on this occasion we note how this mention, which did not seem particularly required by the context, appears

at the end of a fundamental book of the Guenonian opem, concerning **precisely** precisely India.

the most truthful account that can be found on this subject, the latter

retreated to the realm of the same Priest Janni; and he contesualmente he specifies that this realm is but "a representation of the supreme spiritual centre, where they are in fact conserved in a latent state.

In fact, all the traditional forms that for one reason or another have ceased to manifest themselves externally are preserved in a latent state until the end of the present cycle" (67). Ciononostante the mention of India in both cases means that it *was*

Moreover, Albrecht's *New Tzturel* (end of the 13th century) specifies, regarding the transfer of the Grail, that India *is* "not far from Paradise on Earth"; and the latter,

of course, is only the biblical symbol of the supreme centre. In addition, the fact that, with regard to the two traditional lines in question, Celticism and Christianity respectively, the positive interventions of the Islamic exoterismo (68), can only confirm the notion of an axial, and ultimately integral, role played in general by Islam and more specifically vis-à-vis the traditional West.

On the other hand, if one is hesitant to conceive of the adjustments that the Hindu tradition should make, *it is* also useful to consider these reflections of René Guénon, written in a fairly remote period, but about

of the trials that India is undergoing in our time, trials of which its spirit will eventually have to triumph (the italics are ours):

".. India seems more particularly destined to maintain

India seems more destined to maintain until the end the supremacy of contemplation over action, to oppose through its **elite** an impassable barrier to the encroachment of the modern western spirit,

to keep intact, in the midst of a world shaken by changes in the

(67) *Aperçus sur l'initiation*, ch. xxxviii.

(68) Apart from René Guénon, *ibidem*, see also, in particular for the question of the Grail, Pierre Ponsoy, *L'Islam et le Graal* (transl. it. Parma, 1980).

unceasing changes, the consciousness of the permanent, the immutable and the eternal.

It must be well understood, moreover, that *what is immutable that what is immutable is only the principle, and that the applications to which it gives rise in all domains can and even must vary according to circumstances and epochs*; for while the principle is absolute, the *applications are relative*. principle is absolute, the applications are relative and continue like the world to which they refer. Tradition for puts adaptations indefinitely manifold and diverse in their modes; but *all these adaptations, when they are made strictly according to the traditional spirit, are nothing but the nominal development of certain consequences eternally contained in the principle; they are only the nominal development of certain consequences eternally contained in the principle.* contained in the principle; it is nothing more, in any case case, than to make explicit what was hitherto implicit, and so the background, the very substance of the doctrine, always remains always ~~the~~ the same through all the differences in external forms" (69).

After the aspects that we have most emphasised, it is clear that these statements apply par excellence to the re-adaptation that, as far as the Hindu tradition is concerned, is required by the definitive traditional integration.

### 3. Primordial Tradition and Axial Worship

Later, in the same article, after pointing out that the India to be considered in this order of things cannot be modern, westernised India at all, but the one that remains faithful to the teaching of its *elite* and preserves integrally the deposit of a tradition whose source goes back higher and further than humanity, Guénon adds:

"We know that it was not always the region that is today designated by this name; without doubt, after the

(69) L'Esprit de l'Inde, in Le Monde Nouveau, June 1930 (reproduced in Études Traditionnelles, November 1937).



the primitive Arctic dwelling of which the Veda speaks, it has successively occupied many different geographical positions; perhaps it will occupy still others, but it matters little, because it is always there that is the seat of this great tradition, the preservation of which among men constitutes its mission and its *raison d'être*.

*raison d'être*. Thanks to the unbroken chain of its Sages, its Gurus and its Yogis, it subsists through all the vicissitudes of the outside world, as unshakable as Meru; it will endure as long as the Sanatana Dharma (which we could translate as *Lex perennis*, with the

last as long as the Sanatana Dharma (which we could translate as *Lex perennis*, with the precision allowed by a western language) and will never cease to contemplate all things through the frontal eye of Shiva, in the serene immutability of the eternal present' (70).

This text also emphasises the special relationship that exists between the Hindu tradition and the Sanatana Dharma, whose This text also underlines the special relationship that exists between the Hindu tradition and Sanatana Dharma, the notion of which is most natural to Hindus, since they regard it as the very designation of their tradition.

Now we see a completely similar and ultimately equivalent thing when it comes to the definitions that the Islamic tradition gives to itself. But before proceeding to some comparisons in this regard, we will ask you to bear in mind the final definition that Guénon gave of the

Sanatana Dharma (71) in the text from which we have already excerpted

an excerpt:

(70) *Études Traditionnelles*, November 1937, p. 375.

(71) Previously Guénon had explained that the Dharma in the indeterminate sense is a "principle of conservation of beings>>>, so that for the latter the Dharma consists in the conformity to their natural essence. Applied more specifically to a Manvantara, "it is the 'law' or the "Applied more specifically to a Manvantara, "it is the 'law' or 'norm' proper to this cycle, formulated from its origin by the Manu who governs it, i.e., by the cosmic intelligence that reflects the divine Will and expresses the universal Order in it; this, in principle, is the true meaning of the Manava-Dharma, irrespective of all the particular adaptations that may arise from it, and which will also legitimately receive the same designation, since they are but translations of it, required by the various circumstances of time and place. Sic

as the universal Order is in manifestation the expression of the

"It is none other than the primordial Tradition, that which continually and changelessly sours through the whole of *Manvantara* and thus possesses cyclic perpetuity, because its very primordially subtracts it from the vicissitudes of subsequent epochs, and which also can, strictly speaking, be considered as truly and fully integral. On the other hand, as a result of the downward progression of the cycle and the resulting spiritual obscuration, the primordial Tradition has become hidden and inaccessible to ordinary humanity; It is the primary source and common ground of all particular traditional forms, which proceed from it by adaptation to the specific conditions of this or that people, of this or that epoch, but none of these traditional forms can be identified with the *Sanâtana Dharma* or be considered an adequate expression of it, even if it is always a more or less veiled image of it. Every orthodox tradition is a reflection and, we could say, a "substitute" for the primordial Tradition, insofar as contingent circumstances permit, so that, if it is not the *Sanâtana Dharma*, it nevertheless faithfully represents it for those who adhere to it and actually take part in it, because only through it can they draw it; on the other hand, it expresses, if not the totality, at least everything that directly concerns them, and this in the form best suited to their individual nature. In one sense, all these different traditional forms are contained primarily in *Sanâtana Dharma* but, since they are so many regular and legitimate adaptations of it and none of the developments of which they are susceptible in the course of time could ever be substantially other; in another sense, inverse and complementary, the traditional forms traditional forms all contain the *Sanâtana Dharma* as what is in them that is intimate and most "central", since they are, in their

Divine Will, "the *Dharma* could, at least under a certain relationship, be defined as conformity to order". It is from here that the other meanings of 'law' in the social order, of 'just-ice', of 'duty' derive successively.

different degrees of exteriority, like veils that cover it and let it shine through only in an attenuated and more or less partial manner.

Since this is true for all traditional forms, it would be a mistake to want to assimilate Sanata na Dharma purely and simply to one of them, whatever it may be, for example to the Hindu tradition as it is presented to us today" (72).

Nevertheless, later in the text Guénon spoke of the more particular connection of the notion of Sanatana Dharma with the Hindu tradition, and we have already quoted the relevant passage. In the same connection, he said nothing about the Islamic tradition. Now, the consciousness of a link with the primordial Tradition, although established under very different conditions, is equally clear in Islam. Since this point is essential to the order of things we are interested in here, we must pause for a moment and emphasise it, while underlining those particular characters that play a certain technical role in the integrative work of the end of the cycle.

Islam, for its part, presents itself explicitly and radically as the re-actualisation of the 'religion of origin'. A hadith enunciates this dogmatic article in the form of a simple equation: Al-Islamu dnu-l-Fitrah,

"Islam is the Religion of Pure Primordial Nature". This "pure primordial nature", al-Fitrah, is what the Qur'an, with a formula rich in initiatory implications that we will find later on, calls "the Nature of Allah that He has inherent in mankind" (Fitratu-llahi-latfatara-n-nasa alayha) (30, 30).

However, we must point out that the notion of Fitrah, the whose verbal root is of a very synthetic type, carries many other meanings, notably that of 'separative light', which is also found in the meaning of the divine name (derived from the same root) Fàtiru-s-samawati wa-l-ard, 'Sepa-

(72) Cahiers du Sud, op. CIL



rator of the heavens and the earth', and qualifies the characteristic state of primordial manifestation. With regard to the 'substantive' meaning we have assumed in relation to original humanity, we can cite Ibn Arabi, who says that the Fitrah is the nature of the macrocosmic being that is integrally concentrated in Adam and makes him capable of receiving all theophanies: "Since this man," he says, "is the synthesis of the universe (majmu'u-l-alam), his nature unites all the natures of the world. The Fitrah of Adam coincides with the *lefitar* of the whole universe. He knows his Lord according to the science proper to each species of the beings of the world, for he knows by virtue of his Lord for each species, *includere* in his Fitrah. And this Fitrah is that by which Adam appears when he receives his existence from the theophanic act (*at-tajallih*) that concerns him. In him, therefore, is found the predisposition (*isti'dad*) corresponding to every being in the world and he is thus the worshipper according to every religious law, the glorifier in every language and the receptacle of every theophany, when he fulfils every obligation imposed on him by the reality of his "Humanity" and knows himself, because only he who knows his Lord (and thus does not have the epiphany) knows himself" (73). Elsewhere, the same author says that "the human spirit (*ar-ruhu-l-insan*) created by Allàh for the purpose of *phaith*, adult, intelligent, knowing, endowed with faith in the Tawhfid and acknowledging the divine Lordship, is the very Fitrah that has been inherent in mankind" (74). n acknowledgement of the divine Lordship, which is mentioned, is that which

(73) *Futūḥ al-Maknūn*, chap. 73, 42.

(74) *Futūḥ al-Maknūn*, ch. 299. From the juxtaposition of the two cited texts of Ibn Arabi it is quite clear that Adam is the personification of the macrocosmic Intellect in the world of man; this assimilates him to the "King of the World" that represents and personifies in the Manvantara the universal and dialectical Manu primor, defined by Guénon as <<the cosmic Intelligence that reflects the divine Will and expresses the universal Order in it". Cf. René Guénon, *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. II.

was attested by the germs of Adam's children (75), a fact that constituted a profession of Islam; this is why many commentators interpret *the Fitrah* in the cited Qur'anic passage

as 'the covenant made with Adam and his descendants'. This indeed refers to a congenital and primordial fact, but at the same time it evokes a legal notion, and it is probably this idea that explains another, even more specific meaning of the term *Fitrah* in the same place, namely 'the covenant'.

term *Fitrah* in the same place, in commentators who, referring in particular to Ibn Abbas, interpret *Firrah* as 'religion' (*dfn*) and consider *Fitratu-llah* as a synonym of *Dfnu-llah*—'the Religion of Allah', explained as 'Islam'. We thus have a natural state transformed into a legal status.

However, this latter interpretation of the word *Fitrah* cannot be taken literally, because in this case an expression like *Dfnu-l-Fitrah*, used by the hadfth quoted above, would be a pure pleonasm. It is certain

however, that the equivalence indicated by Ibn Abbas, apart from the reasons of convenience he may have had as an interpreter of the *Qur'an*, does not lack a profound basis: it is the fact that in the primordial state the 'norm' (the Islamic *dfn* like the Hindu

Hindu *Dhanna*) is not actually an institution imposed on beings from without, but, more precisely, an intellectual form inherent in their own nature (76). It can also be said that each of these is, in Hindu terms, *swadharma*, "its own law", or, in Islamic terms, *al-dlni-l-Fitrah*,

"according to the innate Law of fundamental Nature" (77).

(75) Cf. Qur'an, 7, 172: "When your Lord had taken from the loins of the sons of Adam their descendants and made them testify over them them: "Am I not your Lord?" they answered: "Of course! We will take care of him' ..

(76) This state of primordial beings is, however, in no way incompatible with the idea of a macrocosmic law that organises the whole world and at the same time integrates it into the universal Order.

(77) But when, later on, these beings or their successors of the same simous species detach themselves and move away from the central and a.ical sense, which is that of their 'normal' existence, then they also need to

Now, even if one considers only the "legislative" aspect of this primordial and synthetic state, the "Islam" thus enunciated designates, in truth, not the law of a particular traditional form, but the fundamental and imprescriptible Law of the entire traditional cycle; in fact, as is well known, the Arabic term *Istam* qualifies, especially in the Koran, every orthodox traditional form hinged on a primordial orientation: the cult of Unity. It is the same meaning that we have

also in the absolute formula: *Inni-d-Dina 'inda-llahi-l Islilm*, <<certainly, the Religion with AlHih is Islam' (Qur'an, 3, 19). However, the tradition in its mobammadia na form will bear the name par excellence, due to the fact that it presents itself as the perfect re-actualisation, in the final cyclical conditions, of the original Truth, and at the same time the synthetic recapitulation of all previously established traditional forms. Moreover, it is not only appropriate to every human possibility, but also inherent in the natural condition of every being that comes into the world, now as in the past: "Every newborn child is born according to the *Fitrah*, and it is his parents who later make him a Jew or a Christian or a

*majCtsf* (fire worshipper)>> (hadfth) (78).

By this typological schematisation, the word prophets means that the human being, primordially deterrned from the pure specific principles alone, designated as Adam and Eve, from whom he receives the condition of the human *Fitrah* pro priably said, after his birth is seen to be modified according to the condition of the human *Fitrah*.

actions and supports in order to be able to restore their previous state; and these metaphysics are, after all, nothing but external fomtulations of their "congenital, currently defective 'norm>>.

(78) It is to such a function of the *Fitralr* that verisimilarly corresponds that universal virtue of the Word that the Gospel of John, I, 9 calls "true light that enlightens every man who comes into this world". Such a juxtaposition makes it possible to think that a similar consideration of the primordial background of the beings of the world must be found in the doctrines of each traditional form, for it is on such doctrines that the consciousness of the *Sanécitana* *Dlrama* in each of these forms can be founded.

the mental and traditional form of its immediate parents (and of those who represent them educationally). The qualifications of 'Jew', 'Christian' and 'mazdean' (majast) designate the successive typifications of this process (79), which are as many alterations and deformations of the Fitrah considered as a primordial form, both existential and traditional. In this perspective, at present, only the entry into Islam understood in its absolute sense and its complete virtues can bring about the recovery of the lost primordial condition. But this cannot happen naturally unless it is through a rejection of all the limiting conditions represented by imperfect traditional conceptions. This is one of the meaning of the hadfth that says: *Al-Islittmu. yajubbu ma qabla hu*, "entry into Islam truncates what was before" (80). This is also why, when one enters Islam, it is believed one virtually reintegrates the primordial Tradition itself; after all, this is only a consequence of the definition already given: *Al-Islîimu dfnu-l-Fitrah*.

But, however certain the basic identity of the notions of *Dfnu-l-Fitrah* and *Saniitana Dharma* is, the Hindu expression first of all enunciates an idea that is not found explicitly in the Islamic expression, no more than in the technically Guenonian of 'Primordial Tradition' (which actually seems rather a transcription of the latter) (81), but it is

(79) Regarding the Hesian meanings of such <<appellations>>, cf. what we have said in the notes to our translation of Al-Qashanî's *Commen to the Fiûihah*, in *Études Traditionnelles*, Mar-April 1963, pp. 90-94.

(80) The "undressing" as a characteristic act intended for the recovery of the Fitrah is even represented in the hygienic prescriptions of the prophetic Sunna: "It is part of the FîJrah to rinse one's mouth, to draw water up the nostrils, to use the toothbrush, to shorten one's moustache, to cut one's nails, to depilate their nails, shave their armpits, shave their pubes, wash their fingers, sprinkle themselves (at the end of the ghusl) and circumcise themselves>> (hadfth).

(81) It is known that the expression 'Primordial Tradition' had already been used previously, but its notion was only technically fixed by René Guénon, especially in *Roi du Monde*.



found in the translation first provided by Guénon in the terms of *Lexperennis*: the idea of stability and perpetuity. Now, there is in the Qur'an itself another expression, which is related to this character of the fundamental traditional order: it is *ad-Dfnu-l-Qayyim*, which could be translated, according to the context, with 'the Immutable Religion' or 'the Hessian Cult', and which is understood as one of the epithets of Islam in its absolute sense. The Qur'anic places where this expression appears leave no doubt as to its equivalence with that of *Sanfitana Dharma*. and, moreover, allow certain considerations about the spiritual realities and activities specifically related to this notion.

Here, first of all, is a verse in which the *Dfn Qayyim* appears in a situation that is not only primordial, but even cosmic and pre-human in character; the human order (although human order (although man is from another point of view the "end" of all creation) is inscribed in it under certain conditions that coincide with the observance of a divine right in the universal order, macrocosmic and microcosmic, collective and individual.

"Verily, the number of months with Allah is twelve (which are found) in the Scripture of Allah, from the Day He created the heavens and the earth: four of them are sacred (*hurum*); this is the Immutable Religion (*ad-Dfnu-l-Qayyim*). Do not wrong your souls during these; however, fight the ace But fight the donors (the polytheists) all together, just as they fight you all together, and know that Allah is with the fearful.

"The intervening month (*an-nasf*) is but a surfeit of It is because of it that the Unbelievers are led astray: they declare it not sacred in one year, and declare it not sacred in another year, in order to make up the number of the sacred months instituted by Allah, so that they declare not sacred that which Allah has declared sacred. has declared holy. The worst of their deeds has been made beautiful in their eyes. But Allah guides not the people of miserable teeth' (Qur'an, 9:36-37).

We will not go into lengthy explanations here on the calendar issues called into question by these verses and regularly exposed, for instance, by the Qur'anic commentaries. It is suf-

It is sufficient to know that, in spite of the principle of lunar calculation of time, the pre-Islamic Arabs (as well as the Hebrews) had a long-standing method of determining the year through the periodic introduction of a supernumerary month, destined to postpone the beginning of the lunar year at the same time as the solar year (in autumn); The pilgrimage of Abrahamic tradition was thus carried out in months offset from real time, which were all given the names required by the performance of the annual rites and sacrifices.

The re-establishment of things in the normal order occurred only in the last pilgrimage made by the Messenger of Allah, the "Pilgrimage of Farewells", which must have taken place, according to the *haddith*, at a time when, providentially, the pilgrimage had returned to its normal position in the secular succession of months. In fact, here are the words spoken by the Messenger of Allah at that time: "In verity, Time (Az-Zaman) has cyclically returned to a configuration like the one it had on the Day when Allah

created the heavens and the earth. The Year has twelve months, and four of them are sacred: three of them follow one another and are DhU-I-Qa'dah, DhU-I-Hijjah and al-Muharram, while one, Rajab, is isolated and lies between Jumada (ath-thani) and Sha'bat etc.". The continuation of the *haddith* shows how the Prophet solemnly identified the sacred months (DhU-I-Hijjah) in which the skin

took place, the sacred land on which the rites took place and the day itself, as the Day of the Sacrifices on which the victims were to be offered, and concluded by proclaiming the sacred your blood, your heritage and your honour are sacred to you, as sacred is this day of yours, this territory of yours and this month of yours! You will meet your Lord and He will ask you to account for your deeds. Do not become unfaithful after me by cutting off each other's heads, etc.'.

To better understand the significance of these last words, one must know that among the pre-Islamic Arabs, during the four sacred months, all things chargeable to man, whether for good or for evil, are not to be attributed to him.

in evil, were considered much more important than in ordinary time, and so were rewards and punishments. Wars were forbidden, and if 'someone met his father's or brother's murderer, he made sure not to see him'. In Islam, the importance of these months was further increased, but as far as the

what seems most evident is that the specific war against the associationists or polytheists (al-mushrikun), being a divine right, can be waged at any time; and furthermore, that combat is inevitable when it comes to defence.

As for the expression ad-Dfnu-1-Qayyim, which qualifies this statute of the year and the four sacred months, here is one of the opinions quoted from Al-Khazin's commentary: 'It is the Decree to (al-Hukm) unalterable and irreplaceable. The word qayyim has here the sense of déiim, "permanent", the yazul, "which will not cease". Since this decree goes back to the Day of the creation of the heavens and the earth, we have here a cosmic, preuma na Law, which must, however, be observed. by man in a manner particular to him and which must last as long as the world. It is precisely the sense of Sanéitana Dhamta as universal Order that we find here, at least in one of its meanings' (82).

(82) Especially as Méinava-Dhanna. We will point out in this regard an additional aspect of the Dfn Qayyim at this point in the cycle: the moment in which the return to an astrological configuration similar to that of the origins is proclaimed is exactly the moment in which the Sigil Io of the Prophet-Legislators ends the formulation of its own Law

("Today I have made your religion perfect, I have completed My benefit for you and it has pleased Me that you should have Islam as your Religion", says Allah in the text that concludes the whole of the Qur'anic revelation; Qur'an, 5, 5).

But this Law is only just beginning to be practised and this relationship opens up a new traditional cycle; this practice of the Law is destined, moreover, to "realise>> the properly Mohammedan conception of the universal Truth, not only in the forms of the present life, but also in the constitutive results of the "future life>> for all beings of the present cycle. present cycle.

As for the content of the Dfn Qayyim, it will be noted that, under the primordial aspect that is in question here, it appears only in a negative way: it is about abstaining - and especially during the four sacred months - from everything that could be "injustice" for the beings of the present cycle.

be "injustice" to the souls, literally "you must not darken your souls" (fa-li tazhlimu fi-hinna anfttsa kum); and it is prescribed to act in a still negative way: war to defend oneself and to defend the right of the Oneness of

Allah against the polytheists. This uniquely negative status of the Dfn Qayyim is normal in the earliest formulations of the cyclic or dine. The natural perfection inherent in the pri

in the beginning only needs to be defended; only when it is 'lost' later, will the need for reconciliation lead to the prescription of positive acts. In the Paradi so terrestrial, it is with a negative and restrictive prescription that

begins the legislative cycle: "do not come near this Tree, for you will be among the unjust" (Koran, 7, 19); and it is interesting to note that even in this case the non-observance

of the rule was to be the cause of <<injustice>> or "obscurity" (the Arabic term for "unjust" is zhdlimun, etymologically "obscuring"). This idea of 'obscuration' naturally opposes that of 'light' proper to the Fitrah, the pure primordial Nature.

Another time the mention of Dfn Qayyim is found in the words Joseph addresses to his two companions in prison. After declaring that he follows the Rule (Millah) of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which excludes any association with Allah, he says:

"O two companions in prison: are the dividing lords preferable, or Allah, the One, the Reducer?

"You do not worship, apart from Him, other than Names, which you yourselves have established as Names, with which Allah has sent down no (operative) power, because (effective) authority belongs to Allah alone. He hath ordained that ye worship none but Him: this is the Unchangeable Religion (ad-Dfnu-l-Qayyim), but most men do not know it' (Qur'an, 12: 37-40).



Here then, **Din Qayyim** is defined precisely as to its content: worship nothing but Him, **AlHih**, the essential rule that we see inscribed in the private tradition of Abraham.

In the two verses of the same sura, the 30", **Din Qayyim** finds its place in the divine injunction given to the **Send** to Mohamad himself:

"Turn (**aqim**) your face for the Axial Worship (**ad-Dfnu-1-Qayyim**) before that Day comes which nothing from Allah will prevent. On that Day they (the good and the wicked) will be separated" (Qur'an, 30:43).

Here the **Din Qayyim** is somewhat defined in terms of method, which can be qualified as "direct": it is an essentialising attitude, because the "face" (**wajh**) of a thing is the "face" (**wajh**) of a thing.

(**wajh**) of a thing is its imperishable essence (**dhtit**), according to the verse

according to the verse: "everything is perishable except its face" (Qur'an, 28, 88).

(Qur'an, 28, 88) (83). In this case, since the "face" is that of a contemplator, it is his profound essence that must be oriented in an immediate, total and unfailing way towards the pure Truth: this is the meaning of the term **aqim** "turned towards the pure Truth". term **aqim** 'turn', which, moreover, derives from the same root of **qayy**.

same root of **qayyim**, qualifier of **Din**; and it is this that will be guaranteed by the notion of **Fitrah**, which we thus find in its integral context, in which it appears as the "immutable creation of Allah". Moreover, it constitutes the true foundation of that axial position and immutable consciousness that characterise the **Dharma**.

which characterises the **Dfn Qayyim** as a divine institution and spiritual cult.

divine institution and spiritual cult.

It must however be admitted that the notion of **Fitrah** is complex and even ambiguous, as does the syntax of the verse in which it is used.

syntax of the verse in which it appears. Since it is on this notion that that of **Din Qayyim** rests, it will be useful to quote a

(83) These Qur'anic words can also be translated as follows: <<Everything is perishable except His face," i.e. the Face or Essence of Allah; this dual application of the tennines in question will appear as a logical consequence of the idea of the essential oneness of all things.



Ibn Arabi's text highlighting what can be called re the 'divine' aspect:

"Allah *is* the One who manifests things, He is their Light. The manifestation (zhulu2r) of things manifested (mazhà hir) *is* Allah. He, as the Fàtiru-s-samàwàti wa-l-ard (the Separative Nurturer of the heavens and the earth) has naturalised ifata ra) these through Him: He is their **Fitrah** (of the hier minal covenant): Am I not your Lord? - They answered: Yes!... (Qur'an, 7:172). *It is* not but by Him that He has naturalised them. And *it is* likewise through Him that things are distinguished from one another, separated and determined. And things in their divine appearance (j'i **zuhùràh**) are nothing! Existence is His Existence, servants are His ser vi: these are servants as to their determinate entities (yàn.) but they are God (**al-Haqq**) as to their existence (wujud) (84).

For his part, Abdu-r-Razzaq Al-Qashani, commenting in his **Tafsir** on the verse we stopped at, says:

"**Fitrara-llahi** means: Stick to the divi na (**al-halaru-1-ilihiyyah**) disposition according to which reality was natur human reality as clarity and purity from all eternity! This 'disposition' is *Din. Qayyim*, from all eternity and for all eternity; unalterable and unchanging, it never departs from the original clarity and purity of the primordial natural **Tawhid**.e. This Primordial Nature (**al-Fitratu-l-Ulà**) comes only from the Most Holy Emanation (**al-Faidu-l Aqdas**), which is the Source of the Essence or the Essence itself (**Aynu-dh-Dhat**). He who stands firm on this foundation cannot be diverted from the essential Identity (**at-Tawhid**), nor can he be veiled with regard to the Truth' (85).

(84) Futuhlit, chapters 43, 73.

(85) What Al-Qashant says enables us to understand that the "Fitrah of Allah according to which men were naturalised" is after all the same as the life of things in the Word by which everything was made, "life that was the light of men" (cf. Gospel of John, I, 3-4, according to the ancient reading: Quodfactum est in ipso vita erat, et vita illa erat

Finally, in the context of the same verse, we also see the notion of Hanifiyyah, which is gene rally connected to the Fitrah; but we cannot stop there either (86).

At the same time, as we do not find the Fitrah and the Dfn Qayyim conjoined here, we verify the perfect coincidence of the notions of "Primordial Tradition" and Lex perennis, with which Guénon had interpreted the Sanarana Dharma. However, we realise that the notion of Dfnu-l-Fitrah is included in that of ad-Dfnu-l-Qayyim, because the latter, as we have seen, entails the idea of primordality in the Qur'an. It is therefore the latter Islarnic notion that more accurately corresponds to that of the Hindu Sanatana Dhanna.

It is also significant to note that there is, between these two expressions that correspond in the two traditional forms, a certain complementarism, which corroborates the other findings we have so far inscribed under the same heading. Although both expressions designate the primordial Tradition in its perpetuity, each emphasises a mode of it that concerns the respective tradition in particular. Hinduism, which is the uninterrupted outward continuation of the primordial Tradition through simple formal modifications, according to epochs and geographical situations, enunciates its idea of perpetuity; Islam, which *is* revelation ex 110vo after an epoch of "cessation of the envoys" (cf. Qur'an, 5:19), emphasises the idea of axiality. A complementarism of horizontality and verticality naturally presents itself to the spirit, but it is only really significant in the following way: on the Hindu side there is the consciousness of a

lu.x hominwn). This aspect is cosmologically 'anterior' to the one previously noted and juxtaposed with another passage (I, 9) from the same prologue of the Gospel of John.

(86) Let us likewise leave aside certain detailed forms of ad Dtnu-l-Qayyim (with the article), such as Din Qiyam or, variant, Din Qayyim without the article (Qur'an, 6, 161) and Dfnu-l-Qayyimah (Qur'an, 98, 5).



sort of substantial continuity of the Truth itself linked to the human substance that has been conveying it since time immemorial; on the other hand, there is the conception of a supreme elective incidence at the end of time, very well illustrated by this saying of the Prophet who speaks of himself: "I was the first in the order of Creation (87) and I am the last in the order of the mission".

#### 4. *Om and Amen*

We could say that the aspects of the traditional complementarism existing between Hinduism and Islam, which we have already dealt with so far and which we could certainly complete under some other relationship, are summarised by those two forms

corresponding characteristics of the sacramental and invocative Word whose kinship we have already pointed out: the *Om* of the traditions linked to India and *the Amen* of the traditions of Semitic stock, the latter considered more specifically in the Islamic case, where the exact form is *Amfn* (88).

On the other hand, there is also in this a reflection of the transitional relationship between East and West, each in its own

(87) Cf. the *lufth*: <<The first thing Allih created was my Spirit

"I was a prophet when Adam was still between the water and the argilla".

(88) See *Études Traditionnelles* of March-April 1964, pp. 77-78. Juxtapositions between *Om* and *Amen* have long been made, particularly by 19th century Orientalists. It is thus that we found in a note of the translation of the *Brahmakanna ou Rites sacrés des Brahmanes* by A. Bourquin (Ernest Heroux, 1884), p. I, the following remark: <You can translate *Om* with *Glory* or with *Amen*. We note incidentally, however, that the same translator inaccurately renders the term 'glory' as 'Glory'.

*IUJmah*, which rather means "homage" or "greeting": now, it is not possible to maintain the same translation for the two terms in question when they happen to be closely related.

in question when they happen to be closely associated in the same doxology: *Om! namah!* Oldenberg also spoke (*Die Religion des Veda*, 1894, French translation by Victor Henri, Alcan, 1903, pp. 392-

93) of the "Om syllable that is equivalent to our *Amen*>>.

together; but before approaching this topic, it is appropriate to briefly indicate the exact meaning of the two sacred words in the respective traditions.

The Hindu word, which, moreover, also belongs to Buddhism, is according to an Upanishadic definition "the syllable that expresses acquiescence, because to express acquiescence one says: Om!" (Chandogya Upanishad, I, I, 8). Substantially and structurally Om is also defined as 'the sound itself, it is immortality, happiness itself'; 'he who, knowing it, murmurs the word, penetrates this word which is the sound, which is immortality, which is happiness' (I, IV, 4-5). Its importance as a symbol of the universal Word is well known; we ourselves have already mentioned some of its doctrinal aspects.

Om is thus the **mantra** par excellence of Hindu spirituality.

But its technical and ritual use is extremely rich and complex. Om is the opening word of the fundamental liturgical canticle called *udgitha*, for which *reason* it is thought to **contain** within itself and represent *udgitha* in its totality (cf. I, I, 1). It inaugurates the different recitations of the Rig-Veda (cf. I, I, 9 and I, IV, 1) and is also uttered at the end of the recitation of a *rik* (verse or hymn), a *saman* (liturgical chant) and a *yajus* (invocation). In certain texts such as the Upanishads, but not all, Om appears in the inaugural doxologies associated with *Hari*, 'the Lord', one of the names of Vishnu: Om *Hari!*; and in the final doxologies: Om! *Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!* (Om! Peace! Peace!) (89). Finally, as a supreme word, Om is identified with the Supreme God (90).

For its part, *Amen* is also used, in traditions of Semitic origin, as an **aphactive** term, or rather as a fermative; first of all in the *Pentateuch*, where it appears with

(89) Cf. *Mtinava-Dhanna-Shastra*, U, 74: "Let him always pronounce the sacred monosyllable at the beginning and at the end of the study of the Holy Scripture-

every reading that is not preceded by Om vanishes a little at a time and that which is not followed by it leaves no trace in the spirit!"

(90) *Mtinava-Dhanna-Shastra*, U, 83: "The sacred monosyllable is the God Supreme".

a character of greater rigour, and in certain official rites (91). With the Psalms, it appears in pure and simple final doxologies (92). (92) At the time of Hellenistic Judaism, before the emergence of Christianity, **Amen** was used liturgically in the synagogues, from where it would pass to the Christian liturgies.

It is thus a term that **is** originally an adjective meaning 'firm', 'sure', and which later acquires an adverbial meaning: 'firmly', 'sure mind'. Since it serves to confirm a previous sentence, it also constitutes a solemn vow or an assumption of commitment and thus means: "so shall it be!", "so be it!", "Be it

cos1 h>; the Greek expressed this meaning with **génoito** and the Latin with **fiat** or **ila sit**; but when the function of **Amen** is purely incantatory, then it is not translated and is *con serva* unchanged.

The confirmatory role of **Amen** is found in the New Testament ments; thus in Matthew 6:13, where it appears at the end of the text of the **Pater**, to which it will remain linked in the practice of the daily prayers; similarly in **Revelation**, in which apart from its use in the doxologies of the Prologue, it is found in the transcendent liturgies, where it is pronounced by the angels, by the twenty-four watchmen and the four throne-bearers (93).

However, the Gospels also present **Amen** to us in a completely new use and aspect in relation to the betrayal.

(91) It will be noted that it first appears in the Mosaic institution of the law on jealousy, according to which the woman suspected of adultery, in order to exonerate herself. must confirm by <<Amen! Amen!" the priest's oath of imprecation (Numbers, 5, 1-22); later it appears in the rite of cursing instituted on the eve of the entry into Canaan, in which all the people participate: "And all the people shall answer and say: Amen!" (Deuteronomy, 27, 15-26); here **Amen** is pronounced 12 times to confer 12 curses, a number that corresponds among other things to that of the tribes gathered for the rite.

(92) "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, for ever and ever. Amen! Amen!" (Psalms, 41, 12). Cf. Psalms, 12. 19; 89, 53; 106, 48.

(93) Cf. Revelation, 7, 1-2; see also 5, 13-14 and 19, 4.

earlier sense. This is a purely affirmative sense, and no longer confirmatory; it is an Amen placed at the beginning of periods and sentences.

beginning of periods and sentences formulated in the first person, and no longer at the end or as the conclusion of a statement (94). This is how it appears dozens of times in the discourses of Christ, especially in Matthew and John: Amen dico vobis, sometimes replaced by Vere dico vobis.

sometimes replaced by Vere dico vobis- "Verily, I say unto you" (95). This is a characteristic style of Christ, who could speak thus as the source of truth and take himself as a witness. The role of the Amen in this case would therefore rather be a reflection of his identity with the Word. And it is significant that in this initial position and with this role as a statement of principle, Amen is ultimately in a situation comparable to that already reported of Om at the beginning of certain Hindu doctrinal texts. In both cases there is a first enunciation by means of a direct and total symbol of the Word.

On the other hand, in Christianity Amen is also a name of the Word; in the Apocalypse of St John (3:14) Christ is called "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness and Beginning of God's creation" (96). This was related to a certain

(94) Actually, an Amen in the inaugural position is found at least once in the Old Testament in Jeremiah 28: 6, but the prophet does not speak in his own personal name, for he says: <<Amen! Thus speaks Jehovah! etc.'. Now, already in this case, the initial Amen does not come to confirm anything, but, on the contrary, to formulate an objection against the irregular prophecy of Ananias, the falsity of which was later to be established.

falsity.

(95) It is not excluded that the affirmative Amen is related to the language in which the Gospel texts or at least the words of Christ were originally formulated. In any case, a linguistic consideration should be made here: whereas in Hebrew the word Amen rather serves to confirm, in Syriac it serves to affirm.

(96) Regarding the latter cosmogonic aspect of Amen, it will be worth recalling what Anne-Catherine Emmerich recounts after one of her visions about the life of Jesus Christ: she saw Jesus on his journey to Mallep on the island of Cyprus (an episode not known from the Gospels), while giving a <long lecture on the word Amen>> and saying "things



biblical tradition, because Amen was already attested anteriormen by the Prophets as a divine name: 'Whoever wishes to be blessed on earth will wish to be blessed by God. Amen!' (Isaiah, 65, 16) (97).

In Revelation, where titles are applied to Christ, by transposition identification, titles are applied first of all to the "Lord God" ("Alpha and Omega", "First and Last", "Principle and End") (98), there is a particularly interesting point in the order of things examined here; in the Prologue of this text, after an "Etiam! (Yes!) Amen!", which apparently confers a barely enunciated perspective on the final advent of Christ, we have a text that could be considered as a commentary on this mysterious Amen, applicable in the theosophical order of the Mission as well as in the purely principled order: "I am the Alpha and the Omega (the beginning and the end), says the Lord God, he who is, who was and who is to come, the Almighty!" (Revelation, Prologue, 7-8). On the other hand, these words are found almost as such in connection with Om, in a fundamental text of the Mandukya Upanishad, I: "Hari Om ! (the Lord-is Om). This syllable ba Om is the whole! Here is the explanation: what has been, what will be, all this is the syllable Om!". Gaudapada's commentary on this passage says: "The syllable Om is the beginning, the middle and the end of everything.... It must be known that the syllable Om is the Lord of all things' (99).

marvellous" about the virtue of this word. "He called it the beginning and the end of

all things. He seemed to say that with this word God had created the world" (Tome II, p. 428, Éd. Tequi, 1952).

(97) In the Hebrew text there is be-elohé Amen, <to the God Amen>. In the Vulgate we have: ...benedicetur in Deo amen... jurabir in Deo amen; it has been

also translated as 'the God of Amen' (Jean Koenig, in La Bible, 5 de la Pléiade, Gallimard) or 'the God of Truth' (Crampon).

(98) See, for 'the Lord God': 1, 8 and 21, 6; for <<the Christ>>: I, 17; 2, 8; 22, 13.

(99) Cf. Mandukya Upanishad et Kfirikfi de Gaudaplida, published and translated by Em. Lesimple (A. Maisonneuve, 1944).

After the preceding observations, it can be said that the two sacred words, Om and Amen, coincide both in their adverbial signifi

the adverbial meaning (of affirmation or confirmation) and the corresponding ritual use, as much as for the meaning of symbol of the universal Word and name of the supreme Truth.

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As far as the Islamic tradition is concerned, it will be interesting to know first of all some linguistic clarifications.

linguistic order. The Arabic word is written and read in different ways: if it is trilateral (amn), it is read amin (part. pres. "which is safe"), while if it is quadrilateral, it can be read amfn or amfn

(adj. 'very safe'). There is also, again in quadrilateral, a form ammfnn (where the letter mfm is simply reinforced, which in the transcription is rendered with a doubling that does not exist in the script), which we will return to later.

° As for the institution of this term and its use in Islam, the Envoy of Allah Mohammad, may Allah grant him his unitive and peaceful graces, declared: 'The Angel

Gabriel, peace be upon him, conveyed to me the word amfn when I had finished reciting the Fatihah and said that it was like the seal (al-khatm) on a writing. The Fatihah is the opening sura of the Book, which must be recited in every ʿaliḥ (ritual prayer); the word amfn that concludes it is not part of it.

concludes it is not part of it; the pronunciation of it, which is done in a low voice, is analogous to the Amen after the Dominical Prayer. Another hadfth says: <<Amfn is the seal of the Lord of the

Worlds on the tongue of His believing worshippers'.

Ibn Abbas asked the Envoy of Allah what the meaning of Amfn was, and he replied that it is "Do!" (if'al), which corresponds to a fiat. The commentators explain its meaning with these words: "Our Lord, Jai as we ask You!". Finally, a teaching of the Pro.feta concerning the recital

during the rite of the ʿaliḥ shows what the sacramental operation that

the sacramental operation that takes place at that moment:

"When the Imam (who leads the communal prayer) has pronounced (the last words of the *Fatihah*)« . . not the way of those upon whom Wrath *is* upon, nor the way of the stragglers," say: *Amfn!* Indeed the angels also say: *Amfn!* And the Imam will also say: *Amin!* Now if one pronounces his *Amfn* in unison with the *Amfn* of the angels, the sins he has committed up to that time will be forgiven him.

A special meaning has the *Amfn* pronounced after the *Fatihah* with reinforcement of the letter *mfn*: *Ammfn!* From a morphological point of view, it is considered to be the present plural inflected participle (singular *amm*, nominative plural *ammun*) of the verb *amma*= "to go towards", "to have for objective" (101).

(101). In this meaning, since it comes after the characteristic request of the *Fatihah* "Guide us to the straight Path, the path of those on whom Thy grace is bestowed, not of those on whom Thy wrath is bestowed, nor of those who are in distraction", the word *ammfn* (analogous to *qaçidfn*= "Those who are heading towards") according to Ibn Arabi means: <<We go towards Your answer as to what we have asked You to" (*qaçadna ijabatakafima da'awnakafihl*) (102).

*Amfn* is also used to support the request addressed to God by another: 'The requestor and he who supports him with his own .

(100) This agreement is to be understood first of all according to the 'Intelligible" fashion: harmony of purity and holiness between the inwardness of being

and the higher spiritual powers; agreement according to the "sensible" mode, in the order of ordinary time, is only conceivable in relation to the angels descended and condensed in the corporeal mode (*tajassud*), who are thus

are thus on the sensitive plane of ordinary human ordinary. (Cf. Ibn Arabi.

Futuhlit, ch. 69, vol. I, p. 426 and ch. 73, quest. 100, vol. II, p. 101, Éd. Dîrû-1-Kutubi-Arabiyyati-I-Kubrlî).

(101) It is from this same root that the word *imllm* derives, which designates the leader of the prayer made in common, i.e. 'the one who, before the others, directs the prayer towards" the House of Allah.

(102) Cf. FutuhO.t, ch. 73, quest. 100, vol. II, p. 101, which from a lexical point of view refers back to Qur'an, 5, 2: "those who direct towards the Sacred House" (*iimina-1-Bayta-I-Harlùn*).





*Amin* are associated (in reward)' (*hadjfih*). The Prophet was once observing a believer making requests to God and said: "He will necessarily get the answer if he seals the prayer with an *Amin*!"

The prophetic teaching also gives this instruction: "The prayer of someone for the sake of an absent brother is answered and an angel standing by his head pronounces: *Amin*! And there is a similar good for you too>.

Finally, "At the Yemeni corner of the Kaaba there is an angel who has been in charge of that place since A'Jlil created the heavens and the earth; when you pass by (during ritual rounds), say: "Our Lord, give us in this world a good and in the next world a good and preserve us from the chastisement of the Fire!" (cf. *Qur'an*, 2:201), for the angel will say: *Amfn! Amm!*".

In all this, it can be seen that the confirmatory meaning of *Amin* is complemented with the specific idea of the affixed 'seal', which implies the sense of a firm and enforceable conclusion. This idea of a 'seal' is typically Islamic: it seems to be a reflection of the dominant conception of the seal of the prophetic manifestation. But since the notion of a final prophetic and legislative synthesis in view of a universal safeguard must essentially be identified with the primordial mandate given to Adam in the world of man, it is significant in this respect that the *Aminah* or the respective Trusteeship (cf. *Qur'an*, 33, 72) bears a name derived from the same root as *Amfn*. The Faith itself, this mystery so characteristic of Islam, where it has a much deeper dimension and scope than in any other tradition because of the extent and importance of the Revelation to be received and guarded, is called by a word with the same root: *al-lmàn*.

After all, the Seal of Prophethood himself bears the title of *al-Amfn* (with the article)= the Steadfast, the Secure, the Faithful, the Sincere, the Truthful. He said of himself: 'As for me, by Allah, I am *Amfn* in the sky and *Amfn* on earth! Moreover, long before he was invested with the prophetic message,

the Meccans called *him al-Amfn*, as a sign of the great trust they had in him (103).

It is in this same perspective that the same qualifying epithet when it is applied to the Angel Gabriel himself as the 'Confident Spirit', *ar-Ruhu-l-Amfn* (cf. *Qur'an*, 26, 193); more specifically, he bears,

(103) This epithet is particularly mentioned in the following exceptional circus: the Quraysites rebuilt the Kaaba. When they arrived at the place where the Black Stone (which is "the Right of Allah on Earth") was to be put back, the different tribes disputed terribly among themselves. for each aspired to the honour of lifting it up and setting it in the Outer Corner which is consecrated to it. One of the chiefs proposed this solution:

"Let it be agreed that the first person to enter through the Mosque gate will be the judge who will put an end to the dispute!" The others agreed. The first person to enter was Mohammad, the future Prophet. When the Quraysites saw him, they shouted, "It is the Amtn, the Man of Trust! We are pleased! It is Mohammad!" Informed of the controversy, they found a solution by placing the stone on a cloth, which the representatives of each tribe came to hold in their hands. each by one edge: thus they all raised it to the height at which it was to be placed, he took it and placed it with his own hand. In this regard, it is interesting to note a singular correspondence with a Masonic symbolism of a legendary nature that René Guénon dealt with in *Érudes Traditionnelles* of April-May 1950, reviewing the *Speculative Mason* of October 1949 (text reproduced in *Érudes sur la Franc-Maçonnerie*, tome II, pp. 178-180). Speaking of the fact that in most of the manuscripts of the O/d Charges the name of the architect of the Temple of Solomon was not Hiram "Or Amon. or some other phonon that seems to be a corruption of it," he also noted that this word has in Hebrew the precise sense of craftsman and architect and that one may wonder whether a common name was mistaken for a proper name, or whether instead this designation was given to the architects because it was originally the name of the one who built the Temple. "Be that as it may," he added, "its root, from which the word amen derives in particular, expresses in Ebmic as in Arabic the ideas of firmness, constancy, faith, fidelity, sincerity, and vehemence, which accord very well with the character attributed by Masonic legend to the Third Grand Master". In the episode referred to in the biography of the Prophet, the designation of ai-Amiit with the function of Master architect in relation to the primordial Temple of Mecca is surprisingly combined.

the title of Aminu-l- Wahy, 'Custodian and Guarantor of the Revelation'.

Finally, the word Amin is also a divine name; it does not does not appear in the ordinary lists of divine Names, but is found in certain initiatory invocations, taJora rather enigmatic, such as the Dairah (Circular Enclosure) or the Khlitam

(Seal) (104) of Shaykh Abù-l-Hasan ash-Shàdhili. In the respective formulae, the pronunciation Imfn occurs as a regularly transmitted variant.

Taking into account the preceding findings, it seems probable that, given the specific meaning of "seal" found in the Islamic case, the Amen of the different Semitic or related traditions is ultimately linked to an Egyptian origin, and more specifically to the divine name inm, usually transcribed "Amon" (although its exact vocalisation is unknown) and meaning "hidden" and "mysterious" (105). More precisely, this name refers by its root to the "invisible world"; in Egyptian inm-t designates the "West" as <<the place of concealment of the Sun>>, while Osiris, who corresponds to the "Night Sun">, was himself called Hnty Imn-tt, "Lord of the West" (106).

In any case, it is certain that in sacred history, at least as results from the Bible, the Amen appears only with the coming of the

(104) It is a talisman bearing the names al-Hin. (the Guard) and as-Sayf(the Sword). See Al-Maf8khir a/-aliyah of Ibn Ayyad.

(105) This coincides with the meaning of what René Guénon said in the text we quoted in an earlier footnote: "As for the name of the Egyptian god Amun, although its form is identical [to that of amen], there is a different meaning, that of 'hidden' or 'mysterious'; it could

It may be, however, that there were more relations between all these ideas than there seem to be at first sight' (*Études sur la Franc-Maçonnerie*, tome II, p. 179). It is the idea of 'seal' or 'imprint', it seems, that could establish such a relationship.

(106) This title was given, at an earlier time in traditional Egyptian history, by Anubis, the dog-headed god, who was d'tronde considered the son of Osiris, or even of Ra, the diurnal aspect of the same 'solar' principle.

Children of Israel from Egypt. On the other hand, it is likely that it was part of the Egyptian inheritance that Moses and his people then had in some way. Nonetheless, the prominently Egyptian word, because of its entry into another linguistic context (where the Semitic root *amn*, from which we get *emunah*, faith, a notion so characteristic of the "religious" mode of tradition, must have exerted a definite influence) and because of a new ritual usage (since it was an autonomous revealed legislation), was more or less veiled in terms of its original properties. However, one must also take into account the fact that its inclusion in a newly formulated tradition, such as that brought by the Mosaic message, had to give rise to a prophetic adaptation proper, and that this necessarily conferred certain new characteristics on the latter. An Islamic datum can clarify this point in the traditional history of the sacred Amen.

The Messenger of Allah declared that he received the *parola* the Amen through a privileged revelation and that "before him, only Aaron could have received it, because when Moses invoked divine assistance (*kàna yad'u*), Aaron supported him with his Amen (*yuamminu*)" (107). This is therefore the Amen in a "confirmatory" function, not the Amen in an "affirmative" function. On the other hand, one must note this: the mere fact that someone accompanies another with his Amen is not proof that he received the Amen in the privileged manner of the Prophet Mohammad; in this case, in fact, he, who knew the Judeo-Christian tradition of the Amen (liturgical or prayerful), would not have expressed himself in the Amen (107).

(107) Here is the complete text of one of the ahddft concerning this point: "I have been assigned three gabels: I have been assigned the pre gage by ranks, I have been assigned the greeting of Peace (*as-saliim*) which is the way of greeting of the beings in Paradise, and I have been assigned the Ammi'n, which was not received by any of those who were before you, unless Allah assigned it to Aaron, because when Moses invoked divine intervention, Aaron supported him with his Amill.



dubious manner. The Prophet must have been aware of a reception by direct revelation and implying a knowledge and operative power that could not be received in this way.

\* \* \*

If we now consider the literal structure of the two words Om (AWM) and Amen (AMN), we realise that they are basically one and the same word, originally consisting of two elements, A and M, which correspond to the extreme points of the vowel sound, the first of which constitutes the primordial manifestation, the second the final extinction (108). The third element involved in the constitution of each of the two words, on the other hand, differs and plays a differentiating role.

In one case, due to the fact that the *u* that intervenes in Aum means "elevation" (utkarsha), one has the Word in an ascending and reabsorbing function; in the other, due to the fact that the *n* that concludes amn, vocalised Amen or Amin, implies a sense of envelopment and preservation (109), one has the Word in a confirmatory and conclusive function. Responding to remarks that we had made to him in this regard, René Guénon told us something that retains its interest even independently of our considerations: "As far as Aum and Amfn are concerned, the relationship of which you speak is perhaps indeed indicated, in a certain way, by the fact that the waw represents the union of the two

(108) It can also be noted that in Arabic, the corresponding letters, alif and mfm, are respectively symbols of the beginning and of death.

(109) See René Guénon, *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée*. ch. XXIII: Les mystères de la lettre Nun. It may also be noted that the nun as a letter and as a desinence morpheme (the tanwfn) is the characteristic terminal element of the verses of the Qur'an, which underlines the synthetic function of this last revelation of the Lawful Word in the traditional cycle of our world.

other terms, while *m'Jn* represents their product' (Let tera of 28 February 1949).

In the third element of each of the words we are dealing with could in fact only be a secondary and logically further modification of the same word, originally biliteral. It can also be noted that the geo-graphic areas over which the traditions to which one or the other of these two triliteral sacred words belong, and which are in some way complementary to each other, lie on an East-West line, rather southern at least as far as their origins are concerned.

origins. On the other hand, the original area of the monosyllable *Om*,

in one of its recognisable modes, because in certain places it is pronounced *im* (1 10), is South Asia and the Pacific islands. It is also found, through a kind of extreme emigration, among the Araucans of Chile, to whom an 'oceanic' origin is also attributed.

\* \* \*

As far as the Araucanians are concerned, the report of a Catholic ecclesiastic (R.P. Emile Housse, *Une épopée indienne*, Plon, 1939) contains a description (p. 106) of the ceremony accompanying a propitiatory sacrifice officiated by a

**Machi** (a kind of 'druidess', says the author): 'Black pages and horsemen dance backwards, followed by the druidess, the leader of the feast who leads her, the musicians with flutes and whistles, and the groups of people. They all jump rhythmically to the sound of

instruments. At each of the stanzas sung by the Machi, everyone responds with a prolonged exclamation "*6-6-6-om!*". Twenty-four times the procession thus goes round the altar rustic'.

(110) This is also its pronunciation in India, among the Tamil- and Malayalam-speaking southern populations. It is also like this among the ethnic groups of Oceania (New Guinea). One might also think that there are traces of the original biliteralism mentioned above in this.

Here, now, is another ceremony during which the pronunciation of the word in question is associated with symbolic elements that corroborate its identity with Hindu *Om*.

It is the preparatory rite of the consecration of a Machi, a rite that involves the erection of a sacred staircase, the *rehué*: "When the master of the ceremony gives the signal, flutes, horns and drums gather the people, who are arranged in a circle. At the foot of the altar, the druids slaughter the lambs offered by the family, cut off their right ear, dip it in the blood flowing from the incision and raise it up with their right hand. They then turn towards the East, like the main Machi, who utters a prayer: 'O Lord and Father of mankind, (...) grant us good weather and rain for the sowing, so that we may have enough to live on! Send us not the flood. Grant that we may, through thy will, enjoy happiness! *O O! O Om! Ou Oum!*'"

And in a formidable clamour the crowd repeats this final "so be it". At this moment, the sacrificers return the ear of the lambs to the owner of each animal. The latter, in turn, formulates a supplication aloud. After that, he lays this ear on the altar, next to the recipient into which the druids pour the blood of the victims. The evil animals are then dismembered. The donor gets the head and half of the body cut lengthwise; the immolator gets the other half. As for the heart, it is suspended from a branch. Next to it, generous guests hang slaughtered chickens, which they offer for the feast.

Immediately the music starts up again and accompanies a gene people on foot walk around *the rehué*, jumping and swinging; the horsemen, bridle free, describe large circles. Everyone, without exception, shouts infinitely "*o-o-om!*" (p. 100).

Having had the opportunity to communicate this observation to René Guénon and to comment a little on the document, we had the following answer:

<<What you tell me about the existence of the *mantra* "Amn" among the Araucanians is really very interesting and I

had never heard of it; your observation about Your observation about the offering of the ear and its relation to the primordial sound seems to me entirely justified; and it is certainly a very remarkable fact to find this *mantra* in a region where it certainly cannot be said to have come from India" (Letter of 21 January 1949).

\* \* \*

To be quite clear about the meaning of these findings, we must add that, contrary to what one might think on the basis of general notions concerning the

pre-Indian origins of the Hindu tradition, the word *Om* is not is not of Nordic origin and is not Indo-Iranic. This linguistic datum, so fundamental to both the symbolism and the ritual and spiritual techniques of Hinduism, does not in fact appear in the Vedic texts, those of the Rig-Valvin.

Vedic texts, those of the *Rig-Veda* above all, nor in those of the

of the Mazdaic tradition, to which, on the other hand, a commonality of origin with Hinduism is acknowledged before they became independent traditions. Other Vedic texts that later acquired their present form possess the sacred monosyllable, perhaps combined with verses from the from the *Rig-Veda* (as in the case of the *gayatri*), but this shows more

that the respective texts were constituted through a combination with elements belonging to the aboriginal traditions of India (111).

## 5. *India* and Arabia

According to the elements that we have highlighted, it is probable that the monosyllable *Om* was in India the legacy of a traditional world prior to the advent of Hinduism, a

(111) The doctrine of the Trimurti does not even appear in the Rig-Veda; one may think that the symbolic relationship this doctrine presents with the constituent elements of Om subjects it to a similar historical explanation.



world that extended over a largely vanished southern continent, of which, apart from present-day India and South-East Asia, only certain islands in Oceania survive. But Arabia itself must have had a precise link with this world, both traditional and geographical. The memory of such a state of affairs is indeed preserved by a large number of Arab legends and Islamic traditions.

Thus various sources, including the Prophet's own *ahéidfh*, locate in India the descent of Adam when he was exiled from Paradise (112); parallel accounts dating back to the Companions say that it is the Island of Ceylon, called *Sarandfb* in Arabic (113); finally, it is sometimes further specified that Adam had descended there on a mountain whose name would be NUd or even Wasim (114).

{112} Cf. the chronicle of Al-Kissàý entitled *Qičiçu-1-Anbiylì* (Vita Prophterarum in the Eisenberg ed.) and especially that of Ath-Tha'labi, which bears the same title but is known as *Araisu-l-Majéilis*. See also *Chronique de Tabari*, Éd. Zotenberg, t. I, p. 81.

(113) This name is a deformation of the Sanskrit *Sinhaladwipa*, composed of *Sinhala* (hence the "Ceylon" of the Occidentals) and *dwipa*, island.

(114) Cf. Ath-Tha'labi, op. cit., Section sur Adam, ch. V. There is a tradition in the island of Ceylon of a very famous mountain (the local Muslims call it Adam-malay, the mountain of Adam, and the Portuguese Pico da Adama), on which the father of mankind is said to have set his foot when he descended from Paradise. The huge footprint of his right foot is still visible on the highest rock (moreover, a series of sandbars connecting the island to the mainland is called Adam's Bridge). The size of this footprint ('a shallow hole, five feet, three and three quarters inches long and two feet seven inches to two feet five inches wide', says a Western visitor) must be related to the gigantic stature attributed to Adam by Islamic traditions; as to the proportions, however, this would raise a difficulty, because according to these traditions, Adam's stature was such that his head touched the sky and his other foot rested in the sea. The solution might lie in a less literal interpretation, if one were to recognise these descriptive elements as having above all an analogical meaning: the size of Adam touching the sky with his head would then be, more than anything else, a way of expressing the transcendent nature of the human intellect in the traditional cor-

respondent. This, however, does not undermine the traditional notion of the far superior stature that primordial man would have had or, even, certain peoples who preceded us. The onna on the summit of the Adam malay. it is claimed, is the destination of pilgrimages not only by Muslims, but also by Christians and Buddhists. The latter venerate this footprint (Sri Pada In pali) and celebrate at it a cult that predates Islam, for because they believe it is the footprint left by Buddha when he visited the island. Thus Islam, as far as it is concerned, would have interpreted -on its own terms an earlier tradition. But that is not all:

Local Buddhism also had to make a similar adaptation, because Hinduism, which preceded it on the island, has retained its own link with it to this day; a Western visitor from the beginning of the 19th century, from whom we have taken some of the above-mentioned data, says

that "the mountain is also sacred to the worshippers of Brahma and to those those of Buddha' (Davy, *Le Pie d'Adam*, in *Anna/es de Voyages*; taken up by Edouard Gauthier in *Ceylon ou Recherches sur l'Histoire... des Chingu lais*, Paris, 1823). The cliff on which the Sri-Ptlda is imprinted is d'altron de called Samenne/la, <<rupe of Samen", Samen being the guard god no of the mountain. in Sanskrit Samanta-Kouta-Parvatl. This refers

certainly to a purely Brahmanical tradition; but this does not mean that this was the first to have consecrated the place. In these different traditions, it seems, there are expressions, variously adapted, of the same event of an archetypal character in traditional history, i.e. the earthly e piphany of one of those tralescendent beings <<whose feet do not leave

the slightest trace on the sand, but imprint it on the theme" (cf. the trace of Abraham's feet on the stone of the maqam lbrdhfm near the

Kaaba, that of the foot of Christ on the Mount of Olives, rsi alente at the A descension, as well as that of the Prophet's foot on the Rock of Jerusalem me, engraved there before the Mi'raj etc.). As for the names given to the mountain by ancient Muslim authors, Wasim, which in Arabic means

imprinting a sign, leaving a mark", could allude to the Foot of Aadrano: Jabal Wdsim would then be -<from the mountain of he who imprints a trace>>; the name N1id, on the other hand, is more difficult to explain

through Arabic. On the other hand, we find this name in Christian documents: in the 6th century, the chronicle of Dionysius of Teii-Mahré, written in the monastery of Zouquin near Amida (Diyarbakir), speaks of the country of

Niïd, where Adam lived once he left Paradise (Monneret de Vil

lard, *The Eastern Legends of the Gospel Magi*, 1958, pp. 27-49, op. cit. in

M. Elissagaray, *La légende des Rois Mages*, 1965). However, this name is that of a village, not a mountain. But since a tradition of Ibn Abbas (Alh-Tha'labi, op. cit., Section sur Adam, ch. IX) specifies that Cain had killed Abel alfi jabali Nad, translatable both as "on the mon-

As for Eve, according to the same traditional sources she went down to the Hijaz, to Jeddah (115). We thus have an arrangement in which the masculine is in the East and the feminine in the West, which manifests a relationship of normal complementarism between the corresponding traditional regions. It should also be noted that this arrangement, which conforms to the order of inscription of the two complementary parts in the triangle of the Androgyne, makes the initial point of the word AWM coincide with the eastern region of traditional expression of the sacred monosyllable (1 16). The complementary relationship noted does not remain a mere configuration, but appears as truly operative, because the Islamic sources add that after a long separation (of one hundred, two hundred or three hundred years, depending on the version) the two spouses met again in Arabia; and their meeting, which is described as the outcome of a mutual search, actually constitutes the rule-

at gna NOd>> both with "On the mountain of NOd>>, it may well be that this is the country which, according to Genesis, IV, 16, Cain inhabited after killing Abel: "Then Cain departed from the presence of Jehovah and dwelt in the country of Nod, to the east of Eden>> (transl. Crampon). It remains to be said that the value of the prophetic tradition concerning "Adam's descent into India", which in itself does not add any further details about the place, is not necessarily linked to the details of the application of the prophecy.

is not necessarily linked to the details of the application made in the case reported above. However, this indication retains a value of correspondence ~~that~~ justifies it on the level in which it is situated and that does not raise dogmatic difficulties.

( 115) Location on the shore of the Red Sea, where the port serving the Mceca. It seems that this name makes reference to the abode of Eve, because the vocaHzzata word Jadah means the Ancestress. In any case, until 1928, when it was destroyed by the Wahhabi regime, there was a shrine of which only the traces remain and which was called the Tomb of Eve's Tomb; this would seem to express some analogical fact, because, as we shall see later, other data indicate that Eve WAS buried elsewhere next to Adam; this is certainly a maqam of blessing having rap port with Eve.

(116) This pattern also corresponds with the initial position of Adam's body (before the spirit was breathed into it), because it is said that "Adam was of such a size that his body went from the East to the West" (Chronique de Tabari, Éd. Zotenberg, t. I, p. 74).



(Chronique de Tabari, Éd. Zotenberg, t. I, p. 74). This was the conclusion of a sacred action, or rather of a ritual of pilgrimage performed by both parties in a converging manner. In fact, the same sources specify that while Adam was in a state of penance in India, Allah ordered him to make the pilgrimage to His Temple in Mecca. On his part Eve, for her part, was called, clothed and guided by an angel to the same purpose.

In this regard, it must be known that Mecca is regarded by Arab and Islamic tradition as the "Navel of the Earth" (*surratu-l-ard*), which is explained by the fact, reported by the same sources, that Mecca is the "Tower of the Earth".

reported by the same sources, that Mecca was the first point on earth to emerge from the primordial cosmic Ocean, while the rest of the earth was later spread out from it, "from beneath it)) (*min tahtihêi*), as well as the corporeal being human beings develop from the umbilical point. Originally, before Adam's descent, the Kaaba shrine had been, in an early form, a pilgrimage centre for angels. Only at a later cyclical moment did it become the

"first temple for men", according to the Qur'anic formula (1 17). Adam thus had, in truth, the task of re-establishing the worship of the House of Allah for a new traditional cycle, specifically 'human'). Significantly in this regard, a *hadith* reported by Ibn Abbas specifies that the first thing

(117) Cf. Qur'an, 3:96: "Verily the first temple that was established

by men is that of Bakkah, a blessed temple and a guide for the worlds etc.1>. In this verse we have the name Bakkah, which is considered both as a synonym for Makkah (Mecca), and as the name of the spot on which, in the centre of Mecca, stands the Kaaba. We note that the name Bakkah, which appears only once in the Qur'an, is used in relation to events contemporary to the Seal of Prophethood and, in particular, in relation to the conquering of Mecca and the defeat of the infidels.

and the other final, of the Mother of Cities (Umu-l-Qura), or even to two areas of the holy city, one central and the other general. These correlative aspects are also expressed in a very precise way in the symbolic relationship that can be seen between the symbolic relationship that can be seen between M and mîm, respective initial and differentiating letters in the two cases.





of the land which Allah made known to Adam, even before he sent him down to India, was the Kaaba: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah grant him grace and peace, said: Before Adam, upon him peace, came down from Paradise, the Temple

(al-Bayt) (i.e. the Kaaba of Mecca) was a Hyacinth among the hyacinths of Paradise (118). For its part, the Visited Temple (al-baytu-l-ma'mi<sup>2</sup>r) which is in Heaven and into which 70,000 pilgrim angels enter every day and do not return until

a1 Day of Resurrection, was located exactly a1 above the Holy Kaaba (which was like its earthly reflection). Allah sent Adam down to the ground of the Kaaba, which shook like a ship violently shaken. He also sent down, for Adam, the Black Stone, which at that time shone like a white pearl: Adam held it against him, seeking a state of intimacy with it. Allah then accepted the written covenant that had been concluded with Adam's descendants and locked it in the

Stone (119); then, bringing down from Paradise the Staff

(al-aça) (120) for Adam, Allah said, "Now walk!". Adam proceeded and there he was in India. He remained there until Allah willed that he should remain there. Then, as he felt a great longing for the Temple, he was told, "Go there on pilgrimage, O Adam! ..." (121).

In other sources it is also said that, before receiving the order (121) In other sources it is also said that before being ordered to go on pilgrimage, Adam and Eve cried, each on his own, for two hundred years, or that they did not eat or drink for forty years.

Before continuing in the order of the subsequent events, a few clarifications are still necessary. In the first

(118) Other stories describe this hyacinth dwelling as having two doors, one "eastern" and the other "western">>, through which the primordial pilgrims entered and exited respectively.

(119) It is for this reason that the Stone on the Day of Resurrection testified monied against those who would deny the existence of the Primordial Covenant.

(120) It is the staff of the Prophets made famous by Moses, to whom it had been transmitted by Shu'ayb (Jethro).

(121) Ath-Tha'labi. op. cit., Section sur Adam, ch. vi.

At the time of his descent into India, Adam had a statu ra that made him 'touch heaven with his head', heard the invocations of the angels and saw their rounds around the Throne. But then, at the angels' request, his stature was reduced to sixty cubits. One must therefore distinguish, even after his exit from paradise, between an initial adamic condition that retained a certain celestial connaturality and intimacy, and a further condition in which the natural and direct contact with heaven was lost.

with heaven; it IS in the phase corresponding to this

It is in the phase corresponding to this second condition that Adam's pilgrimage to the earthly Kaaba must be situated, for it was only then that this pilgrimage had its full raison d'être: that of establishing on earth a substitute cult for the heavenly cult, to which Adam no longer had access.

All this may also have led one to think that the different 'dwellings' assigned to Adam, the 'changes in stature' and his 'attitudes' are symbolic representations of a biological and spiritual process concerning not a particular individuality, but a humanity in the stages of its cyclical development.

For the continuation of the story of Adam's pilgrimage, we will now use the

we will now make use of the terms of another story, more appropriate to our topic and dating back to several Companions (122). AlJah therefore sends Adam to the Kaaba saying to him: "There I have a sanctuary, established as a projection of My Throne. Go there and make rounds around it like those that are made

around My Throne! Perform also prayers like those that are made around My Throne! -It will be there that I will answer your questions!". Then Adam departed from the land of India to the land of Mecca, to visit the temple there. An angel was appointed to him as a coryphaeus. As he walked (with his immense step), every place on which he set his foot became a land fit for habitation and cultivation,

- while the rest was left to desolation and neglect.

(122) Ibidem, Section SUR Adam, ch. VI.

When he made the ritual "stop" at *Araféit*, Eve, who felt a longing for him and had come from Jeddah to look for him, also arrived there; so they met in that place, which from that time on was named *Araf*[citation needed].

that time the name of *Araf*[it, on the day of *Arafah* (the root of these two names suggests that Adam and Eve there "met" or "recognised" each other there) (123).

When they set out from there for *Minì* (a ritual point of pilgrimage whose name implies the idea of "desire"), it was said to Adam: *Taman* (a word with the same root as *Minli*), i.e.: "Express your desires!". He replied: <<Desi

forgiveness and mercy!". From this came the name *Mina* to that place. The sin of the married couple was forgiven and their repentance was accepted; then they left for India (124).

It will have been noted, in this text, that Adam's journey from India to Arabia constitutes the eminently symbolic journey of a founder of civilisation; it can also be interpreted as the journey of a 'species' entity or an intellectual aggregate, which may correspond historically to peoples and spiritual currents. In the same way, certain things that are said in the story of Abraham can be understood later, and one will recall what we said, at another time, about the 'representative' character of Abraham.

Finally, Ibn Abbas adds a particularly significant mention in the order of things that interest us here:

(123) Al-Kissây (Vita Prophetanun, pp. 60-61) mentions an initial meeting of Adam and Eve in Mecca, according to the normal order of the acts of the Pilgrimage, in the ritual of the sevenfold race between *Āfa* and Marwah, but this does not change the proper meaning of the further meeting at *Araf*llt. It is said

also, in other stories of this pilgrimage (p. 57), that by order of the gods and under the direction of the angels Adam had to rebuild the Temple for himself and his descendants, which comprised a readjustment of the sensible elements of the cult. On this occasion, he had to strike the ground in order to make the spring of Zemzem gush forth.

cult of the Kaaba (the case of Ismael, then that of Abd-el-Muttalib).

(124) Ath-Tha'labi, *ibid*.



During his earthly life, Adam is said to have made forty pilgrimages to Mecca, each time starting from India (125); this <sup>i</sup>expresses the constancy of the traditional relations between the two regions and between the two regions. nal relations between the two regions and between the two traditional worlds that correspond to them.



### 3. ISLAMIC REFERENCES OF THE 'SYMBOLISM OF THE CROSS'.

The esoteric significance of the sign of the cross was first enunciated by René Guénon in an article entitled *La Prière et l'Incantation*, published under the pseudonym T. Palingenius in *La Gnose* in early 1911 (1). He speaks of Incantation as a mode of initiatory work, work that

initially entirely interior, but can be expressed and supported externally by words and gestures, the author said that the final goal to be achieved is "the realisation in oneself of the Universal Man, through the perfect communion of the totality of the states of being, hierarchized in an armoric and conforming manner, in an integral unfolding in the two senses of amplitude and exaltation". In a footnote, he added the following precisation: "This sentence contains the expression of the esoteric meaning of the sign of the cross, symbol of this double unfolding of being: horizontally, in the amplitude or extension of integral individuality (indefinite development of a particular possibility), horizontally, in the amplitude or extension of the integral individuality (indefinite development of a particular possibility), horizontally, in the amplitude or extension of the integral individuality (indefinite development of a particular possibility).

indefinite development of a particular possibility, which is not limited

(1) This article, recast and completed, was taken up with the same title as chapter XXIV of the *Aperçus sur l'initiation* (1946). However, we can attest, having read it, that the symbolism of the cross had already been the subject of certain considerations.

already constituted the object of certain specific considerations in the lectures given by Guénon, at the beginning of 1908, at the esoteric circle of the *Ordre du Temple Réncvé* at a time when he had not yet begun to publish.

started to publish.



the corporeal part of individuality) and, vertically, in the indefinite hierarchy of the multiple states (corresponding to the indefiniteness of the particular possibilities included in the Universal Uo mo)" (2).

In the following issues of the aforementioned review, Guénon returned to this theme with an article entitled *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, which, as we know, was the first draft of the book that was to come out with the same title twenty years later (3). Nevertheless, he made no explicit reference to Islamic sources, while the notion of the 'Man. Universal' and those of 'amplitude' and 'exaltation' referred to it without any doubt. However, if one does not consider La Grasse's collection, one naturally understands that the opportunity to approach such a topic, which must have met with exceptional fortune under his pen, was offered to him by the publication, in a previous issue, of Abdul-Hadi's (John Gustav Agelii's) translation of a small treatise by the *Taṣawwuf* presented under the following title: *Epître intitulée Le Cadeau, sur la manifestation du Prophète, par le Sheikh initié et inspiré Mohammad ibn Faz lallah El-Hindi* (4). This writing did indeed contribute a doctrinal datum of the first order, which could be immediately linked to the symbolism of the cross, although the text made no explicit reference to it; this datum is found in a passage that we will quote and which comes after an enumeration of the Seven Degrees of Universal Existence. Preserving the les-

(2) La Gnose, January 1911, p. 26. The passage can be found, somewhat modified, in the *Aperçus sur l'initiation*, p. 173 of the 1<sup>e</sup> edition (1946) and p. 170 of the 2<sup>e</sup> (1953) and 3<sup>e</sup> (1964); the note is replaced by a simple reference to the book on *Symbolisme de la Croix*, published in 1931.

(3) On the editions of this book and the necessary remarks, see our column of « Books » in *Études Traditionnelles* of January-February 1971, pp. 35-40.

(4) La Gnose, December 1910: the 'Notes' to this translation appeared distinctly in the January 1911 issue. (We take this opportunity to mention that this treatise was reprinted in the *Voie d'Isis* of June 1935).

sic of the translator, but summarising the text, these grades are as follows (unlike the words in round brackets, those in square brackets are additions of our own):

1<sup>o</sup> *The Inassignable* or the Absolute, which is designated by the name 'The Pure Unity'.

2<sup>o</sup> *The first assignment*, which is the consciousness that God pos

has of His quiddity, of His attributes and of all created beings in a general or synthetic manner; this degree is called "Truth of Mohammad" [we would rather say the "Reality Mohammadiana"].

3<sup>rd</sup> *The second assignment*, which is the consciousness that God possesses of His quiddity, of His -attributes and of all created beings in a distinctive and analytical manner.

4<sup>th</sup> *The spirits* [or rather "the world of pure spirits"], i.e. the abstract and simple creatures manifested in their prime essences.

5<sup>o</sup> *The world of prime forms*, i.e. the subtile tile but composed creatures that cannot be divided (without them ceasing to be what they are).

6<sup>th</sup> *The world of bodies*, i.e. the gross things that can be split or divided (without their changing substantially in nature).

7<sup>th</sup> *The universal degree* that incorporates the five immediately previous five and which is man.

Immediately after this enumeration we have the passage that interests us: "The first of these seven "planes" is that of the "Unmanifested", while the other six comprise the whole of the manifestation or "expansion". When man in the seventh (and last) "degree" is exalted to the sublime, when the other (five) "planes" arise in him in perfect unfolding, he is "the universal man. Both exaltation and magnitude have reached their apogee in our Prophet - may Allah pray over him and greet him!" (5).

(5) Ibid, December 1910, p. 271.

This passage, modified in style (re-translated, we might say), was taken up by Guénon as an express quotation from the Epistle of Fazlallah El-Hindi only in 1931, in the framework of the *Symbolisme de la Croix* (chap. 111), when, having used the terms "amplitude" and "exaltation", he had to specify that these terms were taken from the language of Islamic esotericism (6). But on that occasion he added another Islamic datum from an esoteric source: <<This allows This makes it possible to understand this sentence, which was pronounced some ten years ago by a personality who then occupied a very high rank in Islam, even from the exoteric point of view: "If Christians have the sign of the cross, Muslims have the doctrine of the cross" (7). have the doctrine" (7).

Since nowhere has it been indicated, neither by Abdul Radi, nor by René Guénon, nor by any other author, which Arabic terms are rendered by the words "amplitude" and "exaltation" - while a whole generation of traditionalist writers now use the corresponding French terms or their equivalents in other Western languages - we will transcribe them here. We will transcribe them here; however, we must warn that they are in fact two complementary "notions" that can be expressed by different pairs of terms rather than by a single pair of particular terms.

In the Arabic text of the Epistle of Fazlallah El-Hindi (8) these words are therefore: *inbiṣiit* for "amplitude" and *uruj*

(6) Previously, Guénon had already indicated, at least once, the origin of these two terms in *Ésotérisme de Dame*, ch. VI, but without mentioning the Epistle we are discussing.

(7) It is well known that the personality in question is Shaykh Elish Al-Kabir, to whose revered memory Guénon dedicated *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*. Let us add that, according to a mention made in private, Guénon recognised this master with the initiatory degree of effective Rosicrucian.

(8) The Arabic title is: *At-Tuhfatu-l-mursalatu illi-n-Nabf*, <JI Gift sent to the Prophet>. The author, of whom Abdul-Hadi confessed to knowing only the name, is called, according to a more complete and slightly more convenient transcription, Mohammad ibn Fadlallih Al-Hindi Al-Burhanapuri (which refers to an Indian family line and an origin linked to the city of Burhanapur); he is an author of the 10th and 11th centuries of the Hegira, who died in 1029.

for 'exaltation'. Taken in their ordinary meanings, the first properly means 'extension' and the second 'exaltation'; they do not therefore designate the expressed dimensions of a cross, but tendencies and movements that can be symbolically made to correspond to these axes, these dimensions. It may be noted, however, that insofar as they designate phases of initiatory realisation, they correspond respectively to the two parts of the Prophet's Night Journey, the *simbo lo par excellence* of the initiatory journey: the first, called

*Isrti* (Night Journey) goes from Mecca to Jerusalem and corresponds to the horizontal dimension of the cross (9), while the second, celestial, designated by the term *Mi'raj* (Half Ascension, Ladder) (10), corresponds to the vertical dimension, culminating at the Lord of Glory Almighty, the final term located at the "interval of two arēhi (*qaba qawsayn*) or closer (*adna*)". - expression of the passage beyond Duality (11).

(9) René Guénon says, in *Ésotérisme de Dante*, ch. V, that the *Isrii* is a descent to the infernal regions; in reality, according to the texts of the *ahīdiths* that speak of it, this journey corresponds, given certain episodes, to the initiatory themes of Dante's *Inferno*; but its journey does not involve, according to the above-mentioned texts, an actual descent into the bowels of Terr.<sup>1</sup> with an A. Cabatoo's summary of Asin Palacios' book, *La escatología musulmana en la Divina Comedia*, which Guénon partially reproduces, also speaks of a similarity between Dante's *Inferno* and the Islamic *Inferno*.

Dante's *Inferno* and Islamic Hell; the latter, however, is evoked not on the basis

the events of the journey to Jerusalem, but on the basis of visions that the Prophet obtained from Heaven during his Ascension

(10) The word *urflj* has the same root as *mi'rtij*, "Ladder">, with which the Prophet's "Celestial Ascension" is designated; in the *Tuhfah* commentaries it is used as a common term and designates the initiatory journey of the Reversed (*ai-Muqarraban*).

(11) Cf. Qur'an. 53, 9: "He (Mohammad) stood at the distance of two arcs (of a circle) or near pitl'. The two arcs being conceived as containing the two *meāt* of a circular "shape", the diameter could correspond to a contact by contiguity or, initiatively, to a 'uoitive' realisation (*itrihftd*); thus, a conception is generally criticised as evoking the union of two distinct natures; the expression "O pitl' near>> then signifies the certain overcoming of duality and corri-



Another, better-known pair of symbolic terms presents a direct reference to dimensions that, geometrically, are those of a cross: these "dimensions", usually cited in reverse order to the previous pair, are the words *tul*– "length" and *ard*– "width" (12). These are the immediate meanings, relating to the measurement of a horizontal plane; but already in current usage these two words are also used in relation to the vertical plane, since the word *tul*, like its equivalents in other languages, easily designates the "vertical length" or height

(13). In the symbolic meaning, the first 'dimension' thus

the pure identity (*wahdah*, *tawhld*), which on the other hand can refer as much to the uniqueness of the central point around which the whole circumference revolves, as to the circumference, as much as to the indivisible **uniqueness** of the circle in its entirety.

(12) This word, consisting of the letters *ayn*, *rfi* and *did*, should not be confused, despite the identical transcription, with the *parpla ard*, 'earth', where the first letter is an *alif*.

(13) See also Coral, 17, 37: 'You will not be able to reach in height (*talán*) the mountains'. We have already had the opportunity to clarify this technical meaning in a footnote to our translation of the Book of Extinction in the Contemplation of Ibn Arabi, in *Études Traditionnelles*, January-February 1961, p. 38, footnote 9 [ed. it. SE, Milan 1996]. It is also worth mentioning that Abdui-Hfidi wrote a note (IA Gnose, January 1911, p. 21) about the terms "exaltation" and "amplitude" in the aforementioned passage of his translation and included the following table of *paral lele* correspondences: "He (the Prophet) is the solution of human antitheses; here are some of them:

Exaltation	Width
Highness	Width
Interior	Exterior
.....	
Spirit Esotericism	The letter Exotericism
Solitude with the Creator	Universality with creatures

.....

.....

applies to the higher and informal world, or even to the purely spiritual nature, and the second to the lower world and for evil or, correlatively, to the gross and corporeal nature. Admittedly, one thus has 'domains' of cosmic existence, rather than qualitative 'tendencies'; but in truth a certain character of tendency results for each of the domains thus correlated, between which the being is situated and in relation to which it acts. In the Shaykh al-Akbar Ibn Arabi, finally, the following correspondences are found: to *al-alam al-Ghayb* answers "the hidden world" (*alamu-l-Ghayb*) and to *al-alam al-Shahadah* answers "the manifested world" (*alamu-sh-Shahadah*) (14) – and this is richer in conceptual possibilities.

Moreover, it is important to know, in the order of our considerations, that this conception of the axial dimensions of universal existence is a characteristic of the science *propria* of those Muslim initiates whose prophetic type is Seyyidna Aissa (Jesus), as one of the forms of the universal Word included in the possibilities of the Mohammedan *Maqam*. This initiatory science is called, moreover, the "Aissauite science", but it is more precisely the "science of Letters" (*ilmu-l-Hurfi*): by this expression one must first of all understand the knowledge of the generating breath of the "letters" both on the divine side and on the human side.

"letters" both from the divine side (*Nafasu-r-Rahmiin* the "Breath of the Most Merciful") as well as from the human side (15). The transcendent letters give rise to the divine Words (*Kalimat*) and the Names of things (*Asma*), and man receives them at the same time as knowledge in itself, as a means of realisation

In this table, which contained a total of some fifteen such <<antitheses>>, it can be seen that the first correspondence inscribed under the pair Exaltation-Amplitude is that of <<Height-Width>>, which suggests that Abdul-Hlidi himself was familiar with the Arabic technical terms we are discussing.

(14) Cf. Fut12Mt, ch. 22.

(15) We have already had the opportunity to discuss this in our Note sur le Shaykh Al-Alawf (Études Traditionnelles, Jan-Feb 1968).

and as a governing power of the macrocosm and microcosm. This science is also that of the 'breath of life' between which Jesus resurrected the dead or animated the birds of air that he moulded. One of the most notable Sufis who possessed this science, and whose case will be particularly interesting to us, was the famous Al-Hallaj. as the master par excellence of the *Taṣawwuf*, Shaykh ai-Akbar Ibn Arabi, states in the following passage from the Futulult:

"This science (the Aissauite science) is that which refers to the notions of the "height" (*riʿū*) and width (*ard*) of the world, meaning on the one hand the spiritual world (*al-munāzih*), which is that of the pure Ideas (*al-Maʿānif*) and the divine Command (*al-Amr*), on the other hand the created world (*alamu-l-khalq*), of cosmic nature (*at-tabʿah*) and bodies (*al-aṣṣam*), all this being Allah's: "Do not Creation and Command belong to Him?" (*Qur'an*, 7:54). "Say: The Spirit is part of the Command of my Lord!" (17, 85). "Blessed be Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!" (7, 54). This was the knowledge of Al-Hussayn ibn Manṣūr Al-Hallāj, may Allah have mercy on him! When you hear some of the people of our Path speak of the Letters (*Ḥurūf*) and say that this or that "letter" has as many arms or as many spans of "height" and as many spans of "breadth" as Al-Hallaj and others have done, know that by "height" he means its operative virtue (*jiʿl*) in the world of spirits and by "breadth" its operative force in the world of bodies: the measurement mentioned is then its distinguishing characteristic. This technical terminology was established by Al-Hallāj' (16).

\* \* \*

(16) Futul!ét, ch. 20. What the Shaykh ai-Akbar says in the last sentence of the text we cite only concerns the application of the notions of *tul* and *ard* in the domain of the science of Letters, because as symbolic "dimensions" of intellectual conception, they are found even before Al-Hallāj (died 309 Hegira), for example in Jāhidh (died around the middle of the 3rd century Hegira).

In relation to the symbolism of the Arabic letters, we will make a general observation here, without any further ado. There exists in the structure of the Arabic language – and let us think first of all of sacred Arabic – an aspect that can illustrate the Hindu theory of the three gunas (tendencies), to which Guénon reserved considerable space in his writings, especially in *Symbolisme de la Croix* (chap. IV). As is well known, these gunas constitute a system of cruciform tendencies, the application of which in Hinduism concerns above all the cosmological order: in the case of which we speak here, we are dealing with the three vowel movements (harakāt) u, a and i, which in Arabic can affect a consonant – in itself silent (sukūn, jāwī) – according to the rules of declension and conjugation (17).

\* \* \*

Before presenting another aspect of the aṣṣawīyah [Jesus'] doctrine, we should make, by way of introduction, at least a brief mention of the application of this cruciform pattern to the values of the works of the Islamic sacred law. The virtue of obligatory works (jara'id) is in relation to the vertical dimension of Science or Knowledge (al-ʿilm), while the virtue of supererogatory works (nawafil, sunan.) is in relation to the horizontal dimension of the latter (17a). The presence of these notions is found in authors

(17) We first alluded to this in our translation of the *Book of the Name of Majesty* (Kitābu-ṣ-Ṣamīʿ al-Jalīl), published in *Études Traditionnelles*, June 1948 (see the notes on pp. 156-157).

(17a) It is appropriate to know that the relationship we see thus established between the two kinds of spiritual works is based on the terms of the following ḥadīth qudsī: "Allāh says: They do not draw near to Me, those who draw near to Me, by no more excellent means than by the means which I have imposed upon them as obligatory! And My slave does not cease to draw near to Me amidst meek deeds of surpassing excellence that I may love him; and when I love him, I am the hearing with which he hears, the sight with which he sees, the tongue with which he speaks, the hand with which he grasps and the foot with which he walks!



from different eras, such as Al-HalHij (d. 309/922), Ornar Ibn Al-Fàrid (d. 632/1235) and Mohammad Ibn Fadlallah Al-Hindi (d. 1029/1620). As for the Shaykh al-Akbar (d. 638/1240), we shall quote another passage from his *Futuh!it*, ch. 559, which is actually just an annotation relating to the chapter from which we have just extracted a quotation:

"The secret of the institution of the obligatory works (*fard*) and the supererogatory works (*neîfilah*) is to be found in the relationship that Science (*l/m*) has with the dimensions of "height" (*tal*) and "breadth" (*ard*) point that relates to chapter 20 (of the *Futuh!it*).

He whose illness (or even 'spiritual cause') (18) is Aissa (Jesus), will not have to cure himself (19), because Aissa is both the Creator who gives life and the creature who comes from it (20)!

The width (*ard*) of the world resides in its gross nature (*tabf'ah*) and its height (*tul*) in its spirital nature (*rfih*) as well as in its Law (*Shari'ah*) (21).

This (doctrinal) light comes from *Aç-çayhar wa-d DayhUr* (22), a writing attributed to Al-Husayn Ibn Mançur (Al Hallàj). I have yet to see another realiser of the unitive type (*muttahid*) (23) who, like him, knew how to "weld and

(18) U philosophical term *illah* has these two meanings.

(19) Another possible translation: "do not grieve>>.

(20) Allusion to Qur'an, 3:49, where Jesus, as an Envoy to the Bani Isrrul, says: "I create out of the mud a form of a bird, I insufflate therein (the soul) and it is a bird, with the authority of Allih! I heal the born blind and the leper, I raise the dead, with the permission of Allah..

(21) Here the Sacred Law is taken as a whole (Obligatory and supererogatory works), to represent the upward trend in relation to the ordinary natural state.

(22) A work that cannot be found today (except for the Preface). D title (which presents some variants, according to the authors) could be translated I Cones d'ombra and cyclical durations.

(23) They are those who express the initiatory realisation of unity as the union of two natures or essences. On the notion of *ittihfid* as reality and as an appearance, see the Introductory Note to our edition of *The Book of F-stinction* in the *Contemplation of Ibn Arabi*, op. cit.

separate" (24) and "speak through his Lord", "swear by twilight, by night and what it envelops, and by the moon and what it fills, and ascend one layer after another" (25), for he was a light in the darkness! In his case, God (*al-Haqq*) occupied Moses' position in the wicker ark (*tiibut*) and that is why he spoke of lahut (= divine nature) and *niisut* (= human nature) (26). However, what is the relationship of this case with the one who professes that the Essence is unique (*al-Aynu wahidah*) and even rejects as absurd (the idea of) the attribute, since it would be a further addition (to the Essence) (27)? Where is the Sinai (mosaic) in rapport to the Fàràn (mohammadian) (28)? Where is the Fire (of the

(24) Cf. Qur'an, 21, 30: "...the heavens and the earth were welded together and We have separated them>>, which is certainly an allusion to phases of the ichthyol.&l.

(25) Cf. Qur'an, 84:16-19.

(26) The analogy between *našar*, 'human nature' and wicker *tabar* is found in particular in the *Fuṣṭuḥ al-Hikam* (I Castons of the Prophetic Forms of Wisdom) of Ibn Arabi, chapter on Moses. Correlatively, *lfihtir*, 'divine nature', is represented here by Moses himself as he is *Kalimah*, the form of the divine Word. We take this opportunity to note that in the other Israelite *tabzlt* mentioned by the Qur'an, namely the Ark of the

the Covenant, the divine presence is constituted by the *Sakfnah* (= the Shekinah of the Kabbalah), alongside which it also figures the *Baqiyah*, the Remnant of what was left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron (Qur'an, 2, 248). (In this regard, one may also refer to our article *Le Cof d'Héraclius et la tradition du Tàbfit adamique*, in *Études*

*Traditionnel/es*, November-December 1962 and January-February 1963, in particular p. 42 and footnote I of the latter issue). [Transl. it. in M. Valsan, *Il Cofano di Eracleo*. Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, Parma, 1985].

(27) Orientalist Louis Massignon, who is hostile to the concept of the Uniqueness of Existence (or of the Supreme Being), which he defines as "existential Itlonism" or simply "monism" (and even "pantheism"), translating the same passage of the *Futahât* thus distorts Ibn Antbi's text: "It is for this reason that Al-Hoşayn ibn Mansur speaks of "lahut" and "nas(lt" without coming for a single instant close to those who say "es without is unique" and do away with the added attribute" (*Kirâb al-Taw/Isin*, Paris, 1913, p. 144). This is tantamount to making Ibn Arabi pronounce the praise of a doctrine whose limitations he instead wants to show!

(28) Jsmael, the ancestor of the Arab Prophet, "dwelt in the desert of Faran' (Genesis, XXI, 21).

Burning Bush) in relation to the Light (blinding and indescribable) (29)? The "breadth" is a limited thing and the "length" is but "prolonged shadow" (30). The obligatory and the supererogatory are "contemplating" and "contemplating" (31)".

This text is also useful here because it presents a case in which Islamic esotericism uses technical notions, *lahUt* and *nasat* (32), which, as will be seen later, have a safe rapport with our argument and in the Qur'anic commentaries of exotericism are mentioned only in relation to the case of the Messiah, and to be criticised there. These notions in fact correspond to what Christian theology calls the two "natures of the Christ", i.e. a conception that in Islam is only admissible in the specific forms of the Mohammedan vision of universal realities. Here is an eminent expression of this found in a text by the great master Ibn Arabi, specifically consecrated to the Word of Jesus (33). After enunciating the general truth that pure spirits have the virtue of making "living" whatever they touch, because life penetrates it by this very fact (34), the mae-

(29) They asked the Prophet: "Have you seen your Lord?" He replied: "Light! How could I see him!". This is a simultaneously positive and negative answer; or, more exhaustively, cataphatic and apophatic.

(30) The 'prolonged shadow' is one of the characteristic features of the paradisiacal abode of the 'companions of the right' (Qur'an, 56, 30), who occupy a lower place than the First= the Approximate (Qur'an, 56, 10-11).

(31) That is, they are conditioned by duality.

(32) In the Shaykh al-Akbar himself, these are found in the *Fuṭūḥ- ʿu-l- Hikam*, chapters on the *Kalimat al-aisawiyah* (the Heristic Word) and the *Kalimah masawiyah* (the Mosaic Word).

(33) *Fuṭūḥ- l- Hikam*, ch. 15 entitled: 'Wisdom cast of the prophetic type concerning an Aissauite Word'.

(34) He mentions in this connection the Samaritan act of Moses: The latter had taken a fist (or a pinch) of the dust trampled by the Angel Gabriel, who is "I Spirit" (*ar-Ruh*), and had thrown it on the Golden Calf, so that the latter, becoming animated, mooed (cf. Qur'an, 20, 96). The same idea, supported by the same example, is found in ch. 20 of the *Futūḥat*.

stro declares: <Ù.a measure of life (dhalika-l-qadru mina-l haytU) thus infused in things is called Uihùt; the nàsut corrella tivo is the receptacle in which this Spirit is. In short, this nàsut is. itself called 'Spirit' because of what is within it" (35).

The consequence expressed in the last sentence may be surprising; but, apart from the fact that the nàsat in question is a divinely and directly manifested fonna as the receptacle of the divine Spirit, the explanation for this is to be found in the fact that Aissa himself is traditionally called the 'Spirit of God' in Islam. This is to be understood not of a single part of his being, but of his totality; and it is as a totality that he has been called a Spirit by the following Qur'anic text: "D Messiah Aissa, son of Mary, is but the Messenger of God, His Word which He projected into Mary, and a Spirit of Him (Ruhun min.Hu)" (Qur'an, 4, 171). Thus, in the constitution of a metaphysical personality such as that of Aissa, the làhUt and the n/ì.sut are the two complementary parts - containing and contained - of a single entity that transcends them and is called the 'Spirit of God' (36).

Certainly, according to the doctrinal evidence evoked so far, the conception of the "two natures" in Islamic esotericism presents characteristics that are specifically different from those found in the dominant theology of Christianity (37). It is in any case not a question of an ordinary nàsut or

(35) Ibn Arab'ì specifies in this regard that Aissa vivified the dead by the mere fact that el"<i>the divine Spirit (Rt/h illihf), although he does not fail to add the explanation that "vivification belonged to Allàh and insufflation to Aissa" (Fuçuç, op. cit.).

(36) It may be noted that this notion coincides with that of the Purus hottama v&lìntico that goes beyond the two Purusha, one destructible and the other indestructible. Cf. René Guénon, L'Homme et son Devenir selon le cap. V.

(37) Monophysitism, when it is not understood vulgarly as a "mixture" of the two natures, can evidently be a separate solution to this theological point, which will then correspond to a different ontological level; but, like all dogmatic conceptions, also  
*Vedānta,*



especially of a *ta.hut* that would coincide with the divine essence itself and in which, moreover, only Christ would participate; on the contrary, it is a type of spirituality constantly represented and even illustrated, one could say, by the *Men* (Rijtl) of the *Taḥawwt* { or, if one prefers, of Islamic holiness, a type that in the whole of Mohammedan spirituality is explicitly linked to the prophetic word of Jesus and also bears the qualifier, as we have seen.

At the same time, one realises that the correspondence, resulting from Ibn Arabi's texts, between the two initiatory dimensions of *taL* and *ard* on the one hand and the two anthological substances of *lthfit* and *ntisut* on the other, and thus the application of these latter notions to the case of Jesus, make it possible to ascertain that the sign of the cross can be seen as a scheme of the union of the two natures in the person of Christ. But if this is so, it is obviously because the cross is first and foremost a geometric compendium of the manifold states of being and therefore a symbol of the Universal Man, as Guénon demonstrated on the basis of numerous examples from the universal tradition.

universal tradition. It is to a second degree, in some way, that it will be applied to interpreting the specific anthology of the *eristic Word*; and then, at a third degree, to the history of Jesus Christ, where it will be the cross of the Passion. It is on these last two degrees that we must now dwell for a little while.

The theological meaning of the Christian cross is usually derived only from the events of Golgotha (38); therefore the symbolic meaning that we have highlighted, that of the sign of the cross as a scheme of the two natures reunited in the person of Christ (and this independently of any particular sacrificial purpose recognised in their union), seems to be the least attested in the teachings of Christianity, while such an understanding should not

this can only be valid for what it affirms, while it cannot be for what it excludes.

(38) Actually, this point deserves to be examined *pill* closely, but another occasion would be necessary for that purpose.

be at all incompatible with the salvific function of the eristic Word in its historical manifestation, because it could only give it an even broader and higher significance. It is not excluded that the cause of this silence is imputable to exoteric dogmatic needs.

Be that as it may, we can point out here some data coming precisely from the Christian side and in perfect agreement with what we have found on the Islamic side. These are data that we deduce from one of the "apocrypha" of the New Testament: it is the *Acts of Peter* (39), a writing

It is a writing that seems to have been widely disseminated, in Greek and Latin, in ecclesiastical and monastic circles in the Christian East and West, before following the fate of all the books not admitted in the canon, which were condemned especially during the 4th century.

the canon, which were condemned especially during the 4th century (40). In this text, the Apo-

(39) See the text and translation in the edition edited by Abbot Louis Vouaux (Letouzey et Ané, 1922). The annotations that appear here are ours.

(40) It can be said that the era of the abolition of the apocrypha, writings that often contain elements of an initiatory nature, is the one that in the history of Christianity is particularly characterised by the Constantinian reform. In this regard, let us recall what Guénon wrote when he spoke of the transformation of Christianity, which, from being esoteric and initiatic in origin, later took the form of religion that we know in ordinary history: "It would probably be impossible to assign a precise date to this change, which made Christianity a religion in the proper sense of the term and a traditional form addressed indistinctly to the public. What is certain, however, is that this was already a fait accompli at the time of Constantine and the Council of Nicaea, so that the latter did no more than "sanction" it, if one can say so, inaugurating the era of "dogmatic" formulations intended to be a purely exoteric presentation of doctrine. In the same vein, it should not be overlooked that Guénon added:

"If Christianity as such ceased in this way to be initiatory, there still remained the possibility that there existed, within it, a specifically Christian initiation for the elite that could not be held to the sole point of view of exotericism etc." (Christianisme et Initiation, in *Études Traditionnelles* of September, October-November and December 1949, taken up in the posthumous collection *Aperçus sur l'Ésotérisme chrétien*, ch. m.

St. Peter, who would be crucified in Rome, standing by his cross enunciates its mystery to the faithful; after saying that the very name of the cross (in the Greek text *onoma staurou*) is a "hidden mystery" (*mysterion apokryfon*) (41), he declares:

"... I will not be silent about this mystery of the cross, previously closed and hidden from my soul. May the cross not be what it appears to be, for you who hope in Christ! For it is quite different from this appearance, this passion according to that of Christ... Turn your souls away from all that is sensible, from all that appears and **IS** not true! Tear these visions from you, tear these hearings, these apparent actions, and you will know what has become of them for the Christ and the whole mystery of your salvation (42); and that these

(41) This reference to a symbolism of the very "name" of the cross, a reference that is by no means explained, does not seem to concern This reference to a symbolism of the "name" of the cross itself, a reference that is not explained at all, does not seem to concern the Greek word *stauros* (not to mention the Latin *crux*); however, there is at least a phonetic assonance to be noted – which, however, has its own symbolism of the stage of the initial letters – with a term such as *sterigma*, which means "support", according to a juxtaposition that has been made between this word and *stauros* (Cf. Desclée, 1958, p. 312). In this sense we can here cite more specifically, among other testimonies, first of all the Homily Pas which is attributed to Hippolytus: "(The cross)... this tree of celestial dimensions has risen from the earth to the heavens, fixing itself (*sterixas*), eternal plant, in the midst of heaven and earth, support of the universe,... support (*sterixas*) of the universe etc.'. We can add this other quotation from Andrew's *Martyrion*, where the same idea is expressly associated with the <<mystery of the cross>>: "<o I know your mystery, for which you were erected. In fact you were erected in the world in order to fix (*sterixes*) what is unstable etc.>>. Finally, the possibility of a foreign or properly esoteric name for the cross (like the *Tau*, for example) is also not excluded.

(42) Abbot Vouaux, who throughout his commentary wishes to legitimise as far as possible the presence of the Acts of Peter in the teachings of the first centuries, here does nothing more than show himself concerned to dispel any suspicion of "Gnosticism" and "Docetism" from the anonymous author of this text (op. cit.

king of this text (op. cit., pp. 438-439). We cannot dwell on explaining what "docetism" might be from a properly initiatory point of view.

"docetismo">, which is always spoken of without understanding anything about it, and al



words, for you who hear them, are as if they were not (43) .". Later the Apostle asks the executioners to cross him "with his head down and not otherwise". When this has happened and he finds himself thus suspended, he resumes: "You, whose role is to listen, listen to what I am announcing to you at this moment when I am crucified. You know the mystery of all nature, and what was the beginning of all things. So the first man, of the race of which I bear the image, praying with his head down, shows a nature different from what it once was; for it has become dead, being without movement. Therefore, overthrown, he who had thrown down his first state, organised the whole order of this world in the image of his new calling, suspended as he was, and saw on the right what is on the left and on the left that which is on the right; and he changed all the signs of his nature to the point of considering as beautiful what is not and as good what is actually bad. In this regard, the Lord says in the secret (en mysterioi /egei): "If you do not turn what is right into sinistral and right into what is left, and inferior into what is superior, and anterior into what is posterior, you will not know the Kingdom" (44). Here is the thought that I place before your eyes; and the way in which you see me hanging is the image of the man who was born first (45). You therefore, O my dear ones, who now hear (this), and also you who are on

to which a superficial and ridiculous conception corresponds; however, we will point out, without further ado, that the passage in the text bears a certain resemblance to the Qur'anic terms pertaining to the crucifixion of Jesus (Qur'an, 4, 157).

(43) The last sentence seems to indicate that this teaching was to remain completely secret.

(44) Such a logion is not found in the canonical texts. For Abbot Vouaux "en mysterioi means nothing more than 'allegorically' or expresses the enunciation of a thought that offers something higher than human intelligence". "It is useless therefore," he adds, "to look here for a Gnostic influence and to claim that Peter introduces a teaching, a mystical gnosis that is not found delivered in the canonical Hebrews" (op. cit., p. 447).

(45) Head down etc.



point of hearing it (46), you must leave this primitive error and free yourselves".

It is the next step that we wish to highlight especially in the context of our discourse:

"For it is fitting to cling to the cross of Christ, which is the Word stretched out (*tetamenos Logos*), one and only, of which the Spirit says: "What then is Christ, if not the Word (*Logos*) [and] the Echo (*Ekho*) of God?" (47). Thus the Word will be the upright part of the cross, on which I am crucified; the Echo will be the

transverse part, the nature of man; and the nail, which at the center in the middle the transverse part to the upright part, will be the rove scape (*epistrophe*) and the spiritual transformation (*meta-noia*) of man (48)".

In this text of great symbolic interest, the identification of the In this text of great symbolic interest, the identification of Christ with the cross must first of all be emphasised, and this under the relationship of the two natures; what is particularly important is that this is expressed in a purely principia I manner, outside of any reference to the historical Cross of Golgotha and the Passion (49). In Christ is thus presented with an axial aspect as to "divine nature" and an aspect of horizontal breadth as to "human nature", just as the divine Word appears firstly in itself and secondly in its cosmic repercussion or echo (50). It can also be noted that, according to this double

(46) This passage could allude to two degrees of initiatic teaching.

(47) One more logion not found in the canonicals.

(48) Here, Abbot Vouaux had translated, in the least meaningful way possible, *epistrophe* with 'conversion' and *metanoia* with 'repentance'.

(49) It should be noted that the symbolism of the two natures' is not absent from the sacrificial cross either, but presents above all its separative aspect. On the other hand, this is what the very words of the Crucified One express: "Eli, Eli, lamma sabactan" = "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?". They constitute the cry of "human nature" that feels abandoned by "divine nature" and that was not to be exalted until after the descent from the cross.

(50) Since being eristic is ultimately one of the formulas

aspect of the universalised Word (tetamenos Logos), the primordial human nature, considered at its own cosmic degree, therefore distinctly from the divine nature, is the reflection of the latter in the world of man (51). Finally, the central point that unites the two natures, and which marks the prominently crucial point at which they coincide "without blurring", constitutes the point of transition from one dimension to the other and corresponds in the ascending sense to a function of "transformation" in the sense of "passage beyond form".

On the other hand, the relationship between the "two natures" in the constitution of the human being has changed due to the cyclical descent: originally, in the Primordial Adam, pure human nature (the **Fitrah**, in Arabic) faithfully reflected the divine nature; following the "fall" and the resulting inversion, especially at the end of the descending cycle, the "divine" and "celestial" part of humanity came increasingly under the sway of the "human" and "terrestrial" part and found itself subservient to the latter. In order to bring about the restoration of the primordial state, the current human orientation must be overturned, and this will necessitate an inversion in the order of "forms", which, by virtue of their symbolic role, must ultimately favour the re-establishment of the "informal" realities themselves.

informal' realities themselves. This is what the crucifixion of St Peter wanted to represent wanted to represent: Christ could be crucified with his head up because he was innocent and in him the two natures were

according to which the constitution of Universal Man can be understood, this formula can somehow be found in every anthropomorphic theophany. Thus, when it is said that the synthetic Adam was made in the "image" of God and also in His "likeness", this double analogical relationship of Primordial Man with God can be referred to the two natures: the "image" corresponds to "human nature" and the "likeness" to "divine nature". In the Islamic data concerning the creation of Adam, this dual relationship can be found in the 'Form' made by the divine Hands and the 'divine Spirit' insufflated by God.

(51) Here there may be a symbolic aspect appropriate to a non-conceived conception of the person of Christ.

remained in their primordial relationship; but the Apostle St. Peter, representing guilty humanity, in which this relationship is reversed, had to be crucified upside down.

D relationship between the respective positions of Christ and St.

Peter in the crucifixion is then that which exists between the two triangles of the "seal of Solomon"; and with regard to this figure it is interesting to note that Guénon wrote the following : in the symbolism of a hermetic school to which Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas Aquinas were linked, the straight triangle represents the Divinity and the crossed triangle represents human nature ("made in the image of God" and as its reflection in the opposite direction in the 'mirror of the Waters'), so that the union of the two triangles represents that of the two natures ('*Ahut* and *Nasut* in Islamic esotericism)" (52). (52) Simplifying matters, one could also say that the responsive positions of the two crucifixes depict - in a global way - the two natures; and then the resulting symbolism could look back on the Church as constituted by the alliance between the heristic presence and its apostolic base. The role of the Word, in relation to the universal Existence, can also be specified by the addition of the cross drawn within the figure of the "seal of Solomon": the vertical arm connects the vertexes of the two opposite triangles, that is, the two poles of the manifestation, and the horizontal arm represents the "surface of the Waters" (53). Here, too, one can find the sign of the cross referring in some way to the conception of the two natures.

In the end, the result of the succinct presentation of doctrinal data with which we have confirmed the existence of an Islamic foundation for the doctrine set out in *Symbolisme*

(52) *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, Éd. Véga, 1950, ch. XXVUI, p. 188.

(53) *Ibid.*

de la Croix, will have verified to an appreciable extent the affirmation of Shaykh Elisb Al-Kabir quoted by René Guénon and recalled by us, at least as far as "the Muslims" is concerned, meaning by this term not the ordinary faithful, but the authentic doctrinal authorities of the **Taṣawwuf**. They therefore actually possess both the doctrine of the cruciform dimensions of universal existence and that of the two natures considered as co-extensive with the two directions of the unfolding in "exaltation" and "amplitude" of Universal Man; and, most importantly, they know it as the characteristic science of Seyyidna Aissa (al-ilm al-ais sawi). As for the doctrinal state of consciousness of the

"Christians" in relation to the same symbolism, Shaykh Elish's statement is no less true, if one considers the reaction of Catholic theologians and writers at the time of the publication of *Symbolisme de la Croix*; in fact, things have changed somewhat since then, but this point may, to tell the truth, constitute a different argument from the one we have proposed in these pages.



#### 4. A TEXT BY THE SHAYKH AL-AKBAR ON THE "DESCENDING REALISATION"

The posthumous volume by René Guénon collecting the rest of his articles on initiation (I) ends with the chapter entitled "Ascending and Descending Realisation", which expounds the most universal and at the same time most mysterious aspect of spiritual realisation. The question of "descending realisation" has aroused since the publication of the article, in 1939, an exceptional doctrinal interest among the readers of *Études Traditionnelles*. René Gué was not only the only one in the West to formulate this question in appropriate terms, but also to treat it intelligibly in the light of metaphysical principles. It would seem that, even in Eastern doctrines, this topic had never been the subject of a proper treatment. In this regard René Guénon says: "As far as the second phase (of realisation) is concerned, that of the 'descent' into the manifested, it seems that it is spoken of more rarely and, in many cases, in a less explicit manner, or even, one could say, with a certain reserve or hesitation, which the explanations that we propose to provide here will allow us to explain in a more explicit manner. allow us to understand'. The explanations that René Guénon later provided did indeed show that

(I) René Guénon, *Initiation et Réalisation spirituelle*, Éd. Chacomac Frères.

there was, in this regard, first of all a certain difficulty in grasping this aspect of realisation, as well as the constant risk of serious misunderstandings, and then a need to veil the "Sacrificial" aspect that the being presents at this stage of realisation.

Now, we are able to make known a text, unique in this matter, from Shaykh al-Akbar, which expounds the different cases of descendant realisation according to Islamic data. It is a chapter of the *Futūḥ*, the 45th, and we have some reason to think that René Guénon was not aware of it, at least until the time he wrote the study we are discussing. What authorises us to say so, is first of all the fact that René Guénon had considered as cases of descendant realisation, in the terms of the Islamic tradition, only those of the *nabī* and the *rasūl*, respectively the divine "prophet" and the "envoy", and had left aside the case of the wali, that is of the "saint". However, the latter, when it is a being who has realised the Union more correctly designated by the term *Wuqūf*, "Arrival", can be "left towards creation" in order to fulfil a divine "mission"; and this "mission" is not, in the case of the wali, that of a "legislator", as is the case with the wali.

"legislator", as it is in the case of *nabī* and *rasūl* (meaning these terms in their general meaning, because in reality there would be some other distinction to be made), but only that of an "heir (*warīth*) in charge of preserving and enlivening the existing law, as well as guiding and directing the creatures towards Al-Hiḥ" (2). Now, in the text of the Shaykh al-Akbar, this case is specifically considered for the obvious reason that, after that "Seal of the Legifying Prophethood" that was Seyyidna Muḥammad, it remains pass-

(2) However, this case is somehow virtually 'reserved' in René Guénon's exposition, with this sentence: 'A being can only be wali 'for itself', if one can express it so. without manifesting anything

outwardly>>. In fact that the wali can be such only "for itself" implies that it can also be so for others, and this is precisely the case with the wali invested with a mission.

Only the descending realisation of the *walf-wiirith* is possible, a realisation that, it should be noted, can also proceed from a "preferential choice" of being.

Another reason that makes us think that René Guénon did not know this text is of a terminological order; a point that must in any case be clarified in order to allow us to see that, despite expressive differences of a certain importance, in reality there is no fundamental divergence between René Guénon's exposition and that of the Shaykh al-Akbar. In the latter

the latter, the descending realisation is designated by the term of "Return" (*Rujuc*) or, more precisely, "Return to the creatures", or again, since the same fact is considered as proceeding from a divine order, "Return to the creatures" (*ar-Raddu ila-l-khalq*). René Guénon, concerned

René Guénon, concerned with emphasising the continuity of the integral process of realisation, used, to explain it, the representation of a circular path: "ascending" for the first half, "descending" for the second; this perspective allowed him to avoid the idea of a "regress", but led him to exclude the terms of a "return back". On the other hand, the Shaykh al-Akbar adopts the expression 'return' without, however, the mature pejorative of the concept of 'back', which would lead to a 'regress'; this is explained by the fact that he makes use of the symbolism of the Slope on which one can climb and the Peak from which one can 'return' with the 'mission', and also the symbolism of the 'face towards the creatures'. But what easily reconciles the two perspectives and simultaneously establishes

the exact scope of the terms employed in the two cases, is the fact that the Shaykh al-Akbar specifies that such a "ritornello" occurs "without descending from the acquired *maqam*", an idea that corresponds exactly to René Guénon's concern to exclude the idea of a <<spiritual return>>.

Before letting the reader take a look at the text we have presented, we will make a few more observations. What characterises René Guénon's study is the demonstration of this aspect of the supreme realisation according to metaphysical principles. Such a demonstration is lacking in the text

of the Shaykh al-Akbar. In this regard, he only says that the reason for the Return is the search for Perfection or Total Completion (*al-Kamal*), which, in the case of the *walf-wélrith*, is made explicit as "totalisation of the heir prophetic heritage>>. Hence the Shaykh al-Akbar, who, moreover, does not even show the appearance of a "sacrificial victim", an aspect that, moreover, remains veiled by this idea of total Completion even where it would be more discernible, the Sbaykh al Akbar, we said, applies himself above all to "describing" how the thing is fulfilled and what the possible cases of "return to creation" are. In order to be complete in the parallel we draw between the two expositions, we would have to provide a compendium of the manual part according to the teaching of the Shaykh al-Akbar himself, as can be deduced from other passages of the

*Furahélt* or from certain other passages in his writings. But this would

But this would require - and the differences in perspective and terminology in particular would demand it - too extensive a development for us to be able to do so on this occasion.

In addition, the text we present is interesting as an enumeration of the different categories of *the Wélçilun* (sing. *Wélçil*) or Coming to Allah, as well as the spiritual attributes that qualify them.

On this same occasion, we will point out that the same document today presents a certain interest of expediency in the order of traditional studies related to Freemasonry. In a footnote to the article in question, René Guénon had established a correspondence between the last three degrees of Scottish Freemasonry and the descendant realisation. This mention served Jean Reyor (3) to support certain views concerning to the "predisposition" of the Masonic organisation to receive the addition of a purely metaphysical point of view in addition to the cosmological point of view that is specific to the craft initiations. It was to us that Reyor responded expli-

(3) Aperçus sur l'initiation, in *Études Traditionnelles*, December 1951.



In a previous article (4), we too had considered such an addition, although we stated that if it were possible, it would be more of an "over-expansion" in relation to what constitutes the Masonic point of view than a normal development of the possibilities of the latter. The traditional data to be found in the text of the Shaykh ai-Akbar allow us to reconsider such a question from the specific point of view of the principle difficulty of an "initiation in the ordinary sense" to the descending realisation, and to see at the same time what sense can be attributed to the aforementioned correspondence established by René Guénon. Because, if the value of this correspondence seems evident and indiscernible under the symbolic relationship, it is not so with regard to the consequences that some think they can draw from it, especially if we do not determine the exact scope of the considerations developed by Reyor himself. We will return to this issue in the next issue of this publication.

(4) Lafonction de René Guénon et le son de l'Occident, in Études Traditionnelles, July-November 1951.

## 5. ON THE SHAYKH AL-ALAWI (1 869-1934)

Martin Lings' work that recently appeared in French translation, *Un Saint Musulman du vingtième siècle: Le Cheikh Al-Alawf* (1), has already been reviewed in our journal on the occasion of the release of the original English edition (2).

We take advantage of this new opportunity to point out a particular point in the biographical data reported in this book, which, corroborated by other documentary elements and illustrated by notions

doctrinal notions of the *Taḥawwuf*, can show a hitherto unnoticed aspect of

highlighted of the figure of this spiritual master of our time and his spiritual function.

Firstly, in the text of Dr. Marcel Carret's recollections, which Lings included in Chapter I of his book as an introduction to the subject (3), one of the initial notes is about the impression made by Shaykh AJ-Alawl on the French doctor when he visited him for a visit to the  
visited him for the first time in the Zawya of

(1) Viliain et Belhomme, Éditions Traditionnelles, 1967.

(2) Cf. *Études Traditionnelles*, January-February 1962, p. 46.

(3) Dr. Carret had drafted his text, dated "Tangier, May 1940", at the request of a Western-born Faqīr Alaouite who had not known Shaykh Al-Aiaw1 and, after the latter's death, had been linked to the Taḥawwufda way by an old moqadem of his from Maroc co, who was also living in Tangier at the time. This text had its first French edition in a 30-page pamphlet published in Mostaganem in 1947 under the title *Le Cheikh El-Alaoui (Souvenirs)*.

Mostaganem: 'What struck me immediately was his resemblance to the face with which it is customary to represent Christ. Her clothes so similar, if not identical, to those Jesus must have worn, the veil of the finest white fabric that framed her features, finally her attitude: everything contributed to further enhance this resemblance. The idea came into my mind that this must have been how Christ received his disciples, when he lived with Martha and Mary" (p. 17) (4). Further on, on p. 21, still speaking of the Shaykh Al-Alawi, Dr. Carret uses the words "this Christ figure)). Many readers will think Many readers will think that there is here, in the text of a modern European who is neither too concerned nor has the means to nuance his own sensibility, a cursory reference to a notion of holiness that is common in the Western world and is based on an analogy of an aesthetic order. We have some reason not to think of it this way; and many other considerations may come into play to explain, at least to a certain extent, the "sorrù glianza)) highlighted in this doctor's text, which, in our opinion, is rather the translation of a more subtle element of physical appearance.

In the period of events following the death of Shaykh Al-Buzidi, who did not wish to designate his successor, expressly leaving it to divine decision, and when the group of affiliates of the Zawya of Mostaganem and their *moqadm* wondered who they should recognise as the new local leader, many members of the brotherhood had spiritual dreams, the meaning of which was that the successor to the *maqam* of Shaykh AJ-Buzidi should be Shaykh Al-Aiaw'i. Shaykh Sidi Adda Ben Tunes, in his book *Ar-Rawdatu-s-saniyyah* (Mostaganem, 1354; Egi ra, 1936) says that these 'visionh) were very numerous:

(4) The final note on this first encounter should also be mentioned here: 'I retired discreetly,' says Dr Carret, 'reporting an impression that, more than twenty years later. has remained distinctly imprinted in my memory, as if these facts dated back only to yesterday' (ibidem, p. 20).

he recalls some sixty and Lings translated six of them, one of which is by Shaykh Al-Alawi himself. Now, apart from the latter, among the visions referred to in the Arabic work there are a few others that are of such a particular and significant character in terms of the

and significant from the point of view of our interest here, that it would be very unfortunate not to mention them here. Let us translate the respective passages:

"One of these visions was the one that was reported to the Shaykh Sidi Abdu-r-Rahman BO'aziz from the head of the Zawya of the country al-Ja'afirah. The latter said to him: "A deifuqarii told us that he saw the moon split in two halves and that a table (lawhah) descended from it suspended from chains, which did not cease to approach the earth until it remained a short distance. There then appeared on this table the Master Al-Alawi, may Allah be pleased with him, and with him Seyyidna Aissa (our Lord Jesus), upon him be Peace! A

A herald stood up and cried: Who wants to see Aissa (Jesus), upon him Peace, with the Supreme Master?! Here they are descended from heaven! Hurry then! - The earth was then shaken violently with its beings, all creatures gathered and asked to go up with the Master to this table. He answered them: Stand by! We will return to you!" (p. 138).

"Another vision of which the Shaykh Al-Hasan ben Abdel-Aziz at-Tilimsani gave news is the following: "I saw myself in the middle of the valley of the city of Tlemcen, which was filled with an immense crowd; this was awaiting the Descent (*Nuzal*) of Aissà (Jesus), upon him the Peace!, from heaven (5). Now, behold, a

man actually descended and it was said of him: It is he Aissa! - When my gaze fell upon him, I saw that he was Sidi Ahmed ben Alioua (- Al-Alawi), may Allah be pleased with him!" (p. 135).

(5) The 'Descent' of Seyyidnii coming of Christ, which events of the future of the times.

refers symbolically to the second Islamic is linked to the

Aissâ  
nell'insegnamento



"The vision of which the revered Sharif, the saint of Allah Sidi Mohammad ben at-Tayyib ben Mfilay al-Arabi ad-Darqawi, may Allàh give us the benefit of His blessings, is this: "I saw a group of men who informed of the Descent of Aisha, upon him the Peace, and they claimed that he had come down and had in his hand a wooden sword with which he struck the stone, transforming it into a real man (*rajul*) and struck the animal transforming it into a human being (*insan*). Now, I knew this man who came down from heaven and I was in an epistolary relationship with him, he wrote to me and I wrote to him. So I prepared myself to meet him, and when I found him, I found that he was Shaykh Sidi Ahmed Al-Alawi, may Alluih be pleased with him, only he looked like a doctor who cured the sick and was helped by more than sixty men" (p. 137).

Apart from these visions he had in a dream, we will mention another one

which seems to have proceeded from the waking state, but which had to be transferred between waking and dreaming (in the latter case it would be more accurately *a waqi'ah*, an 'event'):

"Here is what the faithful of love, the esse king of pure substance, Sidi Ahmed Hajji' at-Ti limsàni', reported: "While I was waiting for the supreme invocation (*adh dhikru-l-az'am*) (6), I saw the letters of the Name of the divine Majesty (*lsmu-l-Jalalah*) filling the entire universe. Well, from these letters I saw the person of the Prophet being formed, that Allah bestows on him unitive graces and peaceful graces, in a luminous form. Then the same letters manifested themselves in another form, in which I saw the figure of Shaykh Sidi Ahmed ben Alioua, on whose body was written *Muṣṭafa Ahmed ben Alioua*; after which, I heard a voice shouting: Testimo ni! Observers! (*Shuhada! Ruqabéi!*) Then, these letters (of the divine name *Allah*) revealed themselves a third time: this time it was in the form of the Shaykh, whose head bore a

(6) This is the dhikr made with the name Allah, currently qualified as "the Name of the divine Majesty", an expression that is also found in the immediate continuation of the sentence.

crown. As we stood like this, behold, a bird descended upon his head and said to me: Look, it is the *maqiim* (spiritual station) of Aissa (Jesus), upon him be Peace!")> (p. 145).

Another ten or so of the "visions"> reported in the book of Shaykh Adda show an explicit and direct relationship of Shaykh Alawt with the Prophet Mohammad; and this, in such a matter, is something that we could say is perfectly normal. One of them, reported by Shaykh Al-Alawi himself, is mentioned in the book of Lings. But the ones we have translated, each of which mentions a particular relationship of Shaykh Al-Alawl with "Seyyidna Aissa" and more precisely with his "spiritual station" (*maqiim*) in Islam, constitute a very uncommon and unexplained phenomenon, at least to the best of our knowledge; in any case, in the volume we are quoting, Shaykh Adda makes no comment and Lings for his part makes no mention of it. For us, this particular group of "visions" is significant not only of Shaykh Al-Alawi's personal spiritual case, but also of his initiatory function. More precisely, here we have first of all an example illustrating the initiatory types existing in the Mohammedan form, of which Ibn Arabi speaks in his *Futūḥ*, as we have already marked elsewhere (7). (7) We will also point out that the Mohammedan prophetic form, as the final synthesis of the prophetic cycle from Adam onwards, includes and summarises all the types of spirituality represented by the previous prophets, the most important and characteristic of which are mentioned in the Qur'anic revelation and the

the Qur'anic revelation and the Prophet's ahi-diths (8). The doctrine of Ibn Arabi explains things this way: the Prophet Mohammad,

(7) See in particular the mention made in *Études Traditionnelles*, nn. 372-373, July-October 1962, p. 166, footnote 2 and, more specifically, with regard to the Islamic spiritual type of Aissa, p. 169, footnote 12.

(8) Furthermore, it can be observed that the Mohammedan form, apart from its universal and totalising character, presents a particular and differential aspect, due to which the Prophet of Islam is historically aligned with the other prophetic cases of the total traditional cycle.

or his light, was the first c:lively creation; from his light were drawn the lights of the other prophets who came successively

the human world as his "lieutenants"; he himself came physically at the end of the cycle of prophetic manifestation, and it is thus, moreover, that the laws of his lieutenants are "abrogated" and replaced by his law, which contains them all in power and which, when it

contains them all in power and that, when it finds them in act on the historical plane, confirms them or not, according to the regime provvi dentially assigned to the last part of trac:lient times. In any case, regardless of the actual presence in the world of laws formulated by previous revelators, the spiritual entities of the latter appear as inherent and

constitutive of the Mohammedan form itself and as functions present in the initiatory economy of Islam. It is for this reason that the spiritual men of the *Taḡawwuf* live and develop initiationally, and this without any deliberate choice

according to this or that spiritual type that corresponds to them in a natural way, either in a general way or in one of the stages of their career; of course, they do not realise the possibilities only insofar as these are found in themselves.

in themselves. It is therefore possible that some may have to pass It is therefore possible that some may have to come under the initiatory regime of more than one of these particular prophetic entities inscribed in the Mohammedan totalizational sphere (9).

With regard to the case of Shaykh Al-Aiawi, with the "visions" in question we have only indirect, occasional documents

indirect, occasional and limited to a single moment in his life, but this moment was particularly important for

(9) There are cases of masters or <<Saints>> of Islam who realised in this way the possibilities corresponding to each of the particular prophets. This issue has a close relationship with the doctrine of the traditional Seals in [slam, and more particularly with the doctrine of the Seal of the Magisterium JnOham of Islam (khfitamu-1-Walfiyati-l-muhammadiyah), which has not been understood at all, and has even been distorted, by the Orientalists who have dealt with it. We will need another opportunity to address this topic.

the personal career of the master and for the historical destiny of the *tarfqah* to which he belonged. This *tarfqah*, apart from its normal role in the Islamic framework, was also to represent the effective presence of the *Taṣawwuf*, as an initiatory pathway, for the purposes of the western world and within the very zone of European influence on the Muslim world, a zone that was also that of a reverse penetration; it therefore had to express itself through modes appropriate to an effective and effective contact with the intellectual sensibility of the West. In spite of the alterations and oblivion due to the action of anti-traditional modernism, this sensibility had to be, to the extent that it existed, mainly heristic in character. Under these conditions, the current presence of a Muslim spiritual function of the *Aisséiwf* type (10) at the head of a North African branch of the Tarf

North African branch of the *Tarfqah Shadhiliyyah* appears very well understood, while other concomitant or consequent facts can only confirm this view.

With regard to the Shadhiliyah, we will recall what we ourselves have already written in dealing with the Islamic sources of Guénon's work (11). Mentioning the most direct interest that Islam has, among all the traditional Oriental forms, in what concerns the fate of the West and the possibilities of its traditional rectification, we have marked the role of the Egyptian Shaykh Elish Al-Kabir. He is the author of the famous statement quoted by René Guénon in chap. m of *Symbolisme de la Croix* (1931): "If Christians have the

(10) This qualifier derives from the Islamic name of Jesus and is used in the *Taṣawwuf* (e.g. by Ibn Arabs) to characterise those Awliyî (sing. wali - <<friend of God>>, saint) whose spiritual type is the spirit of Jesus as a possibility contained in the generative Mohammedan form

It must not be confused with that carried by the members of the *Tarfqah Aissawiyyah*, whose name derives from the name of Shaykh Ben Aissli, founder of a North African branch of the *Tarf qah Qldiriyah*.

(11) L'Islam et la fonction de René Guénon, in *Études Traditionnelles*, January-February 1953, pp. 14-47. [Transl. it. in Michel Violsan, *Lafunzione di René Guénon*, Edizioni all'insegna del Veltro, Parma, 1985, pp. 15-40].



sign of the Cross, the Muslims have the doctrine of it'. On the other hand, it was above all on the basis of doctrinal data coming from this master, that Guénon wrote this book, which occupies a central place in his oeuvre as a whole and concerns to the highest degree the Western modalities of participation in traditional intellectuality. We do not intend to insist otherwise on this point here; we will limit ourselves to pointing out that this book by Guénon, and after it all those in his oeuvre that deal with symbolism, proceed from principles that are characteristic of the *aissawt* spiritual men, principles that are those of the Science of Letters (*Ilmu-I-Huruj*), understood above all in the sense of knowledge and art of the divine Breath or life (being above all, the "letters", the articulated elements of the Word). Let us also add that this spiritual science was that of Al Hallaj, the famous *aissawt* of the 5th and 4th centuries of Islam (858-922), the case of whom, by a coincidence that has nothing to do with chance, constitutes the theme par excellence of the Orientalist interpretation of the *Taḡawwuf* in our times. Hij involves peculiarities and incidents that are difficult to locate, especially when one does not have a traditional point of view, one makes it all the easier, but not without distortions, to turn it into a subtle war machine against Islam as a whole; and modern Orientals, tributarians in European university circles, have also had to succumb to this war machine. This, we might say, was the counterpart to the intellectual relations between Islam and the West that we spoke of earlier.

Returning to the work that presented us with the occasion to write these lines, we will also say that in them we have not set out all the inflexions we could possibly formulate. On one point in particular, on which Lings has been very discreet, we have also been discreet, without any connivance and, moreover, for reasons, we think, a little different from his, though not in the end opposing. We hope, however, that one day we will have the opportunity to be more complete.

## 6. PRECISION

We had committed ourselves in advance to publish everything that Marco Pallis had considered useful to add to his thesis or against ours, and that is why we have given space to his new text on the debated question of christian initiation. Nevertheless, we find in it no additional clarity and no solution to the fundamental difficulties: the direct objections made to his thesis and to his way of reading and understanding Guénon's thesis do not prevent Marco Pallis from reaffirming his conclusions; the factual proofs and doctrinal arguments that we have put forward to support the normal thesis do not seem sufficient to make him change his opinion either. Nevertheless, the new article gives the impression of having been written in order not to fail to maintain, as long as possible, the doctrinal position assumed and, also, not to miss the opportunity to make some new criticism, more and more of a personal nature, against Guénon, which we would have preferred not to see.

In fact, Marco Pallis had based his thesis of the sacramental initiation with an "exo-exoteric" character on the symbolism of the Veil of the Temple and its parting; he thought, like other authors not aware of the existence of two veils, that it was a veil separating the Holy from the Holy of Holies. For our part (1), recalling here that there were two veils and that,

(1) cf. *L'Initiation Chrétienne - Réponse à Marco Pallis*, in *Études*

if one was torn, the other was not, we had pointed out that they could no longer be considered totalising symbolic consequences: a complete communication and interpenetration between interior and exterior. Therefore, in the case of the rending of the veil that guarded the entrance to the Holy of Holies, the thesis of Marco Pallis, it can only be a matter of communication within the Temple, but not with the Vestibule (or Atrium or even Portico) that corresponds to the domain of exotericism. Furthermore, we have shown how a teacher such as Origen, who represents the spiritual science of the school of Alexandria and has specifically dealt with the symbolism of the veils, teaches that it was not the veil between the Holy One and the Holy of Holies that was torn, but rather the veil between the Holy One and the Vestibule (this was also the opinion of the Church Fathers in general); therefore we have pointed out that the intercommunication with the outside could no longer involve the entire mystery of the Temple: that of the Holy of Holies subsisted entirely separate.

For Marco Pallis, all these objections changed nothing: it could only be, apparently, the most important veil, the one that covered the entrance to the Holy of Holies, and the communication of the interior with the exterior took place even though the other veil continued to exist! For Marco Pallis, this parting of the veil also signifies 'the moment of the symbolic fusion of the two natures, a total and irrevocable fusion'.

We will make some objections to this overload of symbolic speculation.

First of all, the fusion of the two natures took place, according to Christian doctrine, with the Incarnation and the human birth, not with the end of Christ's historical career (2). Moreover, the symbolism of the Temple with its three parts is that-

TrUitiormelles, nos. 389-390, May-June and July-August 1965.

(2) One could also note that the Passion was, on the contrary, the occasion of the crucial and dramatic *Eli, Eli, lamma sabactani*, whose symbolism is itself the inverse of that of the Incarnation.

the initiatory body-soul-spirit tritomy of the total human being or Universal Man (3). When Origen, giving an explanation of true wisdom, indicated that the most important of the veils, and therefore all that it signified, remained intact and that it was up to the Christian to work to remove the last veil, which represents the innermost obstacle, it can be said that he himself agreed with such a symbolic scheme (4).

Now, if on an issue so easily judged in its economy Marco Pallis can nevertheless continue to uphold that which suits him, there is little confidence in a common understanding or conclusion. This symbolic question is the very image of the intellectual substance that it must introduce. Indeed, we then find all the other difficult questions for his thesis resolved in the same style.

Remember that Marco Pallis had presented Gué's thesis on Christian initiation and the function of the sacraments in the most unrealistic manner. Guénon was accused of declaring that Christianity, before it had passed three centuries, "had lost its essential inheritance" and had since remained in "a state of exoteric emasculation". We then restated things by relying on textual quotations, which showed how for Guénon the adaptation of Christianity implied instead the essential continuity of initiation, and this in an outline that had to remain esoteric in relation to the Christianity of the world.

(3) We had already pointed out a certain parallelism of data between the three Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel: on the one hand the blow of the spear to the side, on the other the rending of the Veil. A blow of the spear occurred on the body; in this we can also see the reason for the correspondence between the torn veil and the one that gave onto the Vestibule.

(4) As for the fact of the revelation of hidden things at the time when Christianity was constituted, we have also shown (pp. 159-160) how such revelations (accompanied by simultaneous concealments) are characteristic features of every newly founded tradition and how this does not change anything with regard to the naturally necessary distinction, in the structure of a tradition of religious form, between general religion and the particular initiatory way.



to the exotericism of the new structure (5); and furthermore, how it was never questioned that this providential adaptation, represented by the new religious form, had meant the loss of the initiatory order, which necessarily remained its axis (6). Well, having put these notions in order has served no purpose, since Marco Pajis still maintains - and in deliberately pejorative and provocative terms - that according to Guénon the exoteric rites of original Christianity "have assumed a reduced importance at a certain moment in history, to meet the reduced needs of a human collectivity endowed with insufficient intellectual means: the West". Of course Marco Pallis forgets to add that, according to Guénon, the initiative always existed and was perpetuated by an elite similar to that for which it was initially revealed. He then continues as before: 'This reduction of Christian spirituality (trump one or two exceptions) (?) to a permanent exoteric rank is described as "providential-

(5) The original Christianity, which had had an initiatory and esoteric position within Judaism (and which after Christ, according to certain testimonies, remained on Judaic

Christian lines for some centuries) retained an analogy with Judaism within the

form of the new religion that it assumed among the Gentiles following this adaptation; thus the new initiatory elite was called, on the basis of St. Paul, Romans, 9.6, "New Israel", "True Israel", "Israel according to the spirit" (as opposed to "Israel according to the flesh").

according to the spirit" (as opposed to "according to the flesh"). Cf. René Guénon: "The name 'Israel' has also often been employed to designate the whole of the initiated, whatever their ethnic origin, and

these... really form the "chosen people"..." (Nouveaux aperçus sur le langage secret de Dante, in *Le Voile d'Isis*, July 1932, reproduced in chap. VI

of *Aperçus sur l'Ésotérisme chrétien*).

(6) It can also be said that it is Marco Pallis, and only he, who maintains that this purely initiatory and esoteric order of the time of Christ "s historical career

historical career of Christ was 'lost' for Christianity, because after the parting of the Veil, according to him, the new tradition would take on a new and ambitious, 'exo-exoteric' structure, which rather corresponds to a true 'exotericism'», as we will specify later.

the" (7). (7) This is tantamount to saying that for many centuries the Christian tradition and the means of grace it commonly provides for have been sufficient only to meet the needs of mediocre intelligences, so that those who were endowed with sufficient capacities to follow the path of a gnosis (and those who have this point of view undoubtedly count themselves among them) have been forced to look elsewhere for the means to implement the vision of the greater mysteries to which they aspired. This is simply astounding! Indeed, what prevented Christians who believed themselves qualified for Gnosticism from seeking and taking this path in its Christian form? How is it possible to speak of an obligation "to look elsewhere" in the traditional normative epoch of Christianity, when such a necessity could only be felt in the West much later, for example in contemporary times, when it was realised that Christian initiation and esotericism had become practically inaccessible.

The providential extension of Christianity out of its

Christianity's providential extension out of its original sphere had to entail a forced adaptation and overall structural changes, but the essentials remain the same. This is why the protests reiterated further on by Marco Pallis are incomprehensible: "It is impossible," he says, "for the religion founded by Christ to change in nature or be deprived of any essential element. Let us repeat: any valid change could only take place by the will of the divine Legislation, represented, after Christ, by the Holy Spirit sent in his name and operating within the framework of the Church (8), so that it was not a question of depriving Christianity of one grace, but of securing another. On the other hand, the loss of graces or traditional deposits does not concern the Legislator, but the

(7) Marco Pallis takes the opportunity to ironise the idea that a laic advancement could be 'providential', because he always understands that, according to Guénon, it would simply and only be a matter of depriving initiation of the sacraments of their initial character and the absence of a normal

initiation maintained outside the exoteric order.

(8) Cf. our article already cited, pp. 176-177.

men. We know all too well, alas, that communities and their traditional institutions can decay, become corrupt and, by losing the traditional spirit, also lose their graces. Here we come across a different subject, which concerns the cycle of humanity's spiritual vitality, and the question of reviving traditional forms. This is why what Marco Pallis says again, confusing providential reforms and the effects of time, is equally meaningless: 'it is impossible for the means of grace bestowed from the beginning by the Founder to change in character or fall into abeyance or become practically inaccessible after a certain time'. Nevertheless, all this can happen due to a succession of events in which it is even a question of the withdrawal of the esoteric spiritual center of Tradition (9).

(9) In the continuation of the quoted passage, Marco Pallis says something truly extraordinary: "To suggest that for a contingent reason these (i.e. the sacraments) now absolutely need a complement derived from non-esoteric sources is "heretical" in the precise sense of the term, i.e. arbitrary and contradictory etc.". Here Marco Pallis had to understand another time, in his own way, we do not know what; in any case, however, it is not admissible to insinuate that Guénon or others who follow the same point of view could have proposed something like this, which would enter into the category of syncretism or mixing of traditional fannies (10).

(9) Here we might recall what Guénon said about the effects of the traditional deviations that were accentuated following the destruction of the Order of the Temple: "...a day came when even these Rosicrucians had to abandon the West, whose conditions had become such that their action could no longer be exercised; then, it is said, they retreated to Asia, reabsorbed in some way towards the supreme Centre, of which they were like an emanation" (1).  
 were like an emanation" (*Les Gardiens de la Terre Sainte*, in *Le Voile d'Isis*, August-September 1929, taken up in chap. m of *Aperçus sur l'Ésotérisme chrétien*).

(10) In this order of things, let us only recall what Marco Pallis himself suggested at the end of his article in *Le Voile du Temple* (*Études Traditionnelles*, Hand-April 1965), namely that Christians could <<have recourse to a guru belonging to another form>> (traditional).

Marco Pallis also gives Guénon a special trial, bizarre even for his insistence, for having said in one of his most important articles, *Christianisme et Initiation*, that he he had 'never felt any inclination to deal specially with this subject (the questions pertaining to the proper character of Christianity), for many different reasons, the first of which is the almost impenetrable obscurity that surrounds everything that refers to the origins and the earliest times of Christianity etc.'. Now, this is perfectly understandable for the very fact that this is only a storica question and that the main issue of the nature and means of Christian initiation had never been a problem for him. In any case, having had to deal with this topic he did so in a masterly manner and many are grateful to him. For Marco Pallis the question of origins is not is not obscure. Evidently he is not aware of the discussions that have been taking place among theologians themselves for a long time and especially in recent decades! On another occasion we will return to the changes that are currently taking place in this domain of studies and that come to confirm Guenonian theses, moreover, a significant fact; by authors who had already had the opportunity to write to combat them.

But it is not only Guénon's thesis that is badly presented by Marco Pallis; it is also his own thesis, which from one article to another or from one page to another is presented differently. We had already pointed out, in our 1965 article, that there is no coincidence between the thesis that thesis that attributes to the present sacraments the character of initiation rites and the thesis of Marco Pallis according to which these sacraments have from their origin an ambiguous "exo-exoteric" statute; the first of these conceptions considers the exoteric use of the sacraments as a simple "state of affairs", irregular even with regard to their nature, while the second recognises the sacraments in their generalised use as a "state of law" in accordance with their nature.

"State of law" in accordance with their constitutive definition, in which no irregularity is present. The difference, we can see, under the 'legislative' relationship is enormous. Marco Pal-



lis does not seem to realise this, because, taking note with a vague allusion to our observation, he now declares that his conception, which is 'somewhat different, substantially agrees' with the other. And he writes: "The principal Christian sacraments, initiatory in origin (as Guénon has also declared) have not undergone any essential transformation in their character up to the present day. The general externalisation of the Christian point of view that has taken place in recent times – this is undeniable – can be attributed to the advanced stage of human incomprehension; there is no need to attribute it to more mysterious causes! And we, who, after the previous article by Marco Pallis, believed it to be true that the sacraments and their function were in solidarity with the mystery event of the parting of the veil! Here we are now induced to consider that their externalisation – **which** came about in "these last times" – must only be attributed to the "advanced stage" of human incomprehension! Marco Pallis now therefore believes that the extension of the sacraments to the entire Christian community is only a fairly recent "state of affairs" and probably does so in order to move too far away from the previous thesis; however, in doing so, he nullifies his own thesis. As for us, it is easier for us to point out that the divergence between the two conceptions that Marco Pallis wants to relate is such that in reality the sacraments can no longer be the same from one to the other. In fact, the sacraments of the previous thesis are those that Christ had founded and practised with the Apostles when the Jewish way occupied in Judaism the normal position that an initiatory way has in a general traditional framework; those that in Mark Pallis' thesis are conditioned by the Passion, derive their character from the Sacrifice of Christ. There is difference of "date" of departure, just as there is difference of operative "virtue", just as there is difference of "statute"; there should also have been difference of "historical career", but now Marco Pallis wants to make it disappear. We should also say more: in reality, rites defined in principle as "exo-exoteric" would rather be rites of general religion that are

usually considered as 'exoteric' and which must also be practised by those who have received a proper initiation (11 ).

On the other hand, with regard to what we have said on the question of Christian initiation, Marco Pallis believes that our point of view is different from Guénon's; this unexpected opinion is naturally explained by the same false idea that he has had from the beginning about Guénon's thesis and which he does not want to abandon despite our corrections (it is true that this idea is very practical when one wants to criticise Guénon!). In any case, he also states that our point of view is 'plausible' in itself, but is insufficiently proven to be accepted. For once, we are dealing with something that can be understood.

Our personal contribution to this discussion, apart from certain doctrinal views that develop the Guénonian point of view, has consisted above all in an initial collection of documentary data taken from various authors who lived in times of the full traditional reality of Christianity, data that testify to the existence of a normal Christian esotericism and also indicate, at times, the existence of transmission rites

(11) In fact, it must not be forgotten that, as Guénon pointed out, "the exoteric rites can, for those who have received such an initiation, be in some way transposed into another order, in the sense that they will use it as a support for the initiatory work itself and thus, for them, the effects will no longer be limited to the exoteric order alone, as is the case for the generality of the adherents of the same traditional form; in this, one has in the case of Christianity what one has for every other tra

since there is or has been a properly Christian initiation. It is clear, however, that far from dispensing with a regular initiation or being able to replace it, this initiatory use of exoteric rites presupposes it instead

essentially as a necessary condition of its very possibility: a condition which not even the most exceptional qualifications could not make up for, and outside of which everything beyond the ordina

level can at most result in mysticism, that is, in something that, in reality, still belongs to the sphere of religious exotericism' (*Christianisme et Initiation*, in *Aperçus sur l'Ésotérisme chrétien*, p. 23).

initiatory. We can now add other elements to this chapter and we plan to return to all this in the near future by dealing with the question of original Christianity.

On the other hand, we have reported certain information of a private

On the other hand, we have reported certain private information concerning the simultaneous existence of an esictic initiation and the rite of reconnection that it entails. Other data came to us later. Since doctrinal interpretations have to take into account the facts ascertained and, in the final analysis, adapt themselves to them, we report their details and circumstances in the chronicle that we place as an appendix to this specification, under the title *Studies and Documents on Hesychasm*. It turns out that the Optinan hesychastic line spontaneously re-emerged a quarter of a century ago in Romania; according to information from people currently connected to this line, in addition to the initial connection there is a series of initiations called "blessings", which, although we have little precise information about them, are reminiscent of certain Western initiatic forms by degrees. The people (monks or not) who grant the reconnection are specifically empowered to do so. The references we provide in our documentary article will suffice to enable readers, if they wish, to orient themselves if they wish to verify this information. The information we have given in our 1965 article comes from the Moldavian branch of Paissian hesychasm (12). This will hopefully dispense us from making public some personal letters whose context only interests us.

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It is appropriate to say at least a word about the special situation of a rite like that of the Eucharist, on which Mark

(12) The author of these letters, a personal friend, having had knowledge of the above-mentioned article, wrote to us: "I solemnly reconfirm the affirmations that I have made to you and that you reproduce; I should add many decisive nuances to them, but I do not see how I could do so by correspondence".

PaHis insists and of which the virtues considered by the masters of Christian gnosis appear with unquestionably initiatory virtues.

It is nothing surprising that the same medium, a ritual or a sacred support, can have initiatory virtues for some and virtues of a simply religious, or even <<misti co>>, order for others. We shall recall here a fairly clear example that we have already cited in our 1965 article (p. 153, footnote 1), that of the *Qur'an* in the Islamic tradition: in it are found all the metaphysical and cosmological, initiatory and religious, esoteric and exoteric sciences, as well as all the corresponding operative means. In spite of this, *this Cora no* is taught in principle to all believers; it is a general divine gift, a regular central institution, which occupies this position in its own right and not because of a 'de facto' slippage: it is only a matter of observing certain elementary rules of expediency when approaching it. Ordinary "exoteric" prayer is not possible for anyone without reciting a fragment of this *Qur'an*, which is the human and verbal revelation of divine Science, Grace and Power, the sensitive descent of the universal Word. The analogy of the situation with the Eucharist (13) is sufficiently clear. Now, the ordinary – therefore exoteric – fact of learning the *Koran*, of studying it and practising it could not in itself constitute an initiation.

To be even more explicit, it must also be said that the sacred institutions of the so-called 'exoteric' domain are not in solidarity with an 'exotericist' use or conception. A difference must be made between exotericism as a <<point of view>> and exotericism as an institutional and practical order of things. n "exotericist" point of view is incompatible with the initiatory and esoteric aspect and sense of things, but rituals

(13) Another occasion will be necessary to develop certain aspects of this analogy and show, in particular, how it can explain the situational difference of the notion of the 'holy book' between Islam and Christian \$mo



and the means of exotericism, which are sacred things, harmonise naturally with the initiatory point of view, without conditioning it at all, especially since the initiatory order has, among other things, rites that are particular to it.

## 7. STUDIES AND DOCUMENTS ON HESYCHASM

### I

*Hermès*, 4 (issue on *Le Maître spirituel dans les grandes traditions d'Occident et d'Orient*), published an article by Bishop André Scrima entitled *La tradition du Père spirituel dans l'Eglise d'Orient*. We examine it to point out a documentary element that is of some interest for current studies on Hesychasm. After speaking of the chain of *szarec* of Optino (central Russia), which dates back to Paisy Velickovski (1722-1794), the hesychast restorer who settled in Moldavia, the author, Archimandrite of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and, it seems, himself connected to hesychasm, concludes his paper as follows

"It is to another spiritual father, from the line of the *szarec* Paisy and a very recent one (he passed away from his disciples in October 1946), that we will ask for the conclusive word. With the same consciousness, humble and clear, of the spirituals of all time, Father John, 'the foreign pilgrim', shortly before his death addressed to his spiritual children of Romania an (unpublished) letter which, if it contains his testament, nevertheless explains why there cannot be, in this domain, a 'last word'; here are the last lines'. We interrupt the quotation here to provide some explanation. We were already quite familiar with the story of this monk, who came anonymously from Russia to Romania during the last war and lived in Romania during the war.

years in Romanian monastic circles before returning to his country to die ~~there~~. According to more complete information, he called himself and was called by his disciples as 'Foreign Pilgrim' or 'John the Foreigner' or simply 'the Foreigner'. Certainly, in such epithets there was a title of initiatory category, so we can refer, in this regard, to what has been written by Guenon about the epithets of "traveller" and "foreigner", which are the two meanings of the term *peregrinus*, from which derives "pilgrim", and about the particular rapport that has with the Compagnonaggio the symbolism of the "journey" (I).

Let us now reproduce the epistolary fragment to which Scrima's text introduces:

...It is thus that the Lord has given me the gift of what is called "the charismatic Tradition of spiritual inheritance" and of the grace to lead souls to salvation.

Looking back to contemplate the path I have travelled, I, the pilgrim who for 64 years have walked the paths of this life, recognise that from the beginning the Lord wanted to pour into my young heart the invincible flame of His Love.

I bless Him, for from my earliest years He led me through His mysterious ways to the inexhaustible fountain from which grace gushes forth in abundant streams, a fountain which the ancient Fathers kept in hermitages, on mountains and in corners hidden from the eyes of the world.

Yes, I bless the Lord who, at the threshold of maturity, infused the crucible of my young heart with this abundance of graces that I live by and that I am still renewed by today. III degree the sufferings and tortuous paths of my existence,

(I) Études sur la Franc-Maçonnerie et le Compagnonnage, vol. I, p. 52: A propos des pèlerinages. it is of course in this transitional perspective that the document entitled Les ré its d'un pèleritz russe, which originally appeared in Russian in Kazan around 1865 and was known in French mainly in the translation by J. Gauvin published in 1943 in Neuchlil.el.

He saw to it that this treasure was not lost; he preserved it and took care of it so that it would not fade away. Indeed, to speak with a spiritual audacity, I can bear witness that I too, however humble and unworthy I may be, have communicated the grace entrusted to me to all those who have truly sought it.

Yes, it was He alone, the Lord, who communicated Himself to all the pilgrims on our earthly pilgrimage, who made them come to Himself through the very paths of their daily lives, in order to quench their spiritual thirst.

Now, the thirst of the Spirit cannot be quenched and nothing could satiate it. The more His grace is poured into the soul, the more He increases its capacity and fills it. It is so, in truth.

May the mercy of God and the Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen!"

Since we know the full text of this letter in the Romanian version (the original is in Russian and we do not possess it), we will add a few useful remarks about the French translation.

First of all, the first sentence reproduced here, which would still need some clarification, could

be refined, to be more exact, as follows: "*It is*

It is in this way that the Lord has granted me what he calls "the consequence, by an act of grace, of a spiritual inheritance" (înmanarea harică a unei mosteniri duhovnicești) (2), as well as the intricate of leading the souls of men towards salvation (preocuparea cu încredințarea conducerii spre mântuire a sufletelor oamenilor)'. It will first be noted that the Romanian text speaks of "a spiritual inheritance", in an indeterminate manner, not of "a spiritual inheritance", because there is no single kind of spiritual inheritance. The "commission to lead the souls of the uOini ni" subsequently mentioned appears as a

(2) The Romanian term *înmanarea* (etymologically 'the act of putting in man's hands', from the Latin *in manu*) means 'the handing over of something to someone'.



different, albeit probably conditioned by the existence of the inheritance received.

In the second paragraph, it is not without interest to reproduce an incidental expression that does not appear in the French translation: " ...I see how the Lord has hastened from the the beginning, with His act of divine election (*prin alegerea sa dumnezeiasca*), to pour into my young heart an invincible love of fire for Him'.

In the fourth paragraph, where His approach to the In the fourth paragraph, where it speaks of his approaching the "inexhaustible source" and where - according to the Romanian version - one must read "inexhaustible sources" of grace, in the plural, one wonders whether there is an indication of an exclusively "interior" event and whether there is not also an allusion to some exterior practice and a consequent discovery. The mention of the "mysterious ways" through which the pelle grino was "led" to the aforementioned sources, then the specification according to which these sources were those "which the ancient Fathers guarded in hermitages (3), on mountains and in hidden corners" allow such an interpretation, all the more so since the reference to the Fathers' "custody of the- reference to the guardianship of the "ancient" Fathers implies that, for some time now, the "sources" were no longer located in the <<luoys>> of yore and that they must necessarily lie even more outside a world in which they had neither the ancient supports nor the guardians of yore. The notion of the ordering spiritual centres of the traditional forms, the notion of their possibility of<< irtirpating or "emigrating" more or less far away (either towards "neighbouring" spiritual centres or towards the Supreme Centre from which all the particular centres originally proceeded), as well as that of their possible "remanifestation" at some favourable moment of the traditional cycle, in the domain of the respective traditions, these notions that come to us from the initiatory teaching of René Gué cannot make us understand what the elements of

(3) The word in the Romanian text for <<romitaggi" is sihastrii, an adaptation- to the Greek hesychasteria (similarly, the Romanian sihastru, "hermit", comes from the Greek hesychastos).

institutional and more technical character that must underlie certain events and spiritual developments, such as those alluded to in this epistle.

At the end of the fifth paragraph and in the sixth, the Pilgrim, while affirming the spiritual transmissions of grace effected by his ministry, takes the precaution, which in such a matter is moreover part of his style, of saying that the operating power does not belong to him, but is of the Lord. Since some, like Mark Pams (cf. *Le Voile du Tempie*, in *Études Traditionnelles*, November-December 1964, pp. 265-266), starting from the the concept that Christ is the principle of every spiritual operation, believe they can deduce from this that in Christianity there is no initiatory transmission entrusted to the mediation of masters (hierons, *starcy*, etc.), we take this opportunity to point out to them that things are, on the contrary, quite normal...

The signature of the letter is 'John, the Foreign Father', a further variant of his epithet.

Infme, to further emphasise the interest of the ini tiatic document constituted by this letter, we will quote a carnt- teristic excerpt from it in the unpublished part by Mgr Scrima:

"Ever since I was young, the divine work of Providence has been kind to my heart and, on the way to my salvation, has given me the gift of the blessing of grace given by inheritance. She also gave me the gift of a (living) spiritual guide in whom grace acted, who filled her life. Then God gave me the gift, directly, of His grace support, full of wisdom and steadfastness on the path of spiritual pilgrimage'.

There is here, evidently, the successive enunciation of three different different facts, which occurred distinctly in the career of the "Foreign pilgrim": first, a "blessing of grace", which can be understood as the first reconnection to the Hesychastic way (4). Then comes the mention of a spiritual guide

(4) The expression "given by way of inheritance" certainly means that the

authentic, which seems to refer to a different moment from the one in which the initial "blessing" took place. Finally, it is a direct divine intervention, an event that is expressed in terms of a kind of confirmation. Despite the summary formulations, we have here, without any doubt, facts characteristic of an initiatory path.

Finally, it is not insignificant that in another sentence of the unpublished part of this letter we find the following words: "Blessed are those who have not doubted me, your unworthy father and confessor. (5), that I stand among you as a 'sent stranger ... ". From this we can understand that Father Gio vanni had acted, particularly with his trip to Romania, according to a precise functional orientation, despite outward appearances.

We would also point out, in this circumstance, that from the Romanian religious environment in which Father John lived during the war we have recently received information that confirms what we have argued about the rite of eschatological reconnection in our articles on the question of Christian initiation. Thus, with regard to the introductory "blessing" (binecuvantarea in Romanian) in hesychastic practice, one of our recent correspondents, a former university professor in Bucharest, recently wrote to us: "I have been initiated, or rather, as we say in Esychastic language, I have received the "blessing" from a disciple of Father Jo-

respective "blessing"> is not an act performed by the <<blessed one>> in a personal capacity, e.g. on account of his own holiness, but in a functional capacity, in relation to a reality.

ional, in relation to a reality established and transmitted by inheritance.

(5) The Romanian word here is *duhovnic* (w Slavonic origin), which, in addition to the specific sense of "confessor", also has the meaning of "spiritual father" (in Slavonic and Romanian *duh* means "spirit"). [For the translation of the excerpts from the letter of Father John the Stranger we have kept in mind heard, alongside Valsan's version, the Romanian text reported by André Scrima in *Timpul Rugului Aprins*. *Maestrul spiritual în tradiția răsăritească*, Bucharest, 1996, pp. 21-24, ed.]

vanni (6). Athonite hesychasm has had a Russian restructuring in New Athos (7). The (very authoritative) person with whom I spoke could not tell me to what extent this restructuring has taken place; he only learned from Father Gio vanni that in the hesychastic discipline there are seven spiritual stages that correspond to the seven evangelical mysteries and that in each of these stages the "pilgrim" receives a "blessing", i.e. Uf!

In a later letter, the same correspondent, after having consulted a direct disciple of Father John who holds, among other things, an important rank in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, specified the following: "As far as the power to transmit the "blessing" in matters of pre

of the intellect (*rugaciunea mintii*), Father B. is categorical: only those who receive a *special delegation*, by means of a *special rite*, can transmit this prayer". In the same Father B. considers "As unquestionable the initiatory character of the initiatory character of the hesychastic blessing".

What we thus record under this heading can be added to the material relating to discussions on the question of Christian initiation.

## II

From the different quotations made above, it appears that in the circles in question the introductory blessing to the hesychastic practice is presented as an initiation. We noticed evidence to the same effect in a study that appeared about ten years ago.

ten years ago in *Istina* (nos. 3 and 4, 1958, Boulogne sur-Seine), entitled

sur-Seine), entitled *L'avènementphilocalique dans l'Orthodoxie roumaine* and initialled, instead of the signature, with the indica-

(6) Here, too, one realises that the introductory blessing to the practice is regarded as an 'initiation'.

(7) Epithet of Optinus; the renovation in question refers to the work of the renovator Paissy and the sarcy of the late 18th century.



A monk of the Orthodox Church of Romania'. Mgr Scrima, by means of a mention in *Hermès's* article (8), now makes it known that he himself is the author of this study; and, since in the respective pages there are some data that can be usefully taken up here, because they have a direct relationship with the document we have commented on, we will reproduce the parts that interest us in a more specific manner. At the same time, we will have to make some critical observations and certain fine-tuning (9). On the other hand, when we wrote our reply to Marco Pallis entitled *L'Initiation chrétienne (Etudes Traditionnelles, nos. 389-390, May-June and July-August 1965)*, we did not consider resorting to this testimony precisely because of the critical context of these data and the complexity of the satisfactory fine-tuning that would have been necessary.

First of all, let us point out that the purpose of the article published by *Istina* was to signal and situate, historically and spiritually, the event constituted by the publication, in the years 1946-1948, of the first four volumes of a well-commented Romanian Philocalia, as well as the spiritual, and more precisely eschatological, renewal that accompanied and sustained this publication: "The Romanian philocal flowering is situated," wrote the Monk, "at the point of convergence of a proclamation of the written testimony and the renewal of the prayer life: this very 'coincidence' is the sign of its authenticity. In the 1940s, circles in which the laity joined the monks resurrected, in the light of the teachings of the Fathers, the search for the Prayer of the Heart, until the day when the blessing from the

(8) Cf. Hemzès, 4, p. 88, footnote I.

(9) To be honest, the work in question deserves an overall examination; perhaps we will return to the other points that interest us another time, unless it is on the occasion of the publication of the comprehensive work announced by Mgr.

announced by Bishop Scrima under the title *Tlžèmes et strucntres en spiritualité comparée*, where, it seems, the subject matter of this earlier work should be taken up.

succession of *Stac Paissie* (10). The moment of fullness was once again reached'. The allusion, now everyone will understand, was to the apparition of the Father "John the Straniero", who brought the Hesychastic way into this environment.

Ashedefines the role of the philocal corpus in the life of the Church and the monastic order, the author is led to precise the specific notions of Hesychasm that interest us. We should note from the outset the notion of a clear reservation, observed in the world orthodox world, with regard to the examination or simple public exposition of the constituent elements of the esoteric "tradition" and more specifically of the technical aspect of this way, things that fall within a more or less esoteric order and that we can qualify as properly initiatory. The author denies wishing to break this rule of conduct. Nevertheless, in the course of his exposition, he is inclined to provide some unpublished clarifications that seem to us quite welcome, despite certain less felicitous remarks that sometimes accompany them.

Here is first of all a passage concerning the question of principle regarding the existence of a "Christian esotericism":

"One is normally struck by the unusual "technical" character of the philocal teaching and of the hesychast practice: an unfavourable judgement always seems to be justified (?), formulated in the name of Western mysticism, which is structured differently. This is an unquestionable traditional transmission; there is no unhopied-for (!) occasion here for the representatives of model traditionalism (*sic*), to receive a resounding confirmation from the very bosom of Christianity, a 'religion' king of all esoteric truths? The philocal tradition is not without an obvious element of mystery (norrie that in the Orthodox Church is given not only to the sacraments, but also to certain aeurisms or even to spiritual experience seen in its theandric depths): likewise, through a pre-

(10) Another transcription of the prcnome of Paissy Velickovsky, the renewer of hesychasm in the 15th century in Moldavia and Russia.

move, this evokes, in addition to the notion of "esotericism Christian esotericism", the affinity, if not equivalence, with Far Eastern spiritual techniques (sic): something that will not fail to raise new questions>> (pp. 296-297).

We note, in this passage, the mention of a difference between "hesychasm" and "western mysticism", due to the "technical character" of the former: something that will recall certain observations by René Guénon (LI ). And it is interesting to note that

the expression "western mysticism" is also understood in the And it is interesting to note that the expression "Western mysticism" is also understood in the Guénonian sense; on the other hand, we will find other mentions later on that constitute an implicit reference to the traditional dot trine as formulated by Guénon, even if the latter's name is never cited. The following allusions, to tell the truth a little clumsy in terminology, confirm, should I need it, that the author thinks he is validating Guénon's thesis on Christian initiation.

But then, why speak of "modern traditionalism", thus adopting the language of those who do not understand the authentic traditional point of view, which is precisely anti-modern? (12). To tell the truth, in these conditions one no longer sees how one could have a 'resounding confirmation', since this would be provided to the representatives of a doctrinal position that would then be pseudo-traditional. On the contrary, since as far as Hesychasm is concerned, the point of view of Guénon and those who follow him coincides essentially with the point of view of orthodox spirituality (questions of formulation should not constitute a

(II) Cf. *Aperçus sur l'Initiation*, p. 25.

(12) To express our whole thought at this point, it seems to us that the author, having entrusted his text (the first to be published in France) to a Catholic journal, wished in this way to provide guarantees of independence with respect to Guénon's doctrinal authority; this does not detract from the fact that the chosen manner is not the happiest.

(13), it was perfectly logical to expect that additional proofs, sooner or later, on one side or the other, would be added to what was already known thanks to certain sources and thus further confirm, in the case of Christianity, the existence of a basic constitution, considered by all as "normal", regarding the nature and technical means of authentic initiation. In this regard, when the author wants to speak of "affinity if not equivalence" with other traditional Oriental forms, he commits a *calamitous lapsus* (which will be repeated in his article) by using the qualifier "extreme-oriental", because one realises that he is thinking of India. What is certain, however, is that Christianity, as a tradition in its own right, albeit a religious form, could be considered "refractory" to any esoteric truth only by those who are strictly exotericist in spirit (14), as for example those Catholic theologians - especially Neo-Thomists, but also many others - who fought Guénon's initiatory thesis and countenanced the existence of a "Christian esotericism".

The following passage will allow us to better situate the notion of the "incontestable transmission" that has been discussed:

"It is necessary, to begin with, to recognise that we are dealing with a 'tradition'. Spiritual life has always been conceived in the Eastern Church as a living transmission, a *paradosis*, which circulates the incarnate Spirit in history. As evident as this is, there is nevertheless no room here for a conflict of importance with the Church's tradition, nor for a distinction in nature with

(13) We have summarised this point of view in our article *L'Initiation chrétienne. Réponse à M. Marco Pallis*, published in *Études Traditionnelles* in May-June and July-August 1965; Guénon's thesis on *l'esotisme* is cited there on pp. 178-181.

(14) As for the verbal objections that a superficial reader might formulate with regard to Guénon's thesis, they are reduced to their proper measure by the basic affirmations contained in the quotations we have collected on pp. 160-161 of our aforementioned 1965 article.



the latter. It is the breath of the Holy Spirit Himself that kindles the fire of the Prayer of the Heart and keeps it burning in the Church: in a position of interiority, it is true, which, however, for this very reason, does not allow any esoteric depreciation (*sic*) of the spiritual life realised in other forms. (We would say, to be precise, that if a mystery is not a secret, this is particularly true of the Christian mystery, which continues the very condition of the Incarnate God, simultaneously offered in his fullness to each one and invisible to those -who do not see him. We are, essentially, in a universe different from that of the esoteric doctrine which protects, by means of a secret initiation, its own "essential truth" against the psychics and the hilics. The distinction, which is itself external, between the esoteric and the exoteric, is meaningless here, because it is no longer a matter of a hidden, time-denying continuation of a sacred past, but of a continuation of Presence, at every moment creative and life-giving - we might say, of a simultaneity of the Spirit. We feel it appropriate to discern, in this sense, between the tradition of the Church and other traditional forms, currently undergoing artificial resuscitation)" (pp. 300-301).

In this passage we note, as a positive thing from an from an initiatory point of view, this notion of "tradition" as well as the meaning of the word *paradosis* that it translates, because, to tell the truth, neither of these terms are neatly used in the meaning emphasised here. However, we will not be the ones to create difficulties on this point. The author's concern not to dissociate the Spirit from the integral tradition and not to oppose the operative forms, but to affirm, instead, the organic cohesion of the Hesychastic tradition with the Church's Tradition, will also be perfectly understood. As for us, it is all the easier for us to conceive this, since we know that the same thing happens in other religious, or monotheistic, traditions: the Taçawwufnel Dtn of Islam is conceived no differently, nor is the Kabba lah in Judaism. But, of course, it would no longer be possible to use the same unifying and all-encompassing formulas, if one con-

sidered more specifically the technical means and practical modalities of hesychasm, because then the specific spirit of the initiatory path derived from the total Spirit would be called upon to appear with its own characteristics, which cannot be merged with the other specifications of the Spirit (15).

With regard to the Christian mystery "Which is not a secret", the author essentially has in mind the mystery of the Faith, in other words the fundamental revelation of a common creed, "Symbol" without which there is no religion, be it Christianity or any other tradition of religious form, "symbol" on which the doctrinal forms and sacred institutions are founded, as well as the rites and all the acts of transactional life. As for the clarification that in this case 'we are essentially in a different universe from that of esoteric doctrine, which protects, by means of a secret initiation, its own "essential truth" against psi chics and laymen', it first of all shows that herei the author contrasts Christianity above all with the ancient initiatory forms of the Greco-Roman world, to which certain western extensions can be added; then, that of Christianity itself he considers only the most external aspects, knowable by the whole community and coinciding in reality with what is usually called exotericism (16). This situation is therefore analogous, under the same relationship, to

(15) In order to be better understood, we will take an example from the ordinary sacramental domain. The One Spirit intervenes and works in each of the sacraments with a particular form and virtue, which are not interchangeable with those of another sacrament. The same happens, afor tiori, when one is dealing with an even more particular domain, such as, for example, that of the "blessing" technically instituted for the practice of the esica stica or, rather, for different degrees of this practice. (Cf. in par ticular what we have referred to above with regard to the "blessings" corresponding to a sevenfold hierarchy of initiatory conditions).

We have already alluded to this coherent, hierarchical multiplicity of forms of the Spirit of one and the same tradition in the article 1965, pp. 152-153, 176-177 and, finally, 183-184.

(16) It will be found elsewhere what we say needs to be understood more precisely by this term.

that observable in other traditions of religious form, which are profoundly characterised by this constant organic link between the institutions proper to the initiatic way and those of the common way of which we spoke earlier. In fact, to be more explicit, in these traditional forms the initiatic ways are presented in their own traditional framework, as "ways of perfection" of the general religion.

It is thus that in the Islamic tradition *the* Taçawwuf is regularly referred to *the* *Ihsêin* (excellence in Faith and Submission to God), which is the third degree of the *Dfn* (Religion) after the degrees of *Islêim* (Submission) and *Iman* (Faith). But if the hesychast initiate, cabbalist or *mutaçawwif* on his

But if the hesychast, cabbalist or *mutaçawwif* initiate on his specific path, which involves a corresponding spiritual influence, discipline and method of work, accesses higher degrees of being, there is for him sanctification, transcendence, intuitive openness and access to mysteries that cannot be understood by others nor divulged thoughtlessly, and then the difference with the "psychics" and the "hilics" will arise by the very force of things, even if the latter, either out of charity or simple prudence, are not expressly designated as such... Certainly, there is a 'Presence' everywhere; nevertheless, how many degrees in this 'Presence', which is that of total possibility! There is no interest in simplifying and generalising for apologetic needs, for then one risks eliminating the *raison d'être* of the Hesychastic way itself within the Christian Tradition as a whole. We note that what is said in this point, when we compare "a hidden and time-denying continuation" to the "contemporaneity of the Spirit", is incomprehensible in this imprecise formulation; we must leave this point aside for the moment, to return to it when we find more explicit observations on the same subject later on. Finally, if it is a question of affirming an advantage for the "Tradition of the Church" in relation to some traditional form "currently undergoing artificial reanimation" - words that may concern, to say the



true, only pseudo-traditional attempts – why put 'the other traditional foundations' in this category, and without any restrictions, as if this could present any semblance of truth and, again, as if the author were personally in a position to know the spiritual and esoteric realities of the traditional world as a whole. This lack of a sense of proportion is equally unexpected. There is, moreover, an obvious illogic here: if the other traditional forms had reached the state of extinction presupposed by this statement, the present world as a whole would already have ended; in fact, it would certainly not have been a revival such as that – authentic no doubt, but nonetheless very modest – of the recent hesychastic revival in Romania that would have been able to postpone the general expiry of a catastrophe that had in that case become unattainable. On the other hand, initiatic or more generally traditional revivals – and this in the domain of any weakened and failing traditional weakened and lacking traditional forms – are only possible because the

because the forms of the Tradition in general are still alive and acting; in this case, there is also a union of interventions or influences emanating from other traditional forms interested in a forthcoming straightening, as we have already said on several occasions (17), so that the fùocaHco event and the parallel esicaHstic renewal of the Romanian regions can be-

- (17) See, most recently, *Études Traditionnelles*, January-February 1968, pp. 33-34. Let us also recall, by way of example, what was noted by

Guénon about the Islamic influences in the West through the Orders of Chivalry, as well as in the case of Dante and later in the case of the Rosicrucianism (cf. *L'Ésotérisme de Dante*); idem with regard to the Judaic origin of the esotericism of the Coen Elects founded by Martines de Pasqually in the 18th century. Regarding Judaism, the Romanian monk noted the case of Chassidism "contemporaneous with Paissian hesychasm originating in the same Ukrainian and Carpatho-Moldavian regions" (p. 31, footnote 35), but only to state at once that "the discrete part in which it depends on hesychasm could not be denied"; in effetti this influence is possible, but it would have to be demonstrated as such. The valuable thing is that the author admits such influences and also admits, in principle, that

they can also be exercised in the opposite direction, when he adds: 'In the intense turmoil of the time and environment, the osmosis and intercommuni-



have been favoured, in some evident or subtle form, from near or far, and despite certain appearances, by the concurrence of traditional factors of foreign and not necessarily specifically Christian form. The mere fact that Guénon's work of Guénon is rather well known in Romanian intellectual circles (this had already begun a few years before 1940) and is now known by a whole generation of new hesychasts, is quite significant (18).

The step immediately following the one we have commented on concerns the initiatory transmission in its mode and meaning:

"We must, however, go deeper and recognise this Spirit as the spirit of philiation. The life of pre gy (and this is the second fact we would like to emphasise)

is born within the heart through the blessing of the Abbot, of the spiritual Father, who is not only the teacher (*praeceptor*), but is, literally, the one who gives birth (*n.on ex sanguinibus, neque ex voluntate carnis, neque ex voluntate viri, sed ex Deo*) to a new being in Christ, at once

Son and. Our Father. The light of baptism is thus "resurrected" and brought towards its fullness, that is, towards that normal term of Christian life that the Eastern tradition likes to call deification. The path of hesychia leads there, and the moment of the Father's blessing opens it up, straight and winged,

spontaneous reactions did not cease to occur'. But since, on this subject, the author speaks of "osmosis" and "spontaneous intercommunication", which corresponds rather to a naturalistic and sociological conception of things, it must be added that, when the influences in question are authentically initiatory facts, they are not produced as simple human facts, due to local contiguities and social mixing, but as factors in a providential economy of realities.

( 18) It is also very interesting that, despite the well-known historical conditions, the study of René Guénon's work has only developed in Romanian circles. One of our recent correspondents, a Guénonian of Hesychastic affiliation, dwelling on the Romanian readers of this work, wrote verbatim that their "number exceeds any sup position". which moreover agrees with what we ourselves know from other sources.

ward off the dangers, the illusions, the aberrations that arise from the shadows. (One cannot avoid noting in this perspective, once again, the initiation that gives access to the secret reality in the traditional classical forms such as the emptiness of the blessing or the disavowal of paternity, which obliges it to reconnect inevitably to the imperial cycle of a hidden truth and to stop there. Everything is connected in this order of facts)' (p. 301).

In spite of a style that risks damaging the clarity of the notions, we can derive as a positive fact the precision that the path to hesychosis is opened by the blessing of the spiritual Father; on the other hand, when it is added that this "gives birth" (of course *ex Deo*) to a new being, this no longer concerns no longer the initial act, which represented only the <<conception>> of this being, but the <<birth>> itself, i.e. the completed work.

Of course, it is also said that this blessing produces the "reawakening" of the baptismal light (that of the orthodox baptism that concludes the "confirmation"); this does not detract from the fact that the Father's blessing operates a *Uora* "transmission": that of a "spirit of filiation". This is the hesychastic rule; and it is, after all, comparable, on the basis of what is commonly

commonly known, with the initiation into the *Taḡmaḡ* with the peculiarity, in the latter case, that *the isnfid* (institutional basis) of it goes back explicitly, through the unbroken chain of the *shuyukh* (sing. *shaykh*, equivalent of "geronte" or of *starec*), *all the way* to the Prophet, who is the initiator of the path respecting the human level.

In the parenthesis that concludes this passage, the author, in pursuit of his apologetic goals, goes so far as to consider initiation in the traditional "classical" forms as "the emptiness of blessing or the disavowal of paternity". But, as is well known, even then there was a "tra-

sition", whatever its modalities and designations, as well as a path with a "guide"; and since in those cases too, as in all others, it was a matter of divine institutions and revelations and not of human inventions, the respective initiations (of which, to tell the truth, we know little, especially in the age of their decadence) were certainly what they had to be for the corresponding traditional world; and this in order that they might aspire to, or at least approach, their purpose, which was essentially the same, namely both metaphysical and cosmological knowledge. If the specific notions and technical terms were different, the fact is that the traditional definitions of the realities and the consequently established sacred forms were different. But, leaving this aside, there is nothing to prevent us from thinking that in the initial and normal epoch of the so-called 'classical' ways - whose antiquity must often have been prehistoric and not just pre-Christian - in the functional place of the

"spiritual paternity" of the Christian Tradition there were, apart from the indispensable initiatic "guidance" or "magisterium" (the latter title never being limited to the exoteric sense of *praeceptor*), modes of contact with the higher realities and forms of initiatory direction so elevated

that with the passage of time they became out of date for a humanity that was qualitatively waning more and more (19). What can be meant, under these conditions, by the author's idea, according to which these initiatory ways were intended to of reconnecting to an "impersonal cycle" of a "born truth", at which "one would stop"? Does he therefore think that these initiatory ways, considered in their normal evolution, had been founded in any evil and ineffective manner, when their founder is none other than God,

(19) We may recall here, by way of illustration, that in the ancient mysteries, the theophany, the Presence par excellence, was an operative reality. The sacred history of the Ark of the Covenant among the Israelites, which in the beginning was the support of a divine Presence visible day and night and which increasingly lost its effectiveness and importance, can also give an idea of what the spiritual resources of ancient times were.

who, as lawgiver, is Wisdom herself? (In fact, until express proof to the contrary, we always assume that the author is capable of understanding the equally divine origin of the manifold forms that the one Tradition takes according to the times and regions of the world, even if we do not expect him to make an openly universalist faith; it is enough for us not to find unjust or tendentious comparative judgements under his pen) (20). We prefer not to express our disappointment on this point, all the more so since considerations of this kind change nothing with regard to the value of the positive data that we can draw from the text itself.

Further on, the author summarises his constat tions and "Must we then see in the Hesychast tradition a *tradition of arcana*? It would not be possible to affirm this without reservation; and that is tantamount to saying that one could not even deny it without reservation. The need to maintain a delicate balance derives, in part at least, from the fact that for some time now the issue has been complicated by esotericist interjections of various kinds. We do not believe that the latter are able to offer an authentic light for the intelligence of esoteric spirituality (although we recognise their normal merit in maintaining a general ferment of ideas), simply because they depend on a source that is not the latter. We should therefore leave aside such advanced points of view and consider rather, from within if possible, *ab intra*, the concrete situation of hesychasm in its own context. What then emerges as an essential element is the fact that it is given within the Church's Tradition; not as another tradition, but as a tradition contained in Tradition, just as (to use an exact image of Gregory Pala-

(20) Our consideration is all the more appropriate as Moos. Scrima, as we have already mentioned, ba plans to publish a book on the subject of 'comparaat spirituality'.



mas) 'the heart is the innermost body of the body'. Or also, the prayer of the Heart is the *way of* the contemplative life, the path that is always identical to itself and always new to tread (which presupposes transmission, initiation, or, according to the better name, the blessing). In other words, the extension of the formal structure of tradition onto the plane contemplative life (testimony to its monkish character monastic character predominant in the Eastern Church) confers on the latter the constancy, discretion, and rigour of the very *sources of* the spiritual life that flows in the Church and distinguishes it from a "mystical school". And access to it will be simultaneously normal and open or difficult and dangerous, depending on whether the moment required has arrived or not. It is not uncommon, in fact, to find in the Neptici Fathers a warning concerning the approach to the mystery and the injunction to preempt it: under the apparent repetition of a generally known norm, they discreetly announce the entry into the "arcane" part of the text under consideration, which must be considered accordingly. We would like to invoke as an example the wonderful *Treatise on Prayer* by Callistus the Patriarch, whose eighth chapter proclaims the following: Let no procreator, let no child yet of milk age touch before of time these forbidden objects. The Holy Fathers denounced the folly of those who seek things before the time and attempt to enter the port of *apatheia* without deploying the necessary means. Those who do not know the letters of the al fabeto are incapable of deciphering a tablet' (pp. 446-447).

The author is therefore hesitant as to whether the Hesychast tradition is an 'arcane tradition' or not, and this for the rather curious reason that <<for some time the problem has been complicated by esotericist interpretations of various kinds'. Now it follows first of all from this that a 'problem' existed in this pro posite long before esotericist interpretations. We would have had the right to know how this problem was raised and formulated, how it was attempted to be solved, and why it has remained a "problem", apparently also because it is a "problem".

for the partisans of Hesychasm. This orthodox monk, who seeks above all to ensure the traditional autonomy of such an initiatory path of Eastern Christianity and who therefore rejects views and opinions that do not come from the esotericist milieu, has here the sole concern of excluding esotericist views and says nothing about Catholic or even Orthodox theological interpretations that are perhaps responsible for having made a "problem" out of esychasm, if not also for having resolved it in a fallacious sense, to say the least.

In so doing, the author is sure to solve his own problem. But the first observation that can be made in this regard is that he makes it even more incomprehensible, using here an uncommon expression that has nothing definite in itself and which he does not even explain. Indeed, what does an 'arcane tradition' mean, in order to be able to answer what it has to do with hesychasm? Indeed, it is in relation to this notion that the 'problem' of hesychasm is posed here. NOW, 'arcane' can mean several things, just as the expression 'initiatory secret' studied by Guénon in his *Aperçus sur l'Initiation* (chapters XII, XIII and XV); there are There are various forms of this secret: "essential" secrets that are ineffable by nature, secondary secrets established by sacred institutions or by a spiritual discipline and concerning various domains, secrets of traditional sciences and arts, secrets of rites and symbols, secrets of "means of recognition" etc. And we think that if the author had had recourse to these notions of general value (which are not found studied and situated in their context anywhere else except in Guénon), he would not have risked "complicating" the problem and would rather have had the best chance of understanding the subject and clarifying it.

Judging from the points that the author touches upon when he applies himself to defining the hesychastic way under the relation of this notion of <<archaicus>>, one realises that the question for him should have been twofold and it would have been interesting to see how certain current exponents of the hesychastic position respond.

s position, apparently more willing than others to contribute to clarifying problems of primary importance for the traditional consciousness of our time.

1. Firstly, the question is whether in the Christian Tradition there is a "Christian esotericism" as a particular domain of spirituality, characterised by a separate objective, an adequate and reserved doctrine and its own spiritual means, or whether there is only a general spirituality, with multiple themes and degrees, certainly, but without formal separation from some objectively determined point and under some objectively determined relationship, between a special and reserved path on the one hand and a common religion on the other.

2. Secondly, whatever the answer obtained to the  
Secondly, whatever the answer to the first question, it is important to know above all whether there is an "initiation" into hesychasm, which constitutes the formal reconnection to this way by means of a special act that could be a "covenant of adherence" or a "rite of transmission" (and then one would also have to specify what is being transmitted) or both simultaneously by implication.

One of these questions concerns the existence of an 'exoteri- smo', the other that of 'special initiation'. Now, if the the imprecise notion of 'arcane tradition' .

puts an answer to the first with an ambiguous spiritualist profession of faith susceptible of playing all the useful games, the facts committed us to a clearly affirmative answer to the second question, which is technically of primary importance. In fact, this answer means that the ordinary sacraments that are indispensable to the whole of the Christian world and vain for both exotericists and esotericists (if not more so, for the latter) are by no means sufficient to be truly on the esoteric path. It is only that esotericists like our author will never say outright that this initiation belongs to an esoteric order, because he finds the notion of esotericism troublesome and the existence of this initiation, which is the introductory blessing of the "spiritual father", is not a secret institution. And we who have sweated seven shirts to get spi-

rites such as Marco Pallis that the hesychastic initiation exists as such, that it transmits something at the same time as it binds, and that the "spiritual father" is therefore an "initiator" proper or rather a Christian "initiator" indispensable on the human level!

In the passage we are dealing with here, apart from this attestation- of the hesychastic initiation (which is after all the "resounding confirmation" of which the author spoke at the beginning)

(21) and apart from the already well-known statement that hesychasm is "A tradition contained within Tradition", one finds few things that are truly characteristic.

The incidental remark based on the structural analogy with the body of the tradition, according to which "the prayer of the Heart is the *way to* the contemplative life", does not enunciate an arcane fact, but an elementary and universally known notion of the initiatory method, which is here presented in a simplified and somewhat in a simplified and somewhat vague manner.

The characteristics of the contemplative life enumerated later to differentiate it from any "Mystical School" are unfortunately neither precise nor specific. The conditions of access to the way are not defined either, and the mention of preliminary preparation and precautions to be observed is not followed by instructive explanations. After all, it is possible that this way of presenting things

(21) Another Hesychastic testimony using similar terminology already existed in *Prière et Sainteté dans l'Eglise russe* (Éd. du Cerf, 1950): "It is he (the starec) and he alone who can initiate the disciple into the higher degrees of mystical prayer, and he alone can initiate the disciple into the higher degrees of mystical prayer.

higher degrees of mystical prayer, and the "son" who acts outside the consent of his "spiritual father" almost certainly becomes prey to the demons. This initiation, moreover, is not limited to advice and intellectual teaching, but is a true transmission of spiritual forces. Through prayer and the blessing of the starec the disciple receives the

gifts of divine grace' (pp. 135-136, italics ours). Another passage in the same work mentions, without being too explicit, a more characterised tra

Another passage from the same work mentions, without being too explicit, a more characterised translation: "Saint Sergius of Raçloniege, before retiring into solitude, is blessed by an 'old man' who transmits to him the gift of 'spiritual knowledge'" (pp. 132-133).





is also due to the fact that the author did not have sufficient knowledge of these topics.

In another passage that we reproduce below, where we find that the author has finally decided to use, in the case of his Tradition, the term if not the very notion of "arcane", the point is thus made of the previous findings:

"These are the elements of the 'Hesychastic arcane' that we possess: fineness of doctrine, transmission of a spiritual lineage, discretion (silence and discernment of spirits). Since they are sufficient to define it in their own right within the universal Tradition of the Church, of which they are part, these characteristic elements also reject any forced identification with any "exoteric truth" constituted on an impersonal basis, which starts from "this way". Let us therefore add the fourth distinctive note: humility (this is clearly not a psychological attitude, but a properly metaphysical state), a sign of self-abandonment and communion with the absolute Person, who nevertheless

wanted to say: *Qui a semetipso loquitur gloriam propriam quaerit; qui autem quaerit gloriam ejus qui misit eum, hic verax est et injustitia in illo non est (Joh., 7, 18)*" (pp. 447-48).

On the basis of what we have said above, no one will think that we would want to force the identification of the "Hesychastic arcane" with no matter what "exotic truth"; as for us, we have simply pointed out the analogy of Hesychasm with the initiatory ways of the other current traditions of religious form; and we are fortunate enough to be able to make such a statement for Eastern Christianity, because Western Christianity seems much less favoured under the same relationship. On the other hand, frankly

on the other hand, if it were not for traditions such as Islam (whose initiatory way, the *Taṣawwuf* has since the end of the 19th century been the constant object of research by orientalists, secularists and royalists, and then

fortunately, of the expositions of an occidental writer like René Guénon, himself integrated in this path and in the respective Tradition), one would probably not have

yet come to know, throughout the Western and indeed Christian world as a whole, what true initiation and esotericism are; nor would one yet have understood that there is a universal "traditional spirit" that makes inter-traditional comparisons and analogies possible, thus helping one to become aware of the reality of a unique truth that constitutes in itself and because of its manifold resources the chain and web of all forms of the sacred world, as well as of universal existence itself.

But what exactly does "no matter what esoteric truth" mean, not admitted by our author as a term of comparison because it is 'constituted on an impersonal basis that starts from here'? *It is* a kind of enigma, which certainly has relation to the 'hidden and time-denying continuation' that we highlighted earlier, without even being able to understand it properly. It may be that all of this is meant to ensure the hesychastic way, like Christianity itself, some privilege of uniqueness and incomparability, and the notion of the divine Personality could play a decisive role. We at *Études Traditionnelles* will not hesitate to take these exclusivist conceptions seriously, although we do not ignore the fact that in every authentic traditional way there is an originality that constitutes its *raison d'être* as a particular form of truth.

being as a particular form of the one truth, but not as Truth *sic et simpliciter*. In any case, we do not know traditional ways, religious or otherwise, that are affirmed starting "from here": they all start from a Principle that they claim to be the only one.

Remarkably, immediately after this character, the author adds, as a final distinctive note of the Hesychastic Aréan, "humility", specified as "properly metaphysical".

"properly metaphysical". One is therefore allowed to have great hopes. What is also pleasing is that the expression and also the sense of 'properly metaphysical' are here strictly 'Guénonian'. In good time.

We find recalled, at the end of this paragraph, the words of Christ who says of his own teaching: "He who speaks

for his own part, seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of Him who sent him, is truthful, and there is no imposture in him'. Certainly, this quotation is made in an entirely disinterested manner and without any precise personal objective; however, since we have alluded to an intellectual master whose doctrinal power has left its imprint on the very language of those who wish to lecture him

(*post mortem*), we think that one could ask this educated monk whether he knew

We think that we might ask this learned monk whether he knows of any author in the first half of this century of characterised intellectual individualism and increasingly generalised anti-traditionalism other than René Guénon who, in expounding doctrines and ideas of capital importance for the fundamental order of things, attributed them less to himself than he did and at the same time provided the clearest possible proof of their traditional origin.

One could also ask him, since the Gospel quotation denounces those who "seek his own glory", whether he knows of an author in the same epoch, other than Guénon, who, in carrying out his task, is more conspicuously exposed to incomprehension, hostility, emargination, attacks and obnoxiousness – for a long time and almost without exception – among an entire generation of academics (orientalists, theologians, philosophers) and pseudo-spiritualists (theosophists, occultists), without mentioning sects of various appartenances.

Furthermore, when one sees that in all his affirmations Guénon is only concerned with showing the validity of the traditional data and the uniqueness and omnipresence of the Principle from which these proceed and towards which they converge; When we see that he then succeeds in paying the greatest intellectual homage to the most universal Truth and in determining in many intellectuals of all affiliations the consciousness and the worship of this same Truth in conformity with the different sacred forms that are accessible to them, he has no chance of appearing also, in his order and without prejudice to all proportions, as one who "seeks the glory of



He who sent him" and to be treated as "truthful"? *Otherwise* it would be necessary, *as* the heretical phrase demands it, to accuse him of "imposture" (*injustitia*); God not like it, because that would be too serious, especially from people who must have had a still more respectable position and a perfectly respectable point of view to begin with.

In the remainder of the article, we deal above all with some other problems posed by hesychasm: the spiritual value of the breathing technique, the question of the oriental origin of this technique, etc., points that are of undoubted interest as far as the characterisation of hesychasm as an initiatory way is concerned, but which nevertheless go beyond the scope of our present discussion.

In conclusion, we would like to say that we are pleased to have drawn from Bishop Scrima's writings some data that are particularly useful for the doctrinal investigations that concern us; and we hope to have the opportunity to find, in his future writings, things of equal documentary and intellectual utility. We also declare that we would gladly dispense with a critical examination, which this time, unfortunately, we could not avoid.

## 8. ON THE SUBJECT OF HESYCHASM

In our articles last year entitled *Mise au point* (p. 151) and *Études et Doc'uments d'Hésychasme* (p. 154) (1) we pointed out that the data at our disposal on the Slavic-Romanian hesychasme reveal some lines of kinship with Western initiations similar to the Compagnonag gio. Now, we have found another document, somewhat older, but still from this century and from the Slavic sphere, which justifies such a juxtaposition, even though it actually provides data concerning initiatory modes of Eastern Christianity that differ from those of the better-known Hesychasm. This is a passage from Ferdinand Ossendowski's book entitled *De La présidence à la prison* (Plon, 1926), chap. XXVIII, *Maniaques et mystiques*, pp. 272-275, which we reproduce *in full*. It is only necessary to know that the events narrated take place in 1907 in Siberia, inside one of the prisons in which the author was detained at the time (following a conviction for an attempt at revolutionary government during the period of unrest in the far eastern regions of the tsarist empire, following the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905).

...Mikhail Nikolov had been sentenced to two years in prison for vagrancy. He was in the habit of constantly changing his identity papers. Of tall stature,

(1) Triple issue 406-407-408 of marzo.August 1968.

thin, he walked hunched over and always seemed lost in his reverie. On his emaciated face, the large, black, pensive eyes were most noticeable. He spoke slowly, in a deep bass voice and never smiled. This wise man led a quiet existence, trying not to attract attention or annoy anyone.

One wonders why the law sentenced men like Nikolov to prison, a common type in Russia, where the vast steppes, the mixture of Mongolian blood and discontent with the material conditions of existence combined to create a kind of psychic deviation in the people, which manifested itself in nomadic habits. Since the gendarmerie never authorised too frequent journeys without some plausible reason, these modern wanderers, forced to change their names, took the papers of a dead comrade. They lived like birds, stealing wherever and wherever they could. The peasants called them 'the passers-by' and never denied them hospitality. In return, the wanderers owed small services to their hosts: some were tailors, others shoemakers or magicians. The latter claimed to cure all illnesses with the help of spells or magic herbs, inherited from the Gypsies.

"One day I caught a conversation between Nikolov and two other inmates. I was at the sinks when they entered, continuing their conversation without paying attention to my presence.

– Not all prayers go up to God.... - said Nikolov.

He lit the lantern hanging in the centre of the ceiling and continued in a grave voice:

– If you find it difficult to pray, your thoughts cannot closely follow the meaning of the words and you recite them without understanding them. These prayers are worth nothing: before they get to heaven, they are intercepted by the devil, who, aided by his black legions, spies on us everywhere, even in person. We must learn to pray. Prayer must have enough strength so that each word burns you to the core.

bottom of your heart. It is not only from the flower of the lips, but from all the fibres of the body, from all the drops of the blood, that it must pass towards God. We alone know . the only ones. I want to teach you, but you will keep the secret!

At that moment he noticed me, approached me and said in a low voice:

– *Stavrosta*, you know well how much those who are here suffer. Everything that can be done to console them will be God's favour. Do not be surprised at what you are now seeing and do not speak to anyone about it.

– All right,' I replied.

Nikolov took out from his breast a bronze crucifix attached to a chain and hung it on the wall; then, marking himself several times, he knelt down until his forehead touched the floor, got up and repeated the same movements several times, faster and faster. Each time, he murmured the same entreaty:

– Jesus, have mercy on us!

The other two prisoners remained motionless like statues, their eyes fixed on their comrade, while their lips moved without letting a sound escape. Nikolov's face became even paler, his mouth was open, his breath hissed and his eyes were bigger than ever. He jumped up with a leap, ran into the middle of the room and, repeating the same words over and over again, began to describe circles that grew smaller and smaller. He turned round and round with such rapidity that by the faint light of the lantern I could see two faces and four hands. He quickened his pace again, until he was no more than a transparent shadow, and ended up blending into the darkness, while the lie had faded from his dizzying movement. A second later, I heard the thud of a body falling to the floor. I shouted to the inmates to put the lamp back on, as I hurried to bring aid to Nikolov, who lay unconscious.

His big eyes were open and staring, his mouth was covered with foam, his chest was heaving with a gasp and he was repeating incessantly, in a hoarse, almost inaudible voice

– Jesus, have mercy on us!



Only a few minutes later, sitting on the bench and still palpitating, he was able to resume his exhortations:

- This is how you must pray! Then you will hear your prayers fall at the feet of the Creator, like the whispering of perfumed flowers...'. This, we know; but during the day, in the hustle and bustle of noisy life among the profane, it is impossible to pray in this way. That is why we flee from men, we hide at night in lonely houses or with those who have received

or with those who have received the light, and we pray. At that moment I understood why this man seemed so mysterious to all who approached him. He belonged to a sect whose adherents were known in the Orthodox Church under the name of 'turners'.

Having once come from Byzantium, they probably had the same origin as the rotating dervishes of Islam that I found in the Crimea, in Asiatic Turkey, in Trebizond and in Persia in the mosques between Rasht and Teh

ran>>.

Remarkably, in this text by a writer with little knowledge of spiritual matters, all the descriptive details given have an initiatory significance. The reader will have noticed first of all the epithet 'passers-by' given to these wandering artisans, and the juxtaposition with the Gypsies, points that Gué did not touch on repeatedly (2). The technique of the 'Jesus Prayer' described by the author is undoubtedly of an initiatory nature: it also appears as a datum of spiri

transmitted esoterically, since Nikolov specifies: 'We are **the only ones who know... the only ones**. I want to teach you, but *you will keep the secret*'. Furthermore, with regard to the correspondent practice of prayer, which is mainly done 'at night, in solitary houses', it is added "Or with *those who have received the light*"; and this concerns those who already possess

(2) Cf. in particular *Études sur la Franc-Maçonnerie et le Compagnonnage*, tome 1. Le Compagnonnage et /es Bohémiens, p. 35 and *À propos des Pèlerinages*, p. 52.

an effective degree of knowledge in this order and serve, therefore, as guides and supports

The affiliation of the man spoken of to what Ossendowski calls the "sect of the revolvers" of the orthodox world is evident; equally valid is the comparison with the revolving dervishes of Islam, whom the author had the opportunity to see in various parts of Russia and Asia and who, for their part, are certainly initiates.

It also remains to be considered that this initiatory way, because of the motor technique that characterises it under the relationship of invocation, appears somewhat different from the Hesychastic way proper, whose very name emphasises the idea of the "Hesychastic way".

Itself emphasises the idea of 'stillness' (3). Nevertheless, Here too, the method of spiritual work is the 'Jesus Prayer'. On the other hand, as is normal, apart from the general and preliminary notions offered by the known Hesychastic writings, not much is known outside about the more reserved technical modalities of Hesychasm, so that one always has to more or less surprising possibilities, all the more so since all initiatory methods, whatever their immediate distinctive features, ultimately converge towards the same goal, which necessarily coincides with the Great Peace.

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One may have noticed in Nikolov's words an unusual detail concerning the operative process of the Prayer: authentic invocations "ascend" towards the sky to "fall at the feet of the Creator like the whispering of fragrant flowers". We do not think this is a mere literary image. Regarding the manner in which the prayers "ascend" to the Lord, we find similar data, although in

(3) According to some, the word hesychia is more accurately related to hesthai, <<to sit.

specifically different forms, in the spiritual teachings of other traditional forms. As far as the Islamic side is concerned, we could talk about this again in a presentation of texts on the 'ascension of spiritual works'; for illustrative purposes, let us just translate this passage from Ibn Arabi:

"A woman came to a meeting presided over by our Shaykh Abderrazzàq (he was young at the time) and said to him: "Yesterday I saw in a dream one of your companions who had just made a prayer (ḡalat); this prayer took a form (ḡurah) which began to ascend – and I observed it – until it reached the Divine Throne (al-Arsh), where it became one of those (angels) who make ritual rounds around the Throne" (4). The Shaykh exclaimed: "Prayer truly made with the spirit" and said to himself: "This prayer cannot be of any of my companions but Abderraz zaq". Then he asked the woman: "Would you know which one of my companions?" She immediately replied: "Yes, it is that one!" – and pointed to Abderrazzaq, whom the Shaykh had thought of. He declared: "You have spoken the truth," and took this dream as a message of good news (mubashshirah)" (5) (Futuhāt, IV, ch. 558, Hadrat-1-Wahb).

This Islamic reference helps us to say a word about the <<rotatory technique>> reported in Ossendowski's document. In it, two phases must be distinguished: one is that of rotation around an axis external to oneself, while the other, which follows it, is that of rotation around oneself. The first, in short, corresponds to the ritual revolutions around a centre of pilgrimage (6); its relation to the spiritual revolutions around

(4) There are angels who come, in the strictly onto-logical sense, from the spells of worshippers.

(5) The mubashshirat constitute the portion of the Prophet Function (maqamu-n-Nubuwwah) that remained accessible after the cyclical closure brought about by the Seal of Prophethood. Such messages can be received in a personal dream or through the dream of another.

(6) It would also have been interesting to know whether the 'meaning' of the rotations

to the Throne is confirmed by the fact that the ternal circumambulations to the Kaabah are themselves in the image of the inter-descending revolutions that the angels make around the Throne of the Lord. In the second phase, one turns around oneself, that is, around an inner axis that is, moreover, identified with the Axis of the World. This axis is but the vertical projection of the Universal Self into the individual being, and the rotary movement around it amounts to a coming closer to the Self and an ever more effective assumption of Self-consciousness. The coming halt, which appears as a kind of passage to the limit of this accelerated movement, should correspond, in the intuitive order, to an illumination emanating from the intelligible Sun, whose dazzling ray follows exactly the axial path of being; if there is then in the "rotator" a total perishing of consciousness, there is extinction, a state whose duration varies according to cases and moments.

Nikolov's "Solar", as is probable, i.e. with the centre on the right, or instead <<polar>>, with the centre on the left, as is the case in the ritual rounds around the Kaabah (Cf. R. Guénon, *Symboles Forulamemeaux de la Science Sacrée*, ch. xxxv: Les Portes soLrticiales, p. 241. footnote I).



# **BERSERKER**

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## **BOOKS**

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