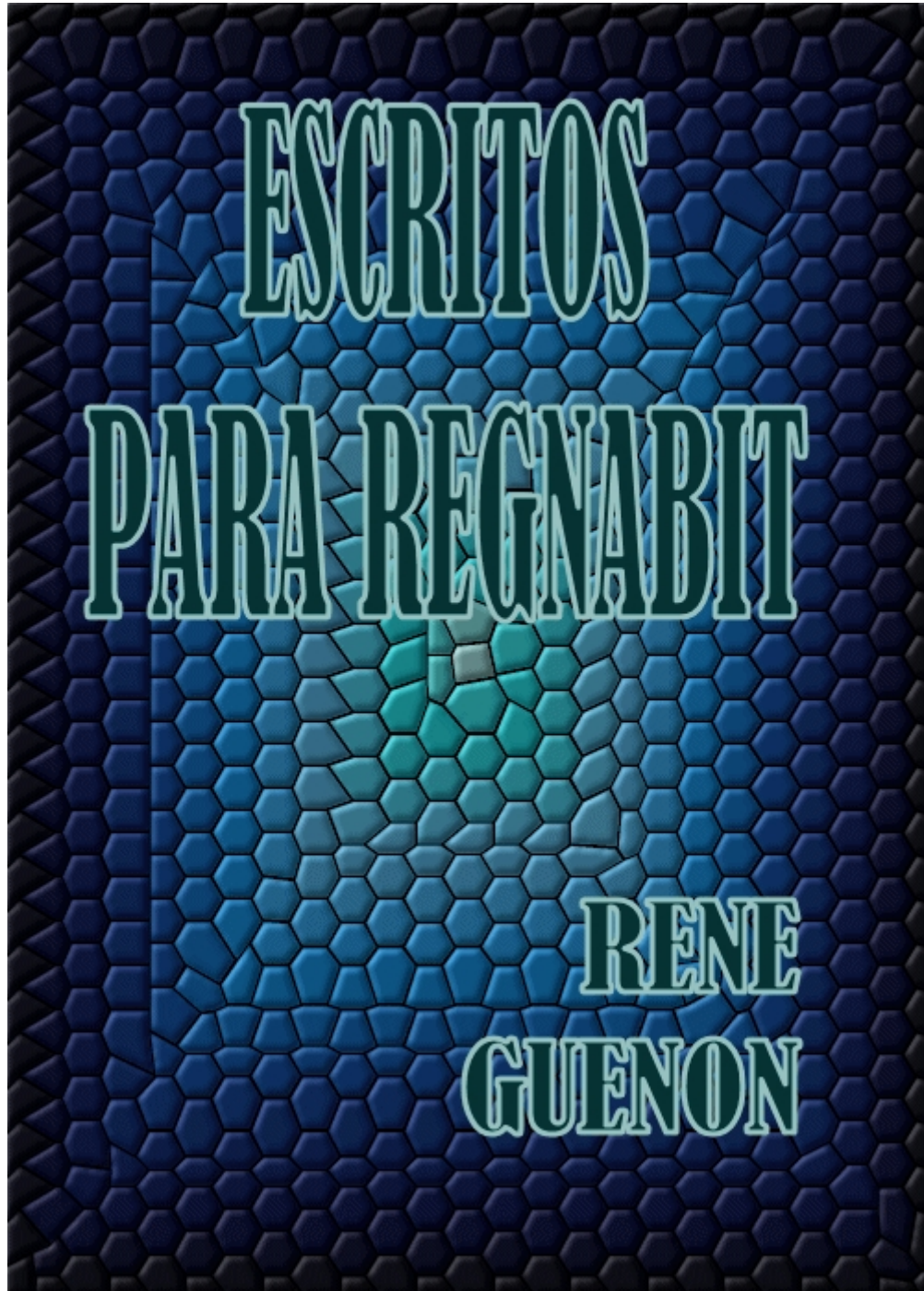


WRITINGS FOR "REGNABIT" RENÉ
GUÉNON



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ECRITS POUR *REGNABIT*, Arché (Milan)-Aragno (Turin), 1999. (330 numbered copies; presented and annotated by P. L. Zoccatelli, 202 pages). This volume brings together the 19 articles published in the Catholic magazine *Regnabit*, 6 of which were already compiled in *Symboles de la Science Sacrée* and 2 in *Etudes sur la Franc-Maçonnerie et le Compagnonnage II*, while most of the rest are present in other various articles reworked by the author.

Chronological list of René Guénon's articles published in *Regnabit*, with indication of their reuse

(1). 1925, August-September: "Le Sacré-Coeur et la légende du Saint Graal" (The Sacred Heart and the Legend of the Holy Grail). This article has been reproduced in *Aperçus sur l'ésotérisme chrétien* [Paris, Les Éditions Traditionnelles, 1954], chap. IX, but without the *addendum* that appeared in December 1925. Also reproduced in *Symboles de la Science Sacrée* with the *addendum* included.

(2). November 1925: "Le Chrisme et le Coeur dans les anciennes marques corporatives" (The Chrisma and the Heart in Ancient Corporate Marks). Compiled in *Etudes sur la Franc-Maçonnerie et le Compagnonnage II*. A *postscript* to the January 1926 article is related to this text. The author revisited the subject in two articles compiled in *Symboles de la Science Sacrée*: "Les Symboles de l'analogie", January 1939 (chap. L) and "Le quatre de chiffre", June 1948, (chap. LVII).

(3). December 1925: "A propos de quelques symboles hermético-religieux". Not included in other posthumous compilations. The final paragraph of this article should be considered a supplement to that of August-September 1925. The topics discussed here were revisited by the author in the study "Quelques aspects du symbolisme de Janus," which appeared in "Voile d'Isis," July 1929, chap. XVIII of *Symboles de la Science Sacrée*.

(4). 1926, January: "Le Verbe et le symbole" (The Word and the Symbol). Forms chapter II of *Symboles de la Science Sacrée* without the one-page *postscript* referring to the article of November 1925.

(5). February 1926: "A propos des signes corporatifs et de leur sens originel" (On corporate signs and their original meaning). Posthumously compiled in *Etudes sur la Franc-Maçonnerie et le Compagnonnage II*. The subject matter of this article has also been used in "Quelques aspects du symbolisme de Janus", chapter XVIII of *Symboles de la Science Sacrée*.

(6). 1926, March: "Les Arbres du Paradis" (The Trees of Paradise). Not included in other posthumous compilations. A one-page *postscript* referring to the December 1925 article is added to this article. The theme is revisited with new developments in *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, 1931, chapters IX ("L'Arbre du Milieu") and XXV ("L'arbre et le serpent").

(7). 1926, April: "Le Coeur rayonnant et le Coeur enflammé". Not included in other posthumous compilations, although an article of the same title published in "Etudes

Traditionnelles" in June-July 1946, which is a reworking, was later published in *Symboles de la Science Sacrée*, chapter LXIX. A *postscript* that appeared in the article on the *Omphalos* in June 1926 refers to this text.

(8). 1926, May: "L'Idée du Centre dans les traditions antiques" (The Idea of the Centre in Ancient Traditions). Also reprinted in *Symboles de la Science Sacrée* (Symbols of Sacred Science), chapter VIII, with fewer notes. Theme revisited in several parts of *Le Roi du Monde* (The King of the World), 1927; some points revisited later in *Le Symbolisme de la Croix* (The Symbolism of the Cross), 1931, and *La Grande Triade* (The Great Triad), 1946.

(9). 1926, June: "La Réforme de la mentalité moderne" (The Reform of Modern Mentality). Reprinted in *Symboles de la Science Sacrée*, chap. I. Text of a paper presented at the study day on 6 May 1926 organised by the "Société du Rayonnement intellectuel du Sacré-Coeur", of which *Regnabit* was the organ.

(10). June 1926: "L'Omphalos, symbole du Centre" (The Omphalos, symbol of the Centre). Text not compiled, although it is largely incorporated into *Le Roi du Monde*, chap. IX. A *postscript* refers to the article of April 1926.

(11). 1926, July-August: "Le Coeur du Monde dans la Kabbale hébraïque". Not included in any other posthumous collection. Subject revisited in *Le Roi du Monde*, chapter III, as well as in *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, chapters IV ("Les directions de l'espace") and VII ("La résolution des oppositions").

(12). 1926, September-October: "La Terre Sainte et le Coeur du monde" (The Holy Land and the Heart of the World). Not included in other compilations. Some points from this article were taken up again in *Le Roi du Monde* (especially chapters III and IV), but most of it was included in the article "Les Gardiens de la Terre Sainte," published in *Le Voile d'Isis*, August-September 1929, collected in *Symboles de la Science Sacrée*, chap. XI.

(13). November 1926: "Considérations sur le Symbolisme" I: "Mythes et symboles". Not reprinted as such in any other posthumous compilation. A one-page *postscript* to the March 1927 article is added to this study. Text reprinted by the author, with new developments, in *Aperçus sur l'Initiation*, chap. XVII ("Mythes, mystères et symboles").

(14). 1926, December: "Considérations sur le Symbolisme" II: "Symbolisme et philosophie". Not reprinted as such in any other later collection. A *postscript* to this article complements the article from March 1926. Text reprinted by the author, with new developments, in *Aperçus sur l'Initiation*, chap. XVIII, with the same title.

(15). 1927, January: "Heart and Brain". Chapter LXX of *Symbols of Sacred Science*.

(16). 1927, February: "A propos du Poisson". Not included in any other posthumous collection. A half-page *postscript* appearing in the April 1927 article serves as a supplement to this text. The article "Quelques aspects du symbolisme du poisson", published in "Etudes Traditionnelles" in February 1936, is a reworking of the present text and is included as chapter XXII of *Symboles de la Science Sacrée*.

(17). 1927, March: "L'Emblème du Sacré-Coeur dans une société secrète américaine" (The Emblem of the Sacred Heart in an American Secret Society). Compiled in *Symboles de la Science Sacrée*, chapter LXXI. A one-page *postscript* refers to the November 1926 article.

scriptum, one page long, refers to the article from November 1926.

(18). 1927, April: "Une contrefaçon du catholicisme" (A Counterfeit of Catholicism). Not included in any subsequent compilation.

(19). May 1927: "Le Centre du Monde dans les doctrines extrême-orientales" (The Centre of the World in Far Eastern Doctrines). Not included in any other posthumous compilation. Subject revisited by the author in *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, ch. VII ("La résolution des oppositions") and XXIX ("Le Centre et la circonférence").

Chapter I: THE SACRED HEART AND THE LEGEND OF THE HOLY GRAIL

In one of his last articles (*Regnabit*, June 1925)¹, L. Charbonneau-Lassay rightly points out that the legend of the Holy Grail, written in the 12th century but much older in origin, is linked to what could be called the "prehistory of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus", since it is in fact a Christian adaptation of very ancient Celtic traditions. The idea of this link had already occurred to us in connection with the previous article, which was extremely interesting from our point of view, entitled "Le Coeur humain et la notion du Coeur de Dieu dans la religion de l'ancienne Égypte" (November 1924) (2), from which we recall the following passage: "In hieroglyphics, a sacred script in which the image of the thing often represents the word itself that designates it, the heart was, however, represented only by an emblem: the *vessel*. Is not the heart of man, in fact, the vessel in which his life is continually elaborated with his blood?" This vessel, taken as a symbol of the heart and a substitute for it in Egyptian ideography, immediately made us think of the Holy Grail, all the more so because in the latter, apart from the general meaning of the symbol (considered, moreover, in both its divine and human aspects), we see a special and much more direct relationship with the very Heart of Christ.

Indeed, the Holy Grail is the cup that contains the precious Blood of Christ, and it contains it twice, since it was first used for the Supper and then Joseph of Arimathea collected in it the blood and water that flowed from the wound opened by the centurion's spear in the side of the Redeemer. That cup therefore replaces, in a certain sense, the Heart of Christ as the receptacle of his blood, taking, so to speak, the place of the latter and becoming a kind of symbolic equivalent: and is it not even more remarkable, in such circumstances, that the cup was already in ancient times an emblem of the heart? On the other hand, the cup, in one form or another, plays, like the heart itself, a very important role in many ancient traditions; and this was undoubtedly particularly true among the Celts, since it was from them that what constituted the very basis or at least the plot of the legend of the Holy Grail originated. It is unfortunate that it is almost impossible to know precisely what form this tradition took prior to Christianity, which is true of everything concerning Celtic doctrines, for which oral teaching was always the only means of transmission used; However, there is sufficient agreement to be at least certain about the meaning of the main symbols that appeared in it, and this is, in short, the most essential thing.

But let us return to the legend as it has come down to us; what it says about the very origin of the Grail is very noteworthy: this cup is said to have been carved by angels from an emerald detached from Lucifer's forehead at the moment of his fall. This emerald is remarkably reminiscent of the *urnâ*, the frontal pearl which, in Hindu iconography, often occupies the place of *Shiva's* third eye, representing what might be called the 'sense of eternity'. This relationship seems to us more appropriate than any other to perfectly clarify the symbolism of the Grail; and one can even see in it a further link with the heart, which, for the Hindu tradition as for many others, but perhaps even more clearly, is the centre of the whole being, and to which, therefore, that 'sense of eternity' must be directly linked.

It is then said that the Grail was entrusted to Adam in the Garden of Eden, but that, as a result of his fall, Adam lost it in turn, for he could not take it with him when he was

¹See *Regnabit*, June 1925: "Iconographie ancienne du Coeur de Jésus" (Translator's note).

expelled from Eden; and this is also made very clear by the meaning we have just indicated. Man, separated from his original centre through his own fault, was henceforth confined to the temporal sphere; he could no longer recover the unique point from which all things are contemplated under the aspect of eternity. The earthly Paradise was, in fact, truly the "Centre of the World," symbolically assimilated everywhere to the divine Heart; and can we not say that Adam, as long as he was in Eden, truly lived in the Heart of God?

What follows is more enigmatic: Seth managed to enter the earthly Paradise and was thus able to recover the precious vessel; now, Seth is one of the figures of the Redeemer, all the more so because his very name expresses the ideas of foundation and stability, and in a way announces the restoration of the primordial order destroyed by the fall of man. There had been, therefore, at least a partial restoration, in the sense that Seth and those who possessed the Grail after him were able to establish, somewhere on earth, a spiritual centre that was like an image of Paradise lost. The legend, on the other hand, does not say where or by whom the Grail was preserved until the time of Christ, nor how its transmission was ensured; but its recognised Celtic origin probably suggests that the Druids played a part in this and should be counted among the regular preservers of the primordial tradition. In any case, the existence of such a spiritual centre, or even several, simultaneously or successively, does not seem to be in doubt, whatever one may think about its location; what should be noted is that these centres were always and everywhere referred to, among other designations, as the "Heart of the World", and that in all traditions, the descriptions referring to it are based on identical symbolism, which can be traced down to the most precise details. Does this not sufficiently show that the Grail, or what is thus represented, already had, prior to Christianity, and even at all times, a very close link with the divine Heart and with *Emmanuel*, that is to say, with the manifestation, virtual or real according to the ages, but always present, of the eternal Word in the bosom of terrestrial humanity?

After Christ's death, according to legend, the Holy Grail was taken to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus; thus began the story of the Knights of the Round Table and their exploits, which we will not pursue here. The Round Table was destined to receive the Grail when one of its knights managed to conquer it and transport it from Britain to Armorica; and that Table is also a likely very ancient symbol, one of those associated with the idea of those spiritual centres to which we have just alluded. The circular shape of the table is also linked to the "zodiacal cycle" (another symbol that deserves further study) by the presence around it of twelve main characters, a feature found in the constitution of all the centres in question. That being the case, can we not see in the number of the twelve Apostles a sign, among many others, of the perfect conformity of Christianity with the primordial tradition, to which the name 'pre-Christianity' would be so aptly applied? And, on the other hand, with regard to the Round Table, we have highlighted a strange concordance in the symbolic revelations made to Marie des Vallées (see "Regnabit, November 1924")², where mention is made of "a round table of jasper, representing the Heart of Our Lord", while also speaking of "a garden that is the Holy Sacrament of the altar" and which, with its

² Cf. Charbonneau-Lassay, *Le Bestiaire du Christ*, chap. X, p. 95 (*The Bestiary of Christ*, Olañeta, Palma de Mallorca) (Translator's note).

"four fountains of living water", is mysteriously identified with the earthly Paradise; is this not another surprising and unexpected confirmation of the connections we pointed out earlier?

Naturally, these overly hasty notes cannot claim to constitute a complete study of such a little-known subject; For the moment, we must limit ourselves to offering simple indications, and we are well aware that they contain considerations that may initially surprise those who are unfamiliar with ancient traditions and their usual modes of symbolic expression; but we reserve the right to develop and justify them more fully at a later date, in articles in which we hope to address many other points that are no less worthy of interest.

Meanwhile, we will mention, with regard to the legend of the Holy Grail, a strange complication that we have not yet taken into account: due to one of those verbal assimilations that often play a significant role in symbolism, and which may have deeper reasons than one might imagine at first glance, the Grail is both a cup (*grasale*) and a book (*gradale* or *graduale*). In certain versions, the two meanings are even closely linked, as the book then becomes an inscription traced by Christ or by an angel on the cup itself. We do not intend to draw any conclusions from this at present, although it is easy to establish connections with the 'Book of Life' and certain elements of apocalyptic symbolism.

We should also add that the legend associates other objects with the Grail, especially a spear, which, in the Christian adaptation, is none other than the spear of the centurion Longinus; but what is most curious is the pre-existence of that spear or one of its equivalents as a symbol that is in some way complementary to the cup in ancient traditions. On the other hand, among the Greeks, Achilles' spear was considered to heal the wounds it caused; medieval legend attributes precisely the same virtue to the spear of the Passion. And this reminds us of another similarity of the same kind: in the myth of Adonis (whose name, incidentally, means "the Lord"), when the hero is mortally wounded by a boar's tusk (the tusk replacing the spear here), his blood, spilling onto the ground, gives birth to a flower; well, L. Charbonneau has pointed out in *Regnabit* (January 1925), "a 12th-century monstrance, where the blood from the wounds of the Crucified One is seen falling in droplets that turn into roses, and the 13th-century stained-glass window in Angers Cathedral, where the divine blood, flowing in streams, also spreads out in the form of roses". We will return shortly to floral symbolism, approached from a somewhat different angle; but whatever the multiplicity of meanings that all symbols present, they all complement and harmonise perfectly, and such multiplicity, far from being an inconvenience or a defect, is, on the contrary, for those who know how to understand it, one of the main advantages of a language that is much less narrowly limited than ordinary language.

To conclude these notes, we will indicate some symbols that in various traditions sometimes replace that of the cup and are essentially identical to it: this is not to stray from the subject, for the Grail itself, as can easily be seen from all that we have just said, has no other meaning in its origin than that generally attributed to the sacred vessel wherever it is found, and in particular, in the East, the sacrificial cup containing the Vedic *soma* (or the Mazdean *haoma*), that extraordinary "Eucharistic prefiguration" to which we may return on another occasion. What *soma* actually represents is the "elixir of immortality" (the *amritâ* of the Hindus, the *ambrosia* of the Greeks, both words being etymologically similar), which

confer and restore to those who receive it with the required dispositions that "sense of eternity" of which we spoke earlier.

One of the symbols we wish to refer to is the downward-pointing triangle; it is a kind of schematic representation of the sacrificial cup, and as such it is found in certain *yantras* or geometric symbols in India. On the other hand, it is particularly noteworthy from our point of view that the same figure is also a symbol of the heart, whose shape it reproduces in a simplified form: the "triangle of the heart" is a common expression in Eastern traditions. This leads us to an observation that is not without interest: that the representation of the heart inscribed in a triangle arranged in this way is not in itself illegitimate, whether it refers to the human heart or the divine Heart, and that it is even highly significant when it refers to the emblems used by certain medieval Christian Hermeticism, whose intentions were always fully orthodox. If, in modern times, some have sought to attribute a blasphemous meaning to such a representation (see *Regnabit*, August-September 1924), it is because, consciously or not, the original meaning of the symbols has been altered to the point of reversing their normal value. This is a phenomenon for which many examples could be cited and which, moreover, finds its explanation in the fact that certain symbols are indeed susceptible to double interpretation and have two opposing sides. The serpent, for example, and also the lion, do they not signify both Christ and Satan, depending on the case? We cannot go into a general theory on this subject here, as it would take us too far afield, but it will be understood that there is something about this that makes the use of symbols very delicate and that this point requires very special attention when it comes to discovering the real meaning of certain emblems and translating it correctly.

Another symbol that often equates to that of the cup is a floral symbol: does not the flower, in fact, evoke the idea of a "receptacle" by its shape, and do we not speak of the "chalice" of a flower? In the East, the symbolic flower par excellence is the lotus; in the West, the rose most often plays that same role. Of course, we do not mean to say that this is the only meaning of the latter, nor that of the lotus, since, on the contrary, we ourselves had previously indicated another; but we would be inclined to see it in the design embroidered on that altar canon in Fontevault Abbey (*Regnabit*, January 1925, figure on page 106), where the rose is located at the foot of a spear along which drops of blood rain down. This rose appears there associated with the spear exactly as the cup is in other places, and seems in fact to collect the drops of blood rather than to come from the transformation of one of them; but, for the rest, the two meanings complement each other rather than oppose each other, for those drops, falling on the rose, enliven it and make it open. It is the "celestial rose", according to the figure so often used in connection with the idea of Redemption, or with the related ideas of regeneration and resurrection; but this would require lengthy explanations, even if we limited ourselves to highlighting the concordance of the various traditions with regard to this other symbol.

On the other hand, since the Rose Cross has already been mentioned in connection with Luther's seal (January 1925)³, we will say that this hermetic emblem was originally specifically Christian, whatever the false interpretations, more or less "naturalistic", that have been given to it since the 18th century; and is it not remarkable that in it the

³ *Regnabit*, January 1925, article by Charbonneau-Lassay, "A propos de la rose emblématique de Martin Luther" (Translator's note).

rose occupies, in the centre of the cross, the very place of the Sacred Heart? Apart from representations in which the five wounds of the Crucified One are depicted by five roses, the central rose, when it is alone, can very well be identified with the Heart itself, with the vessel containing the blood, which is the centre of life and also the centre of the whole being.

There is at least one other symbolic equivalent of the cup: the crescent moon; but this, to be properly explained, would require elaborations that would be entirely outside the scope of the present study; we mention it, therefore, only so as not to neglect any aspect of the question entirely.

From all the relationships we have just pointed out, we will draw a conclusion that we hope to make even more evident later: when such similarities are found everywhere, is this not more than a mere indication of the existence of a primordial tradition? And how can we explain that, more often than not, those who feel obliged to admit this primordial tradition in principle do not think about it any further and in fact reason exactly as if it had never existed, or at least as if nothing had been preserved over the centuries? If one pauses to reflect on what is abnormal in such an attitude, one may be less inclined to be surprised by certain considerations which, in truth, seem strange only because of the mental habits of our time. On the other hand, it suffices to inquire a little, provided one does so without prejudice, to discover everywhere the marks of that essential doctrinal unity, the awareness of which may sometimes have been obscured in humanity, but which has never entirely disappeared; and as one advances in this investigation, the points of comparison multiply of their own accord, and more evidence appears at every moment. indeed, the *Quaerite et invenietis* of the Gospel is not a vain word.

Originally published in *Regnabit*, August-September 1925. This article has been reproduced in *Aperçus sur l'ésotérisme chrétien*, Les Éditions Traditionnelles, Paris, 1954, chap. IX, but without the *addendum* that appeared in December 1925. Also reproduced in *Symboles de la Science Sacrée* with the *addendum* included.

Chapter II: THE CHRISMON AND THE HEART IN ANCIENT CORPORATE MARKS

In an article, otherwise purely documentary in nature, devoted to the study of "Coats of arms with astrological and talismanic motifs" and published in the *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* (July-October 1924), W. Deonna, from Geneva, comparing the signs that appear in these coats of arms with other more or less similar symbols, refers more broadly to the "*quatre de chiffre*" which was "common in the 16th and 17th centuries¹ as a family and house mark for individuals, who included it on their tombstones above their coats of arms". He points out that this sign "lends itself to all kinds of combinations, with the cross, the globe, the heart, associated with owners' monograms, complicated by associated bars", and reproduces a few examples. We believe that this sign was essentially a "mark of mastery", common to many different corporations, with which the individuals and families who used this sign were undoubtedly linked by ties that were often hereditary.

Deonna then speaks rather briefly about the origin and meaning of this mark: "Jusselin," he says, "derives it from the Constantinian monogram, already freely interpreted and distorted in Merovingian and Carolingian documents², but this hypothesis appears to be totally arbitrary, and no analogy supports it." We do not share this opinion, and even consider that such an assimilation should, on the contrary, be very natural, since, for our part, we had always made it without knowing of any specific work that might exist on the subject, and we would not even have believed that it could be contested, so obvious did it seem to us. But let us continue and see what other explanations have been proposed: "Could it be the number 4 in Arabic numerals, which replaced Roman numerals in European manuscripts prior to the 11th century? ... Should we assume that it represents the mystical value of the number 4, which dates back to Antiquity and has been preserved by moderns?" Deonna does not reject this interpretation but prefers another: he assumes "that it is an astrological sign", that of Jupiter.

In truth, these various hypotheses are not necessarily mutually exclusive: it may well be that, in this case as in many others, there has been an overlap or even a fusion of several symbols into a single one, a symbol to which multiple meanings are linked; there is nothing surprising about this, since, as we said before, this multiplicity of meanings is inherent in symbolism, which is also one of its greatest advantages as a means of expression. Now, it is necessary, of course, to recognise the primary and principal meaning of the symbol; and in this case, we continue to believe that this meaning is given by the identification with the Monogram of Christ, while the other are associated secondarily.

It is true that the astrological sign of Jupiter, whose two main forms (fig. 1) bear a general resemblance to the number 4 (fig. 2); and it is also true

¹ The same sign was widely used in the 15th century, at least in France, and especially in printers' marks. We have collected the following examples: Wolf (Georges), printer-bookseller in Paris, 1489; Syber (Jean), printer in Lyon, 1478; Remboldt (Bertholde), printer in Paris, 1489.

² "Origine de monogramme des tapissiers" in the "Bulletin monumental" 1922, pp. 433-435.

that its use is related to the idea of "mastery", which we will return to later. However, for us, this element, in the symbolism of the mark in question, could only be placed in third place. Let us also point out that the very origin of the sign of Jupiter is very uncertain, as some see it as representing lightning, while others see it as simply the initial of the name Zeus.

On the other hand, we believe it is undeniable that what Deonna calls the "mystical value" of the number 4 has also played a role here, and even a more important one, as we would assign it second place in this complex symbolism. It may be noted in this regard that the number 4, in all the marks where it appears, has a shape that is exactly that of a cross whose two ends are joined by an oblique line; now, in ancient times, and especially among the Pythagoreans, the cross was the symbol of the quaternary (or more exactly one of the symbols, as there was another which was the square), and, moreover, the association of the cross with the Chrismon ha debido establecerse de la manera más natural.

Consequently, this observation brings us back to the Chi-Rho; and, first, we must say that it is necessary to make a distinction between the Constantinian Chi-Rho itself, the sign of the Labarum, and what is called the simple Chi-Rho. This (fig. 3) appears to us as the fundamental symbol from which many others derived more or less directly. It is considered to be formed by the union of the letters I and X, that is, the Greek initials of the two words *Iesous Christós*, and this is one of the meanings it had from the earliest days of Christianity; but this symbol, in itself, is very ancient, and is one of those that are widespread everywhere and in all ages. This is an example of the Christian adaptation of pre-Christian symbols and symbolic narratives, as we have already seen.

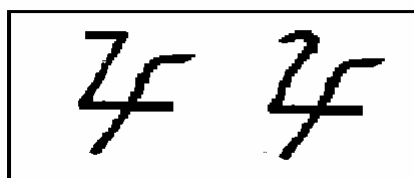


Fig.1

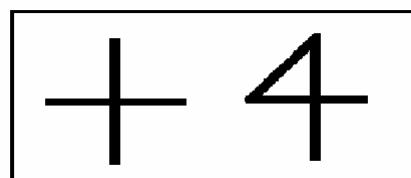


Fig.2

with regard to the legend of the Holy Grail; and such adaptation should be considered not only legitimate but in a certain way necessary for those who, like us, see in these symbols vestiges of the primordial tradition. The legend of the Grail is of Celtic origin; by a coincidence worthy of note, the symbol we are discussing is also found among the Celts, among whom it constitutes an essential element of the "roundel" (fig. 4). Moreover, the rosette was perpetuated throughout the Middle Ages, and it is not implausible to admit that even the rose window of cathedrals can be linked to it³. There is, in fact, a definite connection between the figure of the wheel and floral symbols with multiple meanings, such as the rose and the lotus, to which we have alluded in previous articles; but this would take us too far from our subject. As for the general meaning of the wheel, which moderns generally want to see as an exclusively 'solar' symbol, according to the

³In a previous article, Deonna himself acknowledged the existence of a relationship between the "rodela" and the Monogram of Christ ("Quelques reflexions sur le Symbolisme, en particulier dans l'art préhistorique", in the "Revue de l'Histoire des Religions", January-April 1924); it is therefore all the more surprising to see him subsequently deny the relationship, however visible, between the Chi-Rho and the "four of the number". (N. d. T.: The meaning is also evident in the iconography of the discs of the Mapuche tradition, where the wheel and its cross symbolise the world).

explanation that they use and abuse in all circumstances, we will only say, without being able to insist as much as would be necessary, that in reality it is, on the contrary and above all, a symbol of the World, as can be determined in particular by the study of Hindu iconography. To stick to the Celtic "roundel" (fig. 5)⁴, we would also point out that the emblem in the upper corner of the British flag (fig. 6) most likely has the same origin and meaning, differing only in that it is inscribed in a rectangle instead of a circle, and in which some English people see the sign of their country's maritime supremacy⁵.

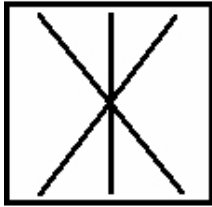


fig. 3

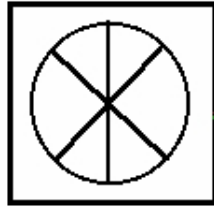


fig. 4

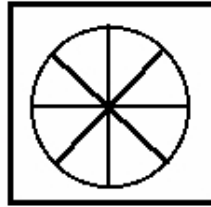


fig. 5

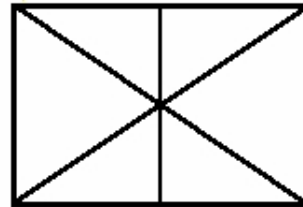


fig. 6 Let us

now formulate an observation extremely important with regard to heraldic symbolism: the shape of the simple Chi-Rho is a kind of general outline according to which the most diverse figures were arranged on the coat of arms. Observe, for example, an eagle or any other heraldic bird, and it will not be difficult to discover the aforementioned arrangement (the head, tail, wing tips and legs correspond to the six points in fig. 3); then observe the fleur-de-lis emblem, and the same can be seen again. It matters little, moreover, what the real origin of the fleur-de-lis emblem is, which has given rise to so many different hypotheses: that it is truly a flower, which would bring us back to the floral symbols mentioned above (the natural lily does indeed have six petals), or that it was originally the tip of a spear, or a bird, or a bee, or the ancient Chaldean symbol of royalty (hieroglyph *sâr*), or even a toad⁶, or, as is much more likely, the result of a synthesis of several of these figures, it always remains strictly in accordance with the pattern we are discussing.

One of the reasons for this peculiarity can be found in the importance of the meanings associated with the number six, since the figure we are considering is, in essence, one of the geometric symbols corresponding to that number. If we join its ends in pairs (fig. 7), we obtain another well-known six-pointed symbol, the double triangle (fig. 8), more commonly known as the "Seal of Solomon"⁷. It is a widely used figure

⁴ There are two types of "rosette", one with six rays (fig. 4) and another with eight (fig. 5), and each of the numbers naturally has its own *raison d'être* and meaning. The Chi-Rho corresponds to the first type; as for the second, it is interesting to note its striking similarity to the Hindu eight-petalled lotus.

⁵The shape of the "roundel" itself is even clearer when the same emblem is traced on the shield bearing the allegorical figure of Albion.

⁶ Strange as it may seem, this opinion must have been accepted very early on, because in the 15th-century tapestries of Reims Cathedral, Clovis's banner has three toads. It is also very possible that this toad was originally a frog, an ancient symbol of resurrection.

⁷ This figure is sometimes also called the "Shield of David" or the "Shield of Michael", the latter designation giving rise to some very interesting considerations.

It is frequently found among Jews and Arabs, but it is also a Christian emblem; it was even, as L. Charbonneau-Lassay has pointed out, one of the ancient symbols of Christ, as was another equivalent figure, the six-pointed star (fig. 9), which is in short nothing more than a variant, and as is also, of course, the Chi-Rho itself, which is one more reason to establish a close link between all these signs. Medieval Christian Hermeticism saw in the two opposing and intertwined triangles, where one is like a reflection or inverted image of the other, a representation of the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of Christ; and the number six includes among its meanings those of union and mediation, which are perfectly suited to the Incarnate Word. On the other hand, the number six itself, according to Hebrew Kabbalah, is the number of creation (the work of six days), and, in this respect, attributing the symbol to the Word is not without justification, as it is a kind of graphic translation of the "*per quem omnia facta sunt*" of the Creed⁸.

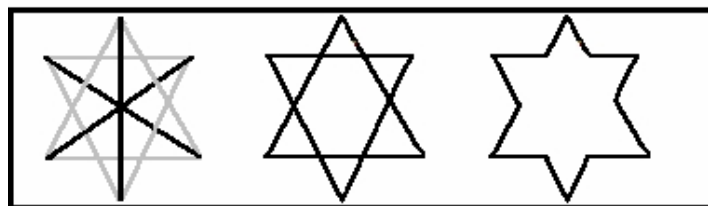


fig. 7

fig. 8

fig. 9

However, what is particularly interesting from the perspective of this study is that the double triangle was chosen in the 16th century, and possibly even earlier, as the emblem and password of certain corporations. Similarly, especially in Germany, it became the usual emblem of the taverns or breweries where these guilds held their meetings⁹. It was, in a way, a common general mark, in that the more or less complex figures in which the "four" was found were personal marks, specific to each master; and is it not logical to assume that there must have been a certain relationship between the latter and the former, the same relationship that exists between the Chi-Rho and the double triangle, the reality of which we have just demonstrated?

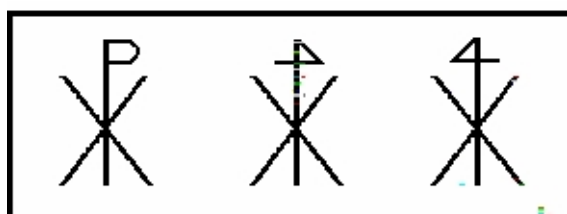


fig. 10

fig. 11

fig. 12

⁸ (Translator's note = "through whom all things were made"). In China, six strokes arranged in a different way are also a symbol of the Word; they also represent the middle ground of the Great Triad, that is, the Mediator between Heaven and Earth, who unites in himself the two natures, heavenly and earthly.

⁹ In this regard, let us point out a curious and little-known fact: the legend of Faust, dating from around the same period, was an integral part of the initiation ritual of printers.

The Constantinian Chi-Rho (fig. 10), which is composed of two Greek letters joined together, X and P, the first two letters of 'Christos', seems at first glance to be derived directly from the simple Chi-Rho, whose basic layout it retains exactly, and from which it differs only in the addition of a loop at the top, which transforms the I into a P. However, if we consider the "four" in its simplest and most common forms, the similarity, or even identity, with the Constantinian Chi-Rho is undeniable; and it is especially striking when the number 4, or the sign that imitates its shape and which at the same time may be a deformation of the P, is turned to the right (fig. 11) instead of to the left (fig. 12), as examples of both orientations are found indiscriminately¹⁰. In addition, a second symbolic element appears here that was not in the Constantinian Chi-Rho: we refer to a cross-shaped sign that is introduced very naturally by the transformation of the P into a 4. This sign is often emphasised by the addition of a supplementary line, either horizontal (fig. 13) or vertical (fig. 14), which constitutes a kind of duplication of the cross¹¹.

It can be seen that in the second of these figures, the entire lower part of the Chi-Rho is missing and is replaced by a personal monogram, as well as various symbols in other cases. Perhaps this gave rise to certain doubts about the identity of the sign, which remains constant throughout all these changes: but we believe that the marks containing the complete Chi-Rho are those that represent the primitive form, while the others are later modifications which resulted in the preserved part being taken for the whole, probably without ever losing sight of the meaning.

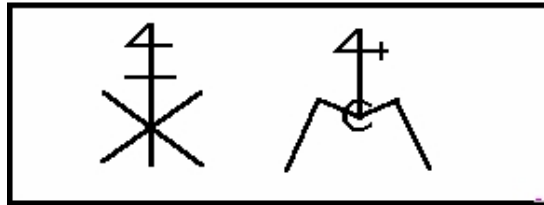


Figure 13

Fig. 14

However, it seems to us that in certain cases the cross element of the symbol came to occupy the foreground; at least this is what we gather from the association of the "four" with certain signs, and this is the point that remains to be examined.

Among the signs in question, there is one that appears on a 16th-century tapestry preserved in the Chartres museum, the nature of which is beyond doubt: it is clearly, in a slightly modified form, the "globe of the world" (fig. 16), a symbol consisting of the hermetic sign of the mineral kingdom crowned by a cross; here the "four" has simply taken the place of the cross¹².

¹⁰ Fig. 12 reproduced by Deonna includes the following mention: "Mark of Zacharias Palthenio, printer, Frankfurt, 1599".

¹¹ Fig. 13: "Mark dated 1540, Geneva; attributed to Jacques Bernard, first 'Reformed' pastor of Satigny". Fig. 14: "Mark of the printer Carolus Marellus, Paris, 1631".

¹² We have also seen the sign of the 'globe of the world' in numerous marks from the early 16th century.

Such a "globe of the world" is essentially a sign of power, and at the same time a sign of temporal and spiritual power, for although it is true that it is one of the insignia of imperial dignity, it is also constantly found in the hand of Christ, and not only in those representations that more particularly evoke divine majesty, such as those of the Last Judgement, but even in representations of the Christ child. Thus, when this sign replaces the Chi-Rho (and here we must remember the link that originally united this sign with the "roundel", another symbol of the World), it can be said that, in short, it is even an attribute of Christ that has replaced another; likewise, the idea of 'mastery' is directly linked to this new attribute, as in the case of the sign of Jupiter, in which the upper part of the symbol in particular may make us think of this, but without it losing its value as a cross, about which there is no doubt when the two figures are compared.

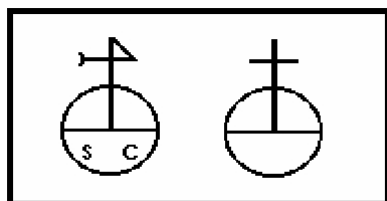


Fig. 15

Fig. 16

Fig. 17

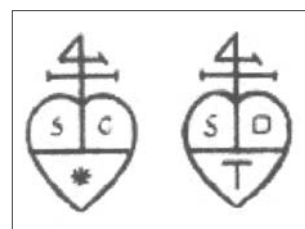


Fig. 18

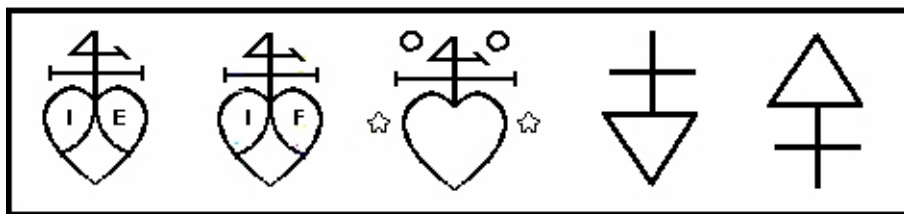
This brings us to a group of marks that are the direct reason for this study: the essential difference between these marks and those we discussed last is the replacement of the globe with a heart. Curiously, both types of symbols are closely linked to each other (Figures 17 and 18), as in some cases the heart is divided by lines that follow exactly the same pattern that characterises the 'globe of the world' ¹³. Does this not indicate an equivalence, at least in a certain respect, and would this not be enough to suggest that it is the 'Heart of the World'? In other examples, the straight lines drawn inside the heart are replaced by curved lines that seem to draw the heart's atria, where the initials are inscribed (Figures 19 and 20). but these marks appear to be more recent than the previous ones ¹⁴, so that in all likelihood this is a fairly late modification, possibly intended simply to give the figure a more or less geometric and ornamental appearance.

Finally, there are more complex variants in which the main symbol is accompanied by secondary signs, which clearly do not change its meaning in any way, and even in the one we reproduce (fig. 21), it allows us to think that the

¹³Fig. 17: "16th-century upholstery mark, Chartres Museum." Fig. 18: "Mark of Master Samuel de Tournes, on a pewter cup by Pierre Rayaume, Geneva, 1609."

¹⁴ Fig. 19: "Mark of Jacques Eynard, Genoese merchant, on a 17th-century stained glass window". Fig. 20: "Master's mark on a pewter plate by Jacques Morel, Geneva, 1719".

The stars are there only to emphasise more decisively the heavenly nature that must be recognised¹⁵. By this we mean that, in our opinion, all these figures should be seen as the Heart of Christ, and that it is not possible to see anything else, since such a heart is crowned by a cross, and even, in the case of all those we can see, by a double cross with the addition of a horizontal line to the number 4.



23 Let

us open now a parentheses to point out another curious

approximation:

by schematising these figures, we obtain a well-known hermetic symbol (figure 22), which is nothing more than the inverted position of the alchemical symbol for sulphur (fig. 23). We thus rediscover the inverted triangle, whose equivalence with the heart and the cup we have already indicated in our previous article. On its own, this triangle is only the alchemical sign for water, while the triangle with the apex pointing upwards is the sign for fire. Now, among the various meanings attributed to water in the most ancient traditions, there is one that is particularly interesting to highlight here: it is the symbol of Grace and the regeneration it brings about in the being who receives it. Let us recall the baptismal water, the four fountains of living water in the earthly Paradise, as well as the water poured out by the Heart of Christ, the inexhaustible source of Grace. Finally, and to reinforce the explanation, the inverted symbol of sulphur signifies the descent of spiritual influences into the 'world below', that is, into the earthly and human world; in other words, it is the 'heavenly dew' of which we have already spoken¹⁶. These are the hermetic symbols mentioned above, and it should be noted that their true meaning is far removed from the false interpretations that certain contemporary sects attempt to assign to them!

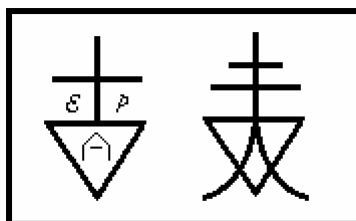


Fig.24

Fig.25

Having said this, let us return to our corporate brands to summarise in a few words the conclusions that seem to us to follow from what we have just explained.

¹⁵ Fig. 21: "Master's mark on a pewter plate by Pierre Royaume, Geneva, 1-09".

¹⁶ Figure 24, which is the same hermetic symbol accompanied by initials, comes from a tombstone in Geneva (lapidary collections, no. 573). Fig. 25, which is a modification of this, is mentioned in these terms by M. Deonna: "Keystone of a house in Molard, Geneva, demolished in 1889, mark of Jean de Villard, dated 1576".

Firstly, we believe we have sufficiently established that the Chi-Rho is the fundamental type from which all these marks derive, and from which, consequently, they derive their main meaning. Secondly, when in certain marks we see the Heart taking the place of the Chi-Rho and other symbols that unequivocally refer directly to Christ, would we not be justified in stating decisively that this heart is indeed the Heart of Christ? Let us add that, as already pointed out, the fact that the heart is crowned by a cross, or by a surely equivalent sign, or even better by both together, supports this statement in the best possible way, since in any other hypothesis we do not see how it could be offered an plausible. Finally, is not the idea of inscribing one's own name, with initials or a monogram, on the very Heart of Christ, very characteristic of the piety of our ancestors?¹⁷

With this last reflection, we conclude this study, content for now with having contributed, with precise data on some interesting points of religious symbolism in general, to the ancient iconography of the Sacred Heart, a contribution that comes to us from a somewhat unexpected source, and hoping only that among our readers there may be some who can supplement it with documentary contributions of the same kind, as we believe that there may well be a considerable number of them here and there, and it would suffice to gather them together to form a truly impressive collection of testimonies.⁽¹⁸⁾

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¹⁷ It is noteworthy that most of the marks we have reproduced, taken from Deonna's documentation, are of Genevan origin and must have belonged there; but this is perhaps not too surprising, considering that Cromwell's chaplain, Thomas Goodwin, dedicated a book to devotion to the Heart of Jesus. We think we should be glad to see Protestants themselves bearing witness in this way to the cult of the Sacred Heart.

¹⁸It would be particularly interesting to investigate whether the heart is sometimes found in the marks of master builders and stone carvers who worked on St Peter's Cathedral in Geneva, among which are inverted triangles, some accompanied by a cross placed below or inside; it is therefore not unlikely that the heart also figured among the emblems used by this guild.

Chapter III: ABOUT SOME HERMETIC-RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

We thought it would be of interest to provide some additional explanations about certain symbols that have already been discussed in this magazine. These explanations, it is true, are not directly related to the Sacred Heart, but since some readers have requested studies on symbolism in general (see July 1925, p. 169), we believe that they are not entirely out of place here.

One of the symbols to which we refer is the *Janus bifrons*, which was reproduced by L. Charbonneau-Lassay following his article on sundials (May 1925, p. 484). The most common interpretation is that Janus' two faces represent the past and the future respectively: this interpretation is perfectly accurate, but it corresponds to only one aspect of Janus' highly complex symbolism. From this point of view, there is already a very important observation to be made: between the past that no longer exists and the future that is not yet here, the true face of Janus, the one that looks at the present, is said to be neither of those that can be seen. This third face is, in fact, invisible, because the present, in its temporal manifestation, is but an elusive instant; but when we rise above the conditions of this transitory and contingent manifestation, the present, on the contrary, contains all reality. Janus' third eye corresponds, in another symbolism, to Shiva's frontal eye, also invisible, since it is not represented by any bodily organ, and of which we have had occasion to speak in connection with the Holy Grail (August-September 1925, p. 187), as representing the "sense of eternity". According to Hindu tradition, a glance from this third eye reduces everything to ashes, that is, it destroys all manifestation, but when succession is transmuted into simultaneity, the temporal into the timeless, all things remain in the "eternal present," so that apparent destruction is really nothing more than a "transformation." It is easy to understand from these considerations that Janus can legitimately be taken as a figure of the One who is not only the 'Master of the triple time' (a designation that is also applied to Shiva), but also, and above all, the 'Lord of Eternity'. Moreover, the 'Lord of Time' cannot himself be subject to time, just as, according to Aristotle's teaching, the prime mover of all things, or the principle of universal motion, is necessarily immobile. He is the eternal Word that Holy Scripture designates as the "Ancient of Days", the Father of the ages or cycles of existence (such is the proper meaning of the Latin *seculum*), and Hindu tradition also gives him the equivalent title of *Purâna-Purusha*.

In the two faces of Janus mentioned in his article, L. Charbonneau-Lassay had seen "that of an older man, looking back to times past, and the other, younger, fixed on the future"; and this, according to what we have just said, was indeed very plausible. However, it seemed to us that, in the present case, it was above all an androgynous Janus, of which there are also frequent examples; we made this observation to Charbonneau, who, after re-examining the figure in question, agreed with us that the face turned to the right must be a female face. In this respect, Janus is comparable to *the Rebis* of

¹ For this reason, some languages, such as Hebrew and Arabic, do not have a verb form corresponding to the present tense.

the Hermeticists of the Middle Ages (from *res bina*, double thing, union of two natures in a single being), which is also represented in the form of a two-headed character, one male and one female; the only difference is that this *Rebis* is Sun-Moon, as indicated by the accompanying emblems that usually accompany it, while *Janus-Jana* is more like *Lunus-Moon*. For this reason, his head is often topped by a crescent moon, instead of the crown he wears in the figure reproduced in *Regnabit* (there would be much to say about the relationship between that crown and that crescent moon; it should also be noted that the name Diana, the moon goddess, is another form of *Jana*, the female aspect of *Janus*. We are merely pointing out this aspect of the symbolism of the ancient Latin god, without going into further detail, as there are others that we believe are worth emphasising a little more.

Janus is the *Janitor* who opens and closes the annual cycle, and the two keys he most often carries are those of the two solstice doors. On the other hand, he was also the god of initiation into the mysteries (*initiatio* derives from *in-ire*, and, according to Cicero, the very name *Janus* has the same root as the verb *ire*); in this new aspect, the same two keys, one of gold and one of silver, were those of the 'great mysteries' and the 'lesser mysteries'; is it not natural that this should have been seen as a prefiguration of the keys that open and close the Kingdom of Heaven? Moreover, by virtue of a certain astronomical symbolism that seems to have been common to all ancient peoples, there are very close links between the two meanings we have just indicated; the symbolism to which we refer is that of the zodiacal cycle, and it is not without reason that this cycle, with its two ascending and descending halves that have their respective starting points at the two solstices of winter and summer, is represented on the portals of so many churches of the Middle Ages. Here we see another meaning of the two faces of Janus: he is the "Master of the Two Ways" to which the two solstice doors give access, those two ways of the right and the left which the Pythagoreans represented by the letter Y², and which Hindu tradition, for its part, designates as the "path of the gods" and the "path of the ancestors" (*déva-yâna* and *pitri-yâna*; the Sanskrit word *yâna* has the same root as the Latin *ire*, and its form brings it singularly close to the name *Janus*). These two paths are also, in a sense, those of Heaven and Hell; and it will be noted that the two sides to which they correspond, the right and the left, are those where the elect and the damned are divided in representations of the Last Judgement, which, by a very significant coincidence, are also so often found at the entrance to churches.

On the other hand, according to the Hebrew Kabbalah, two divine attributes correspond respectively to the right and the left: Mercy (*Hesed*) and Justice (*Din*). These two attributes clearly apply to Christ, especially when he is considered in his role as judge of the living and the dead. The Arabs, making a similar distinction, say "Beauty" (*Djemâl*) and "Majesty" (*Djelâl*), and one could understand from these latter designations that the two aspects have been represented by a female face and a male face. If we refer to the figure that prompted this note, we see that, on the male side, Janus carries a sceptre, the insignia of majesty, while on the female side, he holds a key; this key and this sceptre therefore replace the two keys that are a more common emblem of Janus himself, and perhaps convey even more clearly one of the meanings of this emblem, which is that of a dual power deriving from a single principle: priestly power and royal power. There it is, in effect,

² This is also what the myth of Hercules between Virtue and Vice represented in an exoteric form. We found the ancient Pythagorean symbol, somewhat surprisingly, in the mark of the printer Nicolas du Chemin, drawn by Jean Cousin.

This is yet another of its multiple and concordant meanings, implicit in the symbolism of Janus, and also very appropriate to be seen as a figure of Christ; it is not precisely to the readers of Regnabit that it is necessary to explain that Christ eminently and par excellence belongs to the supreme Priesthood and Kingship.

The Hebrew Kabbalah synthesises the symbolism we have just discussed in the figure of the Sephirotic tree, which represents the set of divine attributes, and where the "column on the right" and the "column on the left" have the meaning we have been indicating; this tree is also designated as the "Tree of Life" (*Ets ha-Hayim*). It is noteworthy that a strictly equivalent representation appears in the medieval symbolism of the "Tree of the Living and the Dead," described by L. Charbonneau-Lassay in his recent article on "Emblematic Trees" (August-September 1925, p. 178) and which also evokes the idea of "spiritual posterity", which is very important in various traditional doctrines.

According to Scripture, the "Tree of Life" was located in the middle of Eden (*Genesis*, II, 9), and, as we have explained in our study on the legend of the Holy Grail, Eden itself was the spiritual centre of the world. This tree therefore represented the unchanging axis around which the revolution of all things takes place (a revolution with which the zodiacal cycle is also related); and for this reason the "Tree of Life" is designated in other traditions as the "Tree of the World". We will list only a few of the trees that, in different peoples, have been taken to symbolise this "Tree of the World": the fig tree in India, the oak among the Celts and in Dodona, the ash tree among the Scandinavians, and the lime tree among the Germans. We believe that we should also see a figure of the "Tree of the World" or the "Tree of Life" in the hermetic *ex libris* of the 18th century that Charbonneau has reproduced in the same article (p. 179); here, it is represented by the acacia, the Hebrew symbol of immortality and incorruptibility, and therefore of resurrection. It is precisely, according to Hebrew tradition, from the "Tree of Life" that this "heavenly dew" emanates, which we have already had occasion to mention on several occasions and through which the resurrection of the dead must take place.

Despite the presence of the acacia, the *ex libris* in question has no specifically Masonic character; the two columns on the right and left of the Sephirotic tree are not represented there, as they would be in such a case, by the two columns of Solomon's Temple. Their place is taken by two triangular prisms with pyramidal ends, placed in opposite directions to each other and crowned respectively by the sun and the moon. These two celestial bodies thus related constitute the acronym Sun and Moon that accompanies the ancient crucifixions³ and at the same time evoke the idea of the Hermetic *Rebis*, which is further confirmation of the very close relationship between all the symbols we are considering here. As for the two prisms themselves, they offer the image of two opposing ternaries forming the "Seal of Solomon", which we discussed in our article on corporate marks (November 1925); and these same two triads are also found in the obviously deliberate arrangement of the branches and roots of the tree itself, an arrangement that is quite clearly reminiscent of the fleur-de-lis and other heraldic figures that have the Chi-Rho as their general pattern.

³In such representations, the cross is placed between the sun and the moon, exactly as the "Tree of Life" is here; it hardly needs to be pointed out that the cross is also the *Lignum Vitae*.

All this is undoubtedly very curious and gives rise to abundant reflection; we hope that, by pointing out all these relationships, we will at least have succeeded in conveying to some extent the identity of all traditions, clear proof of their original unity, and the perfect conformity of Christianity with the primordial Tradition, traces of which are scattered everywhere.

Finally, we would like to say a few words about an objection that has been raised to us concerning the connections we have considered between the Holy Grail and the Sacred Heart, although, to tell the truth, we find the response that has been given to it entirely satisfactory⁴.

It matters little, in fact, that Chrestien de Troyes and Robert de Boron did not see, in the ancient legend of which they were merely adapters, all the meaning contained therein; this meaning was nevertheless truly contained therein, and we do not claim to have done anything other than make it explicit, without introducing anything "modern" into our interpretation. Moreover, it is very difficult to say exactly what 12th-century writers saw or did not see in the legend; and, given that they played only a simple role as "transmitters", we readily concede that they probably did not see everything that their inspirers saw, that is, the true holders of traditional doctrine.

On the other hand, as far as the Celts are concerned, we have taken care to remember what precautions must be taken when talking about them, in the absence of any written documentation; but why should we assume, despite the contrary evidence we do have, that they were less favoured than other peoples of Antiquity? Indeed, everywhere, and not only in Egypt, we see the symbolic assimilation established between the heart and the cup or vessel; everywhere, the heart is considered the centre of being, a centre that is both divine and human in the multiple applications it allows; everywhere, too, the sacrificial cup represents the Centre or Heart of the World, the "abode of immortality"; What more is needed? We know well that the cup and the spear, or their equivalents, have also had other meanings than those we have indicated, but, without dwelling on this, we can say that all these meanings, however strange some may seem to modern eyes, are perfectly consistent with each other and actually express the applications of the same principle to different orders, according to a law of correspondence on which the harmonious multiplicity of meanings included in all symbolism is based.

Now, that not only is the Centre of the World effectively identified with the Heart of Christ, but that this identity has been clearly indicated in ancient doctrines, is something we hope to show in other studies. Obviously, the expression "Heart of Christ" in this case must be taken in a sense that is not precisely what we might call "historical"; but it should be noted that the facts

⁴ We could also have mentioned the hermetic *athanor*, the vessel in which the "Great Work" is accomplished, whose name, according to some, derives from the Greek *athánatos*, "immortal"; the invisible fire that is perpetually maintained in it corresponds to the vital heat that resides in the heart. We could also have established links with another widespread symbol, that of *the egg*, which signifies resurrection and immortality, and to which we may perhaps have occasion to return. Let us point out, at least as a matter of curiosity, that the *cup* in the Tarot (whose origin is, incidentally, quite mysterious) has been replaced by the *heart* in French playing cards, which is another indication of the equivalence of the two symbols.

Historical symbols, like everything else, translate higher realities in their own way and conform to the law of correspondence we have just mentioned, a law which alone can explain certain "prefigurations". This is, if you like, the Christ principle, that is, the Word manifested at the central point of the Universe; but

who would dare to claim that the eternal Word and its historical, earthly and human manifestation are not really and substantially one and the same Christ in two different aspects? This also touches on the question of the relationship between the temporal and the timeless; perhaps it is not advisable to dwell on this too much, for these things are precisely those that only symbolism allows us to express to the extent that they are expressible. In any case, it is enough to know how to read the symbols to find in them everything that we find; but, unfortunately, particularly in our time, not everyone knows how to read them.

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Chapter IV: THE WORD AND THE SYMBOL

In one of his latest articles (*Regnabit*, November 1925), Rev. Father Anizán has insisted, quite rightly and particularly appropriately, on the importance of symbolic form in the transmission of doctrinal teachings of a religious and traditional nature. We would like to return to the same subject in order to provide some additional details and show even more explicitly the different points of view from which it can be approached.

First of all, symbolism appears to us to be particularly well suited to the demands of human nature, which is not purely intellectual, but needs a sensitive basis in order to rise to higher spheres. It is necessary to take the human composite as it is, both one and multiple in its real complexity; this is what we often tend to forget, ever since Descartes sought to establish a radical and absolute separation between the soul and the body. For pure intelligence, of course, no external form, no expression is needed to understand the truth, nor even to communicate to other pure intelligences what it has understood, insofar as this is communicable; but this is not the case with man. Fundamentally, every expression, every formulation, whatever it may be, is a symbol of thought, which it translates externally; in this sense, language itself is nothing more than symbolism. There should therefore be no opposition between the use of words and that of figurative symbols; these two modes of expression would rather be mutually complementary (and in fact, they can be combined, since writing is primitively ideographic and sometimes, as in China, has always retained that character). In general, the form of language is analytical, 'discursive', like human reason, of which it is the proper instrument and whose course language follows or reproduces as accurately as possible; On the contrary, symbolism proper is essentially synthetic, and therefore "intuitive" in a certain way, which makes it more suitable than language to serve as a support for "intellectual intuition," which is above reason and should not be confused with the inferior intuition to which various contemporary philosophers appeal. Consequently, if we are not content with merely noting the difference, and wish to speak of superiority, this will be, however much some may claim the contrary, on the side of synthetic symbolism, which opens up truly unlimited possibilities of conception, while language, with its more defined and fixed meanings, always places more or less narrow limits on understanding.

Let it not be said, then, that the symbolic form is good for the common people; the truth is rather the opposite; or, better still, that form is equally good for everyone, because it helps each person, according to the measure of their own intellectual possibilities, to understand more or less completely, more or less deeply, the truth represented by it. Thus, the highest truths, which would in no way be communicable or transmissible by any other means, become so to a certain extent when they are, so to speak, incorporated into symbols that will undoubtedly conceal them from many, but which will reveal them in all their splendour to the eyes of those who know how to see.

Is it fair to say that the use of symbolism is a necessity? Here it is necessary to make a distinction: in itself and in an absolute sense, no external form is necessary; all are equally contingent and accidental with respect to what they express or represent. Thus, according to Hindu teaching, any figure, for example a statue symbolising this or that aspect of the Divinity, should be considered only as a 'support', a point of reference for meditation; it is, therefore, a simple 'aid' and nothing more. A Vedic text gives a comparison in this regard that

perfectly clarifies this role of symbols and external forms in general: such forms are like the horse that allows a man to travel more quickly and with much less effort than if he had to do so by his own means. Undoubtedly, if that man did not have a horse at his disposal, he could still reach his goal, but with how much greater difficulty! If he can use a horse, he would be very wrong to refuse to do so on the pretext that it is more dignified for him not to resort to any help: is this not precisely how the detractors of symbolism act? And even if the journey is long and arduous, although it is never absolutely impossible to make it on foot, there may be a real practical impossibility of doing so. This is the case with rites and symbols: they are not absolutely necessary, but they are necessary in a certain way for reasons of convenience, in view of the conditions of human nature.

But it is not enough to consider symbolism from the human side, as we have done so far; in order to penetrate its full scope, it is also necessary to approach it from the divine side, if I may express it that way. If it is proven that symbolism has its foundation in the very nature of beings and things, that it is in perfect conformity with the laws of that nature, and if we reflect on the fact that natural laws are ultimately nothing more than an expression and a manifestation of the divine Will, does this not authorise us to affirm that such symbolism is of "non-human" origin, as the Hindus say, or, in other words, that its principle goes back further and higher than humanity?

It is not without reason that Father Anizán, at the beginning of whose article we refer to throughout, recalled the first words of the Gospel of St John: "In the beginning was the Word". The Word, the *Logos*, is both Thought and Word: in itself, it is the divine Intellect, which is the "place of possibilities"; in relation to us, it manifests and expresses itself through Creation, in which some of those same possibilities, which as essences have been contained in Him since all eternity, are realised in actual existence. Creation is the work of the Word; it is also, for that very reason, its manifestation, its external affirmation; and that is why the world is like a divine language for those who know how to understand it: *Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei* (Ps. XIX, 2). The philosopher Berkeley was not wrong, then, when he said that the world is "the language that the infinite Spirit speaks to finite spirits"; but he was mistaken in believing that this language is nothing more than a set of arbitrary signs, when in reality there is nothing arbitrary even in human language, for all meaning must have its origin in some natural convenience or harmony between the sign and the thing signified. Because Adam had received from God the knowledge of the nature of all living beings, he was able to give them their names (*Genesis*, II, 19-20); and all ancient traditions agree in teaching that the true name of a being is one with its very nature or essence.

If the Word is Thought within and Speech without, and if the world is the effect of the divine Word uttered at the beginning of time, then the whole of nature can be taken as a symbol of supernatural reality. Everything that exists, whatever its mode of being, having its origin in the divine Intellect, translates or represents that principle in its own way and according to its order of existence; and thus, from one order to another, all things are linked and correspond to each other in order to contribute to universal and total harmony, which is like a reflection of the divine Unity itself. This correspondence is the true foundation of symbolism, and that is why the laws of a lower domain can always be taken to symbolise the reality of a higher order, where they have their profound reason, which is both their beginning and their end. Let us point out, on this occasion, the error of modern 'naturalistic' interpretations of ancient traditional doctrines, interpretations that simply reverse the hierarchy of relationships between

different orders of reality: for example, symbols or myths have never had the function of representing the movement of the stars, but the truth is that they often contain figures inspired by that movement and intended to express something quite different analogically, because the laws of the former physically translate the metaphysical principles on which they depend. The lower can symbolise the higher, but the reverse is impossible; on the other hand, if the symbol were not closer to the sensible order than that represented by it, how could it fulfil the function for which it is intended? In nature, the sensible can symbolise the supersensible; the entire natural order can, in turn, be a symbol of the divine order; and, moreover, if we consider man more particularly, is it not legitimate to say that he too is a symbol, by the very fact that he was 'created in the image of God' (*Genesis*, 1:26-27)? Let us add that nature only acquires its full meaning when considered as a means of elevating us to the knowledge of divine truths, which is precisely the essential role we have recognised in symbolism¹.

These considerations could be developed almost indefinitely, but we prefer to leave it to each individual to develop them through personal reflection, as nothing could be more beneficial. Like the symbols that are their subject, these notes should be nothing more than a starting point for meditation. Words, moreover, can only very imperfectly convey what is at stake here; nevertheless, there is still one aspect of the question, and not the least important, which we shall endeavour to make understood, or at least to give a glimpse of, by means of a brief indication.

The divine Word is expressed in Creation, we said, and this is comparable, analogically and all proportions considered, to thought expressed in forms (it is no longer possible here to distinguish between language and symbols proper) that both veil and manifest it. The primordial Revelation, the work of the Word like Creation, is also incorporated, so to speak, into symbols that have been transmitted from age to age since the origins of humanity; and this process is also analogous, in its order, to that of Creation itself. On the other hand, can we not see in this symbolic incorporation of the "non-human" tradition a kind of anticipated image, a "prefiguration" of the Incarnation of the Word? And does this not also allow us to perceive, to a certain extent, the mysterious relationship between Creation and the Incarnation that crowns it?

We will conclude with one last observation, because we do not forget that this magazine is especially the Magazine of the Sacred Heart. If symbolism is, in its essence, strictly in accordance with the 'divine plan', and if the Sacred Heart is the "centre of the divine plan", just as the heart is the centre of the being, both in reality and symbolically, this symbol of the Heart, by itself or through its equivalents, must occupy a truly central place in all doctrines emanating more or less directly from the primordial Tradition, the place that gives it, in the midst of the planetary and zodiacal circles, the

¹ It is perhaps worth noting that this point of view, according to which nature is considered a symbol of the supernatural, is by no means new, but on the contrary, was commonly held in the Middle Ages; it was especially that of the Franciscan school, and in particular of St. Bonaventure. Let us also note that analogy, in the Thomistic sense of the word, which allows us to ascend from the knowledge of creatures to that of God, is nothing more than a mode of symbolic expression based on the correspondence between the natural and supernatural orders.

A Carthusian monk who sculpted the marble of Saint-Denis d'Orques (see *Regnabit*, February 1924); this is precisely what we will attempt to demonstrate in other studies.

P.S. Since our article in November 1925, we have been informed of some marks of printers or booksellers from the 17th century, among which we have found three featuring the heart associated with the "four of figures". One of these marks is strictly similar, including the initials, to the one we have represented in our figure 17, giving it, according to M. Deonna, as a 16th-century tapestry mark; this similarity is undoubtedly nothing more than a coincidence, as it is unlikely that the author we have quoted would have given an erroneous reference in this regard. Be that as it may, this mark is associated with two others, one of which is certainly that of the printer Carolus Morellus (see our figure 14), and the other differs from it only in the monogram, which consists of the initials S. M., and in the absence of any additional bar added to the 4.

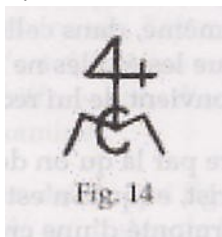


Figure 14

Another mark is of the type shown in our figure 20; the initials placed in the heart are D. B., and the lower part bears a sun instead of a star; this mark is placed under a shield on which there is another sun crowned by a royal crown. The third is of the same type, but the initials A.

D. that appear there are enclosed in two circles occupying the place of the curves that simulate the atria of the heart: the lower part of the heart bears three stars; in addition, the four is accompanied by both a horizontal bar and a vertical bar. This last mark is contained in an oval cartouche placed under a royal crown supported by two angels with the motto "*Non coronatur nisi qui legitime certaverit*". Perhaps these indications will enable some readers of this journal to identify the marks in question precisely.

Let us also point out, on this occasion, that there is a clear similarity between marks of this type and those of the Orléans printer Matthieu Vivian (1490), previously reproduced by L. Charbonneau-Lassay in *Regnabit*, January 1924, p. 124). The main difference is that, in the latter, the heart containing the initials is not crowned by the 'four of figures', but only by the cross; this similarity leads us to consider as very plausible, to say the least, the hypothesis that, in this case too, it is the Heart of Christ that is intended to be represented.

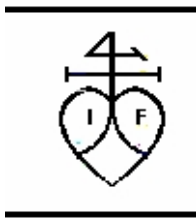


Figure 20

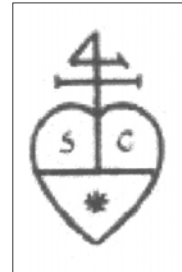


Figure 17

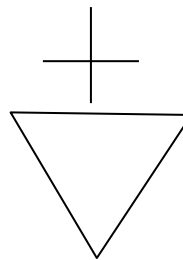
Published in *Regnabit*, January 1926. This study referred to an article by Fr. Anizán, entitled "Si nous savions regarder" (If we knew how to look), which appeared in the November 1925 issue. It was also posthumously compiled in *Symboles de la Science Sacrée*.

Chapter V: ON CORPORATE SIGNS AND THEIR ORIGINAL MEANING

Given that the article we devoted to ancient corporate signs (*Regnabit*, November 1925) seems to have aroused the interest of a number of readers, we return once again to this little-known subject in order to add some other points that we consider useful, judging by the questions that have been submitted to us from various quarters.

Firstly, since then we have received confirmation of what we said at the end of the article regarding the signs of bricklayers and stonemasons and the hermetic symbols to which they seem to be directly linked. The information we are referring to comes from an article on "Comradeship" which, by a strange coincidence, was published at exactly the same time as ours. From there we take this passage: "Christianity, having reached its zenith, sought a style that would summarise its thinking, and replaced domes, semicircular arches and massive towers with slender spires and ogives, which gradually spread. It was then that the Papacy founded the University of the Arts in Rome, to which monasteries from all countries sent their students and lay builders. In this way, these elites founded the universal Mastery, where stonemasons, sculptors, carpenters and other craftsmen of the Arts received that constructive conception they called the Great Work. The gathering of all the foreign Masters of Work formed the symbolic association, the trowel topped by the cross; and from the arms of the cross hung the square and the compass. The emblematic marks created the symbols of the universal Grand Mastery¹.

The trulla topped by the cross is exactly the hermetic symbol that we reproduced in figure 22 of our article:



and the trulla, because of its triangular shape, was considered there as an emblem of the Trinity: "*Sanctissima Trinitas Conditor Mundi*"². Moreover, it seems that the Trinitarian dogma was particularly emphasised by the ancient guilds, and most of the documents originating from them begin with the formula: "In the name of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity".

Since we have already pointed out the symbolic identity between the inverted triangle and the heart, it is worth adding that the latter can also be

¹ Auguste Bonvours, *La Religion de l'Art*, in "*Le Voile d'Isis*", special issue dedicated to "Comradeship", November 1925.

² The word *Conditor* contains an allusion to the symbolism of the "cornerstone". –At the end of the article there is a curious figure of the Trinity, in which the inverted triangle plays an important role.

attribute a Trinitarian meaning to it. We find proof of this in a plate drawn and engraved by Callot for a thesis defended in 1625, which was discussed by R. P. Anizán in this same journal (December 1922). At the top of the composition is the Heart of Christ, containing three *yods*, the first letter of the name of *Jehovah* in Hebrew; these three *yods* were also considered to form a divine name in themselves, which is quite natural to interpret as an expression of the Trinity³. "Today," wrote Father Anizán on this subject, "we worship the 'Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father'; the 'Heart of Jesus substantially united to the Word of God'; the Heart of Jesus, formed by the *Holy Spirit* in the womb of the Virgin Mary'. How can we be surprised that in 1625 the august contact between the Heart of Jesus and the Holy Trinity was attested to? In the 12th century, some theologians saw this Heart as the 'Holy of Holies' and as the 'Ark of the Testament'⁴. This truth could not be lost: its very expression wins the adherence of the spirit. In fact, it was not lost. In a *Diurnal* published in Antwerp in 1616, we read this beautiful prayer: 'O sweetest Heart of Jesus, where all good resides, *organ of the ever-adorable Trinity*, in you I trust, in you I take refuge completely'. That 'Organ of the Holy Trinity' is clearly represented here: it is the Heart with the three *iodes*. And this Heart of Christ, organ of the Trinity, our plate tells us in a word that it is the 'beginning of order': *Praedestinatio Christi est ordinis origo*".

There will be plenty of opportunity to return to other aspects of this symbolism, especially concerning the mystical meaning of the letter *iode*; but we did not want to fail to mention these significant parallels at this point.

Several people, who approve of our intention to restore the original meaning of symbols and who have kindly made this known to us, have at the same time expressed their desire to see Catholicism decisively reclaim all these symbols that rightfully belong to it, including those—such as triangles—that have been appropriated by organisations such as Freemasonry. The idea is very fair and in line with our thinking, but there is one point on which there may be, in the minds of some, a misunderstanding and even a real historical error, which it would be appropriate to dispel.

In truth, there are not many symbols that can be said to be exclusively 'Masonic'; we have already pointed this out in relation to the acacia (December 1925, p. 26). Even the most specifically 'constructive' emblems, such as the square and compass, have in fact been common to a large number of corporations, we might even say to almost all of them⁵, not to mention their use in purely hermetic symbolism⁶. Freemasonry uses symbols of a

³ The three *iodes* inscribed in the Heart of Christ are arranged in the order 2 and 1, so that they correspond to the three vertices of an inverted triangle. We may add that such an arrangement very often appears in the elements of the coat of arms; in particular, this is the case with the three fleurs-de-lis on the insignia of the kings of France.

⁴These assimilations are quite directly related to the question of the "spiritual centres" that we touched upon in our study of the Holy Grail; we will explain this point more fully when we address the symbolism of the heart in Hebrew traditions.

⁵The "Companionship" prohibited only shoemakers and bakers from carrying the compass.

⁶ Thus, since at least the early 17th century, the square and compass have appeared in the hands of the Hermetic *Rebis* (see, for example, the *Twelve Keys of Alchemy* by Basilio Valentín).

Quite diverse, at least apparently, but it is not, as is commonly believed, that it has appropriated them to divert them from their true meaning; it has received them, like other guilds (since in its origins it was one of these), at a time when it was very different from what it has become today, and it has preserved them, but for a long time now it no longer understands them.

"Everything indicates," said Joseph de Maistre, "that vulgar Freemasonry is a detached and perhaps corrupted branch of an ancient and respectable trunk"⁽⁷⁾. And this is precisely how the issue should be considered: too often, the mistake is made of thinking only of *modern* Freemasonry, without even considering that the latter is simply the result of a deviation. The first people responsible for this deviation were, it seems, the Protestant ministers Anderson and Desaguliers, who drafted the Constitutions of the Grand Lodge of England, published in 1723, and who made all the ancient documents that fell into their hands disappear, so that no one would notice the innovations they were introducing, and also because such documents contained formulas that they considered very uncomfortable, such as the obligation of "fidelity to God, *the Holy Church* and the King", an indisputable sign of the Catholic origin of Freemasonry⁸. This work of distortion was prepared by the Protestants, taking advantage of the fifteen years that had elapsed between the death of Christopher Wren, the last Grand Master of *ancient* Freemasonry (1702), and the founding of the new Grand Lodge of England (1717). However, they allowed the symbolism to remain, without realising that, for those who understood it, it testified against them as eloquently as the written texts, which they had not been able to destroy in their entirety. This, very briefly summarised, is what those who wish to combat the tendencies of modern Freemasonry effectively should know⁹.

It is not our place here to examine in its entirety the complex and controversial question of the plurality of origins of Freemasonry; we will limit ourselves to considering what might be called the corporate aspect, represented by *operative* Freemasonry, that is, the ancient builders' guilds. Like other guilds, these had a religious, or if you prefer, hermetic-religious symbolism, related to the concepts of Catholic esotericism so widespread in the Middle Ages, traces of which can be found everywhere in the monuments and even in the literature of that period. Despite what many historians maintain, the confluence of Hermeticism with Freemasonry dates back to long before Elias Ashmole's affiliation with the latter (1646); for our part, we even believe that, during the 17th century, it was only a matter of reconstructing, in this respect, a tradition that had already been largely lost. Some, who seem to be well informed about the history of guilds, even pinpoint the date of this loss of the ancient tradition very precisely, around the year 1459¹⁰. It seems indisputable to us that the two aspects, *operative* and *speculative*, have always been

⁷ *Mémoire au duc de Brunswick*, 1782.

⁸ During the 18th century, *Scottish* Freemasonry was an attempt to return to the Catholic tradition, represented by the Stuart dynasty, in opposition to *English* Freemasonry, which was already Protestant and devoted to the House of Orange.

⁹Subsequently, another deviation occurred in Latin countries, this time in an anti-religious direction, but it is worth emphasising the "Protestantisation" of Anglo-Saxon Freemasonry.

¹⁰ Albert Bernet, *Des Labyrinthes sur le sol des églises*, in the aforementioned issue of *Le Voile d'Isis*. However, this article contains a slight inaccuracy in this regard: it is not in Strasbourg, but in Cologne, that the Masonic letter of April 1459 is dated.

gathered in the guilds of the Middle Ages, which used certain clearly hermetic expressions such as "Great Work", with different applications but always analogous to each other¹¹.

On the other hand, if we really wanted to go back to the origins, assuming that this is possible with the necessarily fragmentary information available on such a subject, it would undoubtedly be necessary to go beyond the confines of the Middle Ages and even those of Christianity. This leads us to complete, in a certain respect, what we said about the symbolism of *Janus* in a previous article (December 1925), since this symbolism is closely related to the question we are now dealing with¹². In ancient Rome, the *Collegia fabrorum* paid special homage to *Janus*, in whose honour they celebrated the two solstice festivals, corresponding to the opening of the ascending and descending halves of the zodiacal cycle, that is, those points in the year which, in the astronomical symbolism to which we have already referred, represent the gates of the two celestial and infernal paths (*Janua Coeli* and *Janua Inferni*). Subsequently, this custom of solstice festivals continued to be practised in builders' guilds; but with the advent of Christianity, these festivals were identified with the two Saint Johns, winter and summer (hence the expression "Lodge of Saint John," which remained until it merged into modern Freemasonry), which is another example of the adaptation of pre-Christian symbols that we have pointed out on several occasions.

From what we have just said, we will draw two conclusions that we believe to be of interest. First, among the Romans, *Janus* was, as we have already said, the god of initiation into the Mysteries; at the same time, he was also the god of the guilds of craftsmen, and this cannot be a mere coincidence. There must necessarily have been a relationship between these two functions referring to the same symbolic entity; in other words, it was necessary that the guilds in question were already at that time, as they were later, in possession of a tradition of a truly 'initiatory' nature. We also believe that this is not a special and isolated case and that similar findings could be made in many other peoples; perhaps this could lead, with reference to the true origin of the arts and crafts, to conceptions not even suspected by modern people, for whom such traditions have become a dead letter.

The other consequence is as follows: the preservation, among medieval builders, of the tradition formerly linked to the symbolism of *Janus*,

¹¹ Let us also note that there existed, back in the 14th century, or perhaps even earlier, a *Massenie of the Holy Grail*, through which the fraternities of builders were linked to their Hermetic inspirers, and in which Henri Martin (*Histoire de France*, I, III, p. 398) rightly saw one of the true origins of Freemasonry.

¹²We would like to emphasise that at that time we did not intend to write a comprehensive study on *Janus*; to do so would have required a comparison of similar symbolism found among different peoples, particularly that of *Ganesh* in India, which would have led to very extensive developments. The image of *Janus* that served as the starting point for our note has been reproduced again in Charbonneau-Lassay's article in the same issue of *Regnabit* (December 1925, p. 15).

Among other things, it explains the importance for them of the representation of the Zodiac that we so often see reproduced on the porticoes of churches, generally arranged in such a way as to emphasise the ascending and descending nature of its two halves. For us, there was even something truly fundamental in the conception of the cathedral builders, who sought to capture in their works a kind of synthetic compendium of the Universe. Although the zodiac does not always appear, there are several other symbols that are equivalent to it, at least in a certain sense, and which evoke similar ideas in the context we are considering (without prejudice to their other more specific meanings): representations of the Last Judgement are part of this case, as are certain emblematic trees, as we have already explained. We could even go further and say that this conception is somehow implicit in the very layout of the cathedral's floor plan, but if we were to attempt to justify this last assertion, we would far exceed the limits of this simple note¹³.

Article published in *Regnabit*, February 1926 issue. Reproduced in "Etudes Traditionnelles", April-May 1951, and also posthumously compiled in *Etudes sur la Franc-Maçonnerie et le Compagnonnage II*.

¹³We would like to correct an inaccuracy that slipped into a note in our article on corporate signs (November 1925, p. 395), which some Provençal friends have kindly pointed out to us. The star on the coat of arms of Provence does not have eight points but only seven; it is therefore related to a series of symbols (the figures of the septenary) different from the one we referred to. On the other hand, in Provence there is also the star of Les Baux, which has sixteen rays (twice eight); and the latter even has a very particular symbolic importance, underlined by the legendary origin attributed to it, since the ancient lords of Les Baux claimed to be descendants of the Magi King Balthazar.

Chapter VI: THE TREES OF PARADISE

In his remarkable article from August-September 1925, Louis Charbonneau-Lassay showed that trees, in general, are emblems of resurrection in Christianity as well as in pre-Christian antiquity. For our part, we have indicated (December 1925) that the tree is also a figure of the 'Axis of the World'; and these two meanings, which are closely related and complement each other admirably, are both responsible for making the tree, as has indeed happened, a symbol of Christ.

In this regard, we have referred more particularly to the Tree of Life that stood in the centre of the earthly Paradise, and which clearly unites the two meanings in question. We even think that many emblematic trees, of different species depending on the country, or sometimes not belonging to any species found in nature, were first taken to represent the "Tree of Life" or "Tree of the World", although this original meaning may, in some cases, have been more or less forgotten afterwards. Is this not how we can explain in particular the name of the tree *Paradision* in the Middle Ages, a name that has sometimes been strangely distorted into *Peridexion*, as if it had ceased to be understood at a certain point?

But in the earthly Paradise, there was not only the Tree of Life; there was another that played a no less important and even more widely known role: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The relationship between these two trees is very mysterious; and, according to the text of the biblical account, they were located very close to each other. Indeed, *Genesis*, immediately after designating the Tree of Life as being in the middle of the garden, names the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (II, 9), and later it is said that the latter was also 'in the middle of the garden' (III, 3); and finally Adam, after eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, would then only have had to 'reach out' his hand to also take the fruit of the Tree of Life (III, 22). In the second of these three passages, God's defence relates solely to 'the tree in the middle of the garden', which is not further specified; but, referring back to the other passage in which this defence has already been stated (II, 17), it is clear that it is obviously the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that is being referred to in this case. Is it because of this proximity of the two trees that they are so closely linked in symbolism, to the point that some emblematic trees have features that evoke both? We would now like to draw attention to this point in order to complete what we have said previously, without, however, claiming to exhaust a question that seems to us to be extremely complex.

The nature of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil can, as its name suggests, be characterised by duality, but this could not be the case for the Tree of Life, whose function as the 'Axis of the World' essentially implies unity. Therefore, when we find an image of duality in an emblematic tree, it seems necessary to see in it an allusion to the Tree of Knowledge, while in other respects, the symbol in question would unquestionably be a figure of the Tree of Life. Thus, the "Tree of the Living and the Dead", on either side of which the fruits represent good and evil deeds respectively, is clearly related to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; and at the same time, its trunk, which is Christ himself, identifies it as the Tree of Life. We have already compared this medieval symbol with the Sephirotic tree of the Hebrew Kabbalah, which is expressly designated as the Tree

of Life, and where, nevertheless, the "column on the right" and the "column on the left" represent an analogous duality; but between the two is the "column in the middle" where the two opposing tendencies are balanced, and where the true unity of the Tree of Life is thus found.

This leads us to an observation that seems quite important to us: when we are in the presence of a tree that has a ternary form, such as the hermetic *ex-libris* of which L. Charbonneau-Lassay (August-September 1925, p. 179), it may happen that such a ternary, in addition to its own meaning as a ternary, has another meaning that results from the fact that it can be broken down into the unity and duality just discussed. In the example we recall, the idea of duality is also clearly expressed by the two columns, or rather the two triangular prisms surmounted by the sun and the moon (the correlation between these two celestial bodies also corresponds to one of the aspects of this duality considered in the cosmic order). Such a tree could very well synthesise in itself, in a certain way, the natures of the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, as if these were united in one¹. Instead of a single tree, one could also have, with the same meaning, three trees joined by their roots and arranged like the three columns of the Sephirotic tree (or like the three portals and three naves of a cathedral, and we alluded to this arrangement at the end of our last article); it would be interesting to investigate whether there are indeed iconographic examples of such a figuration in Christian symbolism.

The dual nature of the Tree of Knowledge only appears to Adam at the moment of the Fall, since it is then that he becomes "knowing good and evil" (III, 22)². It is also then that he is removed from the centre, which is the place of the first unity corresponding to the Tree of Life; and it is precisely "to guard the way to the Tree of Life" that the cherubim, armed with flaming swords, are placed at the entrance to Eden (III, 24). This centre has become inaccessible to fallen man, having, as we have said previously (August-September 1925), lost the sense of eternity, which is also the "sense of unity".

What we have just indicated reappears, on the other hand, in the symbolism of Janus; his third face, which is the true one³, is invisible, just as the Tree of Life is inaccessible in the state of decay of humanity; to see this third face of Janus, or to reach the Tree of Life, is to recover the "sense of eternity". The two visible faces are the same duality that constitutes the Tree of Knowledge; and we have already explained that the temporal condition in which man finds himself trapped by the Fall corresponds precisely to one of the aspects of Janus, that in which the two faces are considered to be looking respectively to the past and to the future (see our article of December 1925). These observations justify the connection we made at that time between symbols that, at first glance, may

¹ In a passage from Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrea*, for which we have unfortunately been unable to find the exact reference, there is mention of a tree with three springs, according to a tradition that seems to be of Druidic origin.

²When "their eyes were opened", Adam and Eve covered themselves with fig leaves (III, 7). This should be related to the fact that, in Hindu tradition, the "Tree of the World" is represented by the fig tree; and the role played by the same tree in the Gospel also deserves to be studied in particular.

³Janus is triple like Hecate, who is none other than *Jana* or *Diana*.

They may seem entirely different, but there are nevertheless very close links between them, which become apparent as soon as one takes the trouble to examine their meaning in depth.

There is yet another thing that is very worthy of note: we have recalled what everyone knows and what is self-evident, that the cross of the Saviour is symbolically identified with the Tree of Life; but, on the other hand, according to a "legend of the Cross" that circulated in the Middle Ages, the cross was made from the wood of the Tree of Knowledge, so that this tree, after having been the instrument of the Fall, thus became the instrument of Redemption; there is an allusion here to the restoration of the primordial order through Redemption; and such symbolism must be compared with what St Paul says about the two Adams (I Corinthians, XV); but in this new function, which is the inverse of the first, the Tree of Knowledge is in a way assimilated to the Tree of Life, which then becomes accessible to humanity once again: is not the Eucharist truly comparable to the fruit of the Tree of Life?

This makes us think, on the other hand, of the bronze serpent raised by Moses in the desert (Numbers XXI), which is known to be a figure of Christ the Redeemer, just as the pole on which it is placed also recalls the Tree of Life. However, the serpent is more commonly associated with the Tree of Knowledge; but then it is considered in its evil aspect, and we have already pointed out that, like many other symbols, there are two opposite meanings (August-September 1925, p. 191). We must not confuse the serpent that represents life with the one that represents death, the serpent that is a symbol of Christ with the one that is a symbol of Satan (even when they are closely united in the curious figure of the 'amphisbaena' or two-headed serpent); and could it not be said that the relationship between these two opposing aspects bears some analogy to the roles played respectively by the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge?

We spoke earlier of a possible representation of three trees, the central one representing the Tree of Life, while the other two evoke the dual nature of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Here, precisely, in relation to the cross, we find something of this kind: is this not, in fact, the idea that should come to mind when we see the cross of Christ between those of the good and evil thieves? They are placed respectively to the right and left of the crucified Christ, just as the elect and the damned will be to the right and left of Christ at the Last Judgement; and, while they clearly represent good and evil, they also correspond, in relation to Christ, to Mercy and Rigour, the characteristic attributes of the two columns of the Sephirotic tree. The cross of Christ always occupies the central place that properly belongs to the Tree of Life; and when it is depicted between the sun and the moon, it is also the same: it is then truly the "Axis of the World".

These last reflections force us to remember the following, which is too often lost sight of: historical events, we have said, have, in addition to their own reality, a symbolic value, because they express and translate in their order the principles on which they depend, and in the same way that the whole of nature, of which they form a part, is like a symbol of the supernatural (December 1925, p. 28 and January 1926, pp. 113-114). If this is so, the crucifixion of Christ between the two thieves is not only a symbol, as those who misunderstand this point of view might suppose; it is also and first of all a fact; but it is precisely this fact itself which, like all those in the life of Christ, is at the same time a symbol, and that gives it

confer universal value. It seems to us that, if things were considered in this way, the fulfilment of prophecies would appear to have a much deeper meaning than that to which it is ordinarily limited; and, speaking here of prophecies, we also include in them all the "prefigurations", which also have a truly prophetic character.

Regarding this question of 'prefigurations', a remarkable fact has been pointed out to us: the cross, in its usual form, that of the cross of Christ itself, is found in Egyptian hieroglyphics with the meaning of 'salvation' (for example, in the name of Ptolemy Soter). This sign is clearly distinct from the "ankh cross," which expresses the idea of "life" and was used as a symbol by early Christians. One may also wonder whether the first of the two hieroglyphs might not have some connection with the representation of the Tree of Life, which would link the two different forms of the cross, since their meanings would thus be partly identical, and in any case there is an obvious connection between the ideas of 'life' and 'salvation'.

After these considerations, we must add that, if the tree is one of the main symbols of the 'Axis of the World', it is not the only one; the mountain is also a symbol, and is common to many different traditions; the tree and the mountain are also sometimes associated with each other. The stone itself (which can also be taken as a reduced representation of the mountain, although it is not only that) also plays the same role in certain cases; and this symbol of the stone, like that of the tree, is very often related to the serpent. We will undoubtedly have occasion to speak again of these various figures in other studies; but we must point out from the outset that, precisely because they are all related to the "Centre of the World", they are not without a more or less direct link to the symbol of the heart, so that, in all this, we are not so far removed from the subject matter of this Review as some might believe; and we return to it in a more immediate way, for a final observation.

We say that, in a certain sense, the Tree of Life has become accessible to man through Redemption; in other words, it could also be said that the true Christian is one who, at least virtually, is reintegrated into the rights and dignity of primordial humanity and who, consequently, has the possibility of re-entering Paradise, the 'abode of immortality'. Undoubtedly, this reintegration will not be fully realised for humanity as a whole until "the new Jerusalem descends from heaven to earth" (Revelation XXI), since this will be the perfect consummation of Christianity, coinciding with the no less perfect restoration of the order that existed before the Fall. It is no less true that, even now, reintegration can be considered individually, if not in a general way; and such is, we believe, the fullest meaning of the "spiritual habitat" in the Heart of Christ, of which L. Charbonneau-Lassay spoke recently (January 1926), since, like the Earthly Paradise, the Heart of Christ is truly the "Centre of the World" and the "dwelling place of immortality".

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Chapter VII: THE RADIANT HEART AND THE HEART IN FLAMES

There are words which, under the influence of entirely modern concepts, have undergone a strange deviation in common usage and a diminution of their original meaning; the word 'heart' is among them. Is it not customary today, in fact, to use 'heart', when employed figuratively, as a synonym for 'feeling'? And, as R. P. Anizán (*Regnabit*, February 1926) has rightly observed, is this not the reason why the Sacred Heart is generally considered only from the restricted angle of "devotion," understood as something purely affective? This way of seeing things has become so widespread that we have failed to notice that the word "heart" once had different meanings; or, at least, when these meanings are found in certain texts where they are too obvious, we are convinced that they have only exceptional and, so to speak, accidental meanings there.

Thus, in a recent book on the Sacred Heart, we were surprised to observe the following: after indicating that the word "heart" is used to designate inner feelings, the seat of desire, suffering, affection, moral conscience, and the strength of the soul¹, all things of an emotional nature, it is simply added, in the last place, that "it sometimes even means intelligence"². Now, this latter meaning is in fact the primary one, and in ancient times it was always considered everywhere to be the main and fundamental meaning, while the others, when they are also found, are merely secondary and derivative and represent little more than an extension of the original meaning.

For the ancients, in fact, the heart was the "vital centre", which is indeed first in physiological order, and at the same time, by transposition or, if you will, by analogical correspondence, it represented the centre of being from all points of view, but first and foremost in the aspect of intelligence; it symbolised the point of contact between the individual and the Universal, the place of communication with divine Intelligence itself; such a conception is even found among the Greeks, in Aristotle for example; and, moreover, it is common to all the traditional doctrines of the East, where it plays one of the most important roles. We hope to have the opportunity to show, in other studies, that this is particularly the case among the Hindus; for the moment, we are content to point out this fact without dwelling on it further. It has been recognised that "for the ancient Egyptians, the heart was both the seat of intelligence and of affection"³, as Charbonneau-Lassay recently recalled here (February 1926, p. 210): "The Egyptian sage regarded the heart not only as the organ of human affection, but also as the true source of intelligence; for him, thought arose from a movement of the heart and was expressed through speech, the brain being considered merely as a stopping place where

¹ The word *courage* is indeed derived from *heart* (*coeur* in French).

² R. P. A. Hamon, S. J., *Histoire de la Dévotion au Sacré-Coeur*, volume 1, l'Aube, la Dévotion, Introduction, p. XVIII

³ E. Drioton, "La Vie spirituelle dans l'ancienne Égypte" (Spiritual Life in Ancient Egypt), in *Revue de Philosophie*, November-December 1925. –But why, after making this observation, say only that the expression "put God in your heart" meant "make God the constant object of your affections and desires"? What about intelligence?

word could be stopped, but she often crosses it with a spontaneous impulse. Among the Arabs, too, the heart is considered the seat of intelligence, not of the totally individual faculty of reason, but of universal Intelligence (*El-Aqlu*) in its relations with human beings, which it penetrates from within, since it resides at their very centre and illuminates them with its radiance.

This explains a symbolism that is very common, according to which the heart is likened to the sun and the brain to the moon. For rational and discursive thought, of which the brain is the organ or instrument, is nothing more than a reflection of true intelligence, just as the light of the moon is nothing more than a reflection of that of the sun. The brain, even in the physical sense, is truly the 'Heart of the World', which it illuminates and enlivens: 'O thou whose form is a dazzling circle, thou who art the Heart of the World!' says Proclus in his *Hymn to the Sun*. And, according to the constitutive analogy that exists between the human being and the World, between the "Microcosm" and the "Macrocosm", as the Hermeticists said, the transposition that we indicate at all times is also effective here; the sun represents the "Centre of the World" in all orders of existence, hence the symbol of the "Spiritual Sun", which we will discuss again in the continuation of these studies.

Now, how is it that all this has been so completely forgotten by modern people and that they have come to change the meaning attributed to the heart, as we said before? The error is undoubtedly due in large part to "rationalism", that is, to the tendency to identify reason and intelligence purely and simply, to make reason the whole of intelligence, or at least its superior part, believing that there is nothing above reason. This rationalism, of which Descartes is the first clearly characterised representative, has penetrated all Western thought for three centuries; and we are not speaking only of philosophical thought proper, but also of common thought, which has been influenced by it more or less indirectly. Descartes was the one who sought to locate the 'seat of the soul' in the brain, because that is where he saw the seat of rational thought; in fact, in his eyes, everything was the same, the soul being for him the 'thinking substance' and nothing more than that. This conception is far from being as natural as it seems to our contemporaries, who, through habit, have for the most part become as incapable of freeing themselves from it as they are of escaping the general viewpoint of Cartesian dualism, between whose two terms all subsequent philosophy oscillates.

The immediate consequence of rationalism is the denial or ignorance of pure and supra-rational intellect, of the 'intellectual intuition' known in antiquity and the Middle Ages. In fact, some philosophers of our time try to escape rationalism and even speak of 'intuition', but, in a singular reversal of things, they only consider a sensitive and infra-rational intuition. Thus, with the intelligence that resides in the heart unknown, and with reason residing in the brain having usurped its illuminating role, the heart had no choice but to be the seat of affectivity; and this is how Pascal already understands the 'heart' in the exclusive sense of 'feeling'. On the other hand, the following has occurred: the modern world has seen the birth of another trend that is closely related to rationalism and is, in a way, its counterpart, which we can call "sentimentalism", that is, the tendency to see in feeling what is deepest and highest in being, affirming its supremacy over intelligence; and this could only happen because intelligence had first been reduced to reason alone. In this, as in many other areas, modern people have lost the notion of normal order and the sense of any true hierarchy; they no longer

They no longer know how to put everything in its proper place; how can we be surprised that so many of them cannot recognise the "Centre" towards which all the powers of being should be directed?

Some may find that, in presenting things in summary as we have just done, we are simplifying a little too much; and, undoubtedly, there is something here that is too complex in reality for us to attempt to explain it completely in a few lines; but we nevertheless believe that this summary does not alter the historical truth in its essential features. We readily acknowledge that it would be wrong to consider Descartes solely responsible for all the intellectual deviation of the modern West, and that even if he was able to exert such a great influence, it was because his ideas corresponded to a state of mind that was already prevalent in his time, and to which he merely gave a definite and systematic expression. but precisely for this reason the name of Descartes takes on a certain symbolic significance, and it is why he has been able to serve better than anyone else to represent tendencies that undoubtedly existed before him, but which had not yet been formulated as they were in his philosophy.

That said, the following question may be raised: for modern people, the heart is reduced to designating nothing more than the centre of affectivity, but can it not legitimately be considered as such, even for those for whom it represents first and foremost the centre of intelligence? Indeed, if it is the centre of the whole being, it must also be so in the aspect under consideration, as from any other point of view, and we see no objection to recognising this; what seems unacceptable to us is that such an interpretation should become exclusive or simply predominant. For us, the relationship established with affectivity results directly from the consideration of the heart as the 'vital centre', life and affectivity being two things very close to each other, if not totally connected, while the relationship with intelligence implies a transposition into another order. This is true if one takes a starting point in the sensible order, but if, on the contrary, one descends from the higher to the lower, from the principle to the consequences, it is the latter aspect which, as we said at the beginning, is the former, since it is the Word, that is, divine Intelligence, which is truly the 'spiritual Sun', the 'Heart of the World'. Everything else, including the physiological role of the heart, as well as the physical function of the sun, is nothing more than a reflection and symbol of this supreme reality; and in this regard, we may recall what we said earlier (January 1926) about nature considered as a symbol of the supernatural.

It should be added that, in what we have just indicated, we have understood affectivity only in its immediate, literal, if you will, and solely human sense, and that sense is also the only one in which moderns think when they use the word "heart"; but are not some terms taken from affectivity susceptible of being transposed analogically to a higher order? This seems indisputable to us for words such as Love and Charity; they have been used in this way, manifestly, in certain doctrines of the Middle Ages, based in this respect on the Gospel itself⁴; and, on the other hand, in many mystics, affective language appears above all as a mode of symbolic expression for things that are, in themselves, inexpressible. Some may find that we are doing nothing more than

⁴ We refer more particularly to the traditions of the Orders of Chivalry, whose main basis was the Gospel of St John (the analogical transposition is evident here), and the battle cry of the Templars was "Long live God, Holy Love". We find a very clear echo of the doctrines in question in works such as those of Dante.

stating here a very elementary truth; but nevertheless it is not useless to recall it, for, on the last point, we mean, as far as the mystics are concerned, the errors of psychologists show all too well what the state of mind of most of our contemporaries is: they see nothing there but feeling in the narrowest sense of the word, purely human emotions and affections related as such to a superhuman object.

From this new point of view and with such a transposition, the simultaneous attribution of intelligence and love to the heart is much better legitimised and takes on a much deeper meaning than in the ordinary point of view, for there is then, between this intelligence and this love, a kind of complementarity, as if what is thus designated did not in fact represent more than two aspects of a single principle; This can be better understood, we think, by referring to the symbolism of fire: this symbolism is all the more natural and appropriate in that it concerns the heart, which, as the "vital centre", is properly the dwelling place of the "animating heat"; it is by warming the body that it enlivens it, just as the sun does with regard to our world. Aristotle equates organic life with heat, and in this he agrees with all Eastern traditions; Descartes himself places a 'fire without light' in the heart, but for him this is only the principle of a physiological theory that is exclusively 'mechanistic', like all his physics, which, let us be clear, does not correspond at all to the point of view of the ancients.

Fire, according to all ancient traditions concerning the elements, is polarised into two complementary aspects, which are light and heat; and even from a purely physical point of view, this way of considering it is perfectly justified: these two fundamental qualities are, so to speak, inversely proportional to each other in their manifestation, and thus a flame is warmer the less light it provides. But fire itself, the fiery principle in its complete nature, is both of these two aspects; thus, fire residing in the heart must be considered when taken symbolically as the centre of the whole being; and here we find yet another analogy with the sun, which not only warms but also illuminates the world. Now, light is everywhere and always the symbol of intelligence and knowledge; as for heat, it represents love no less naturally. Even in the human realm, we commonly speak of the warmth of feeling or affection, and this is an indication of the connection that is spontaneously established between life and affectivity⁵; when a transposition is made from the latter, the symbol of warmth will continue to be analogically applicable. On the other hand, it should be emphasised that just as light and heat are separated from each other in the physical manifestation of fire, feeling is really nothing more than heat without light (which is why the ancients represented love as blind); light without heat can also be found in man, that of reason, which is nothing more than reflected light, cold like the moonlight that symbolises it. In the order of principles, on the contrary, the two aspects are inseparably united, since they are constitutive of the same essential nature; the fire that is at the centre of being is therefore both light and heat, that is, intelligence and love; but the love in question here differs as much from the feeling that bears the same name as pure intelligence differs from reason⁶.

⁵One could object that the principle of the Gospel of St John indicates in a certain way an identification between life and light, and not heat; but the term 'life' does not refer here to organic life, it is transposed to apply to the Word considered as the principle of universal life, and the Word is 'Light' because it is Intelligence.

⁶ Knowing that among the readers of *Regnabit* there are those who are familiar with the theories of a school whose works, although very interesting and highly estimable from many points of view, nevertheless call for certain reservations, we must say that we cannot accept the use of

It can now be understood that the divine Word, which is the "Heart of the World", is both Intelligence and Love; even if it were not Intelligence above all else, it would no longer be truly the Word. Moreover, if Intelligence were not truly attributed to the Heart of Christ, we do not see how it would be possible to interpret this invocation from the litanies: "*Cor Iesu, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi*" (Heart of Jesus, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge), to which we would like to draw the attention of those who see in the Sacred Heart nothing more than the object of simple sentimental devotion.

What is very remarkable is that the two aspects we have just mentioned are both very clearly represented in the iconography of the Sacred Heart, in the respective forms of the radiant Heart and the Heart in flames. Radiation symbolises light, that is, Intelligence (and this, let us say in passing, is what gives the title of Society of Intellectual Radiation of the Sacred Heart its full meaning for us). Similarly, flames represent heat, that is, Love; it is also known that love, even in the ordinary and human sense, has often been represented by the emblem of a flaming heart. The existence of these two types of representations for the Sacred Heart is therefore perfectly justified: one or the other may be used, not indifferently, but according to whether one wishes to emphasise more particularly the aspect of Intelligence or that of Love.

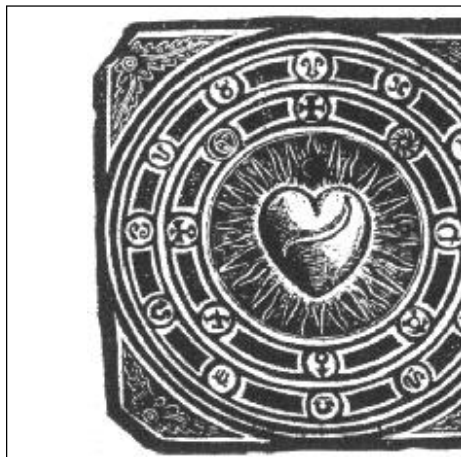
It should also be noted that the radiant heart is the type to which the oldest known representations of the Sacred Heart belong, from the Heart of Chinon to that of Saint-Denis d'Orques⁷. On the contrary, in recent representations (by which we mean those dating from no earlier than the 17th century), it is the heart in flames that is found constantly and almost exclusively. We find this fact very significant: is it not an indication of the neglect into which one of the aspects of the symbolism of the Heart has fallen, precisely the one to which previous eras gave predominant importance? We should still be grateful when this neglect is not accompanied by a neglect of the higher meaning of love, leading to a 'sentimentalist' conception, which is not only a diminution but a real deviation, all too common in our day. To react against this regrettable tendency, the best thing to do, we think, is to explain as completely as possible the ancient symbolism of the heart, to restore its full meaning (or rather its multiple but harmoniously concordant meanings), and highlight the figure of the radiant Heart, which appears to us as the image of a shining sun, the source and home of intelligible Light, of pure and eternal Truth. Is not the sun, moreover, also

The terms *Aor* and *Agni* are used to designate the two complementary aspects of fire that have just been discussed. In fact, the first of the two words is Hebrew, while the second is Sanskrit, and two terms taken from different traditions cannot be associated in this way, whatever the real similarities between them, and even the identity that is essentially hidden beneath the diversity of their forms; 'syncretism' should not be confused with true synthesis. Furthermore, if *Aor* is exclusively light, *Agni* is the fiery principle considered in its entirety (the Latin *ignis* being exactly the same word), then both as light and as heat, the restriction of this term to designate the second aspect is totally arbitrary and unjustified.

⁷ Readers are referred in this regard to the very important studies that Mr. Charbonneau-Lassay has devoted, in *Regnabit*, to the ancient iconography of the Sacred Heart, and to the reproductions included therein.

one of the symbols of Christ (*Sol Iustitiae*), and one of those most closely related to the Sacred Heart?

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Chapter VIII: THE IDEA OF THE CENTRE IN ANCIENT TRADITIONS

At the end of one of our last articles (March 1926), we refer to the "Centre of the World" and the various symbols that represent it; we need to return to this idea of the Centre, which is of the utmost importance in all ancient traditions, and point out some of the main meanings associated with it. For modern people, in fact, this idea no longer immediately evokes what it evoked for the ancients; in this, as in everything related to symbolism, many things have been forgotten and certain ways of thinking seem to have become totally foreign to the vast majority of our contemporaries; it is therefore necessary to insist on this point, all the more so as misunderstanding is more general and more complete in this regard.

The Centre is, above all, the origin, the starting point of all things; it is the *principal* point, without form or dimensions, therefore indivisible, and consequently the only image that can be given of the primordial Unity. In it, through its radiation, all things are produced, just as Unity produces all numbers, without its essence being modified or affected in any way. There is a complete parallelism here between two modes of expression: geometric symbolism and numerical symbolism, in such a way that they can be used interchangeably and that one can even pass from one to the other in the most natural way. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that in both cases it is always a matter of symbolism: arithmetic unity is not metaphysical Unity; it is only a figure of it, but a figure in which there is nothing arbitrary, for there is a real analogical relationship between the two, and it is this relationship that allows the idea of Unity to be transposed beyond the quantitative domain to the transcendental order. The same is true of the idea of the Centre; it is capable of a similar transposition, whereby it is stripped of its spatial character, which is now evoked only as a symbol: the central point is the Principle, pure Being; and the space it fills with its radiation, which is nothing other than that radiation itself (the *Fiat Lux* of Genesis), without which such space would be nothing but "deprivation" and nothingness, is the World in the broadest sense of the term, the totality of all beings and all states of Existence that constitute universal manifestation.

The simplest representation of the idea we have just formulated is the point at the centre of the circle (fig. 1): the point is the emblem of the Principle, and the circle that of the World. It is impossible to assign any origin in time to the use of this figuration, as it is frequently found in prehistoric objects; undoubtedly, it must be seen as one of the signs directly linked to the primordial tradition. Sometimes the point is surrounded by several concentric circles, which seem to represent the different states or degrees of manifested existence, arranged hierarchically according to their greater or lesser distance from the primordial Principle. The dot in the centre of the circle has also been taken, probably since very ancient times, as a figure of the sun, because the sun is truly, in the physical order, the Centre or the "Heart of the World", as we have recently explained (April 1926); and that figure has remained to this day as the usual astrological and astronomical sign of the sun. Perhaps for this reason, archaeologists, wherever they find this symbol, seek to assign it an exclusively "solar" meaning, when in reality it has a much broader and deeper meaning; they forget or ignore that the sun, from the point of view of all ancient traditions, is itself only a symbol, that of the true "Centre of the World," which is the divine Principle.

The relationship between the centre and the circumference, or between what they respectively represent, is already clearly indicated by the fact that the

circumference could not exist without its centre, while the centre is absolutely independent of the circumference. This relationship can be pointed out even more clearly and explicitly by means of radii that start from the centre and end at the circumference; these radii can obviously be represented in varying numbers, since they are actually an indefinite multitude, just like the points of the circumference that are their extremities; but, in fact, numbers that have a particular symbolic value in themselves have always been chosen for representations of this kind. Here, the simplest form is one with only four radii dividing the circumference into equal parts, that is, two orthogonal diameters forming a cross inside the circle (fig. 2). This new figure has the same general meaning as the first, but secondary meanings are added to complete it: the circumference, if represented as travelled in a certain direction, is the image of a cycle of manifestation, like those cosmic cycles of which Hindu doctrine in particular offers a highly developed theory. The divisions determined on the circumference by the ends of the arms of the cross then correspond to the different periods or phases into which the cycle is divided; and such a division can be approached, so to speak, on different scales, depending on whether the cycles are more or less extensive: thus, for example, and to stick only to the order of earthly existence, we have the four main moments of the day, the four phases of the moon, the four seasons of the year, and also, according to the conception found in the traditions of India and Central America as well as in those of Greco-Roman antiquity, the four ages of humanity. We are merely summarising these considerations here to give an overview of what the symbol in question expresses; they are, moreover, directly linked to what we will say next.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

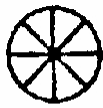


Fig. 4

Among the figures that include a greater number of spokes, we should make special mention of the wheels or "rodelas", which usually have six or eight (figures 3 and 4). The "Celtic disc", which has been perpetuated throughout most of the Middle Ages, appears in one of these two forms; these same figures, especially the second, are also very often found in Eastern countries, particularly in Chaldea and Assyria, in India (where the wheel is called *a chakra*) and in Tibet. We have recently shown (November 1925) the close relationship between the six-spoked wheel and the chi-rho, which, in short, differs from the former only in that the circumference to which the ends of the spokes belong is not usually drawn; now then: the wheel, instead of being simply a "solar" sign, as is commonly taught in our time, is above all a symbol of the World, which can be understood without difficulty. In the symbolic language of India, there is constant reference to the "wheel of things" or the "wheel of life", which clearly corresponds to this meaning; and there is also the "wheel of the Law", an expression which Buddhism has taken, like so many others, from earlier doctrines, and which

at least originally refers above all to cyclical theories. It should also be added that the Zodiac is also represented in the form of a wheel, with twelve spokes, of course, and that, moreover, the name given to it in Sanskrit literally means "wheel of signs"; it could also be translated as "wheel of numbers", according to the primary meaning of the word *rāshi*, which designates the signs of the Zodiac¹.

In the article we referred to throughout (November 1925), we noted the connection between the wheel and various floral symbols; we could even have spoken, at least in certain cases, of a true equivalence². If we consider a symbolic flower such as the lotus, the lily or the rose³, its opening represents, among other things (since these are symbols with multiple meanings), and by a very understandable similarity, the development of manifestation; this opening is, moreover, a radiation around the centre, since in this case too we are dealing with "centred" figures, and this is what justifies their assimilation to the wheel⁴. In the Hindu tradition, the World is sometimes represented in the form of a lotus in the centre of which rises *Mêru*, the sacred Mountain symbolising the Pole.

But let us return to the meanings of the Centre, for so far we have only discussed the first of these, which makes it the image of the Beginning; we find another in the fact that the Centre is properly the 'middle', the point equidistant from all points on the circumference, and divides every diameter into two equal parts. In the foregoing, the Centre was considered, in a certain way, before the circumference, which has no reality except through the radiation of the former; now, it is considered in relation to the realised circumference, that is to say, it is the action of the Principle within Creation. The middle between the extremes represented by opposite points on the circumference is the place where the opposing tendencies, reaching those extremes, neutralise each other, so to speak, and are in perfect balance. Certain schools of Muslim esotericism, which attribute a symbolic value of the utmost importance to the cross, call the centre of that cross the "divine station" (*el-maqâmu-l-ilâhî*), which they designate as the place where all opposites are unified, where all oppositions are resolved. The idea expressed here is, therefore, that of balance, and this idea is identified with that of harmony; they are not two different ideas, but only two aspects of the same. There is still a third aspect of it, more particularly linked to the moral point of view

¹ Let us also note that the "wheel of Fortune", in the symbolism of Western antiquity, has very close relations with the "wheel of the Law" and also, although this may not be so clear at first glance, with the zodiacal wheel.

² Among other indications of this equivalence, as far as the Middle Ages are concerned, we have seen the eight-spoked wheel and an eight-petalled flower facing each other on the same carved stone set into the façade of the old church of Saint-Mexme in Chinon, a stone that most likely dates from the Carolingian period.

³ The lily has six petals; the lotus, in the most common representations, has eight; the two forms therefore correspond to wheels with six and eight spokes, respectively. As for the rose, it is depicted with a variable number of petals, which can modify its meaning or at least nuance it in different ways. On the symbolism of the rose, see the very interesting article by L. Charbonneau-Lassay (*Regnabit*, March 1926).

⁴ In the Merovingian-era figure of the Chi-Rho with the rose, reproduced by L. Charbonneau-Lassay (*Regnabit*, March 1926, p. 298), the central rose has six petals oriented according to the branches of the Chi-Rho; it is also enclosed in a circle, which makes its identity with the six-spoked wheel appear as clearly as possible.

(although capable of other meanings), and it is the idea of justice; we can thus relate what we were saying to the Platonic conception according to which virtue consists of a just middle ground between two extremes. From a much more universal point of view, Far Eastern traditions speak incessantly of the "Unchanging Middle", which is the point where the "Activity of Heaven" manifests itself, and, according to Hindu doctrine, at the centre of every being, as in every state of cosmic existence, there resides a reflection of the Supreme Principle.

Equilibrium, on the other hand, is in truth nothing but the reflection, in the order of manifestation, of the absolute immutability of the Principle; to view things according to this new relationship, it is necessary to consider the circumference in motion around its centre, the only point that does not participate in that motion. The very name of the wheel (*rota*) immediately evokes the idea of rotation; and this rotation is the figure of the continuous change to which all manifested things are subject; in such movement, there is only one single point that remains fixed and immutable, and this point is the Centre. This brings us back to the cyclical conceptions we mentioned a few moments ago: the course of any cycle, or the rotation of the circumference, is succession, whether in the temporal mode or in any other mode; the fixity of the Centre is the image of eternity, where all things are present in perfect simultaneity. The circumference cannot rotate except around a fixed centre; similarly, change, which is not sufficient in itself, necessarily presupposes a principle that is outside it: it is Aristotle's "unmoved mover", also represented by the Centre. The immutable Principle, then, at the same time, and by the very fact that everything that exists, everything that changes or moves, has no reality except through it and depends totally on it, is what gives movement its first impulse and also what immediately governs and directs and legislates it, for the preservation of the order of the World is, in a certain sense, nothing but a prolongation of the creative act. The Principle is, according to the Hindu expression, the "internal organiser" (*antar-yâmi*), for it directs all things from within, residing itself at the most intimate point of all, which is the Centre.

Instead of the rotation of a circumference around its centre, one can also consider that of a sphere around a fixed axis; the symbolic meaning is exactly the same. That is why the representations of the "Axis of the World", which we have already discussed (December 1925 and March 1926), are so frequent and important in all ancient traditions; and the general meaning is basically the same as that of the figures of the "Centre of the World", except perhaps that they evoke more directly the role of the immutable Principle with respect to universal manifestation than the other aspects in which the Centre can equally be considered. When the sphere, whether terrestrial or celestial, completes its revolution around its axis, there are two points on this sphere that remain fixed: these are the poles, the ends of the axis or its points of contact with the surface of the sphere; hence the idea of the Pole is also equivalent to the idea of the Centre. The symbolism referring to the Pole, which sometimes takes on very complex forms, is also found in all traditions, and even has a considerable place in them; if most modern scientists have not noticed this, it is further proof that they completely lack a true understanding of symbols.

One of the most notable figures, in which the ideas we have just outlined are summarised, is that of the swastika (figures 5 and 6), which is essentially the "sign of the Pole"⁵; we believe, moreover, that in modern Europe its true meaning has never been made known until now. Attempts to explain this symbol have been futile

⁵ in the West, the swastika is often referred to as the "gammic cross" because each of its arms is shaped like the Greek letter gamma.

the most fanciful theories; it has even been seen as the outline of a primitive instrument used to produce fire; in truth, if there is indeed sometimes a connection with fire, it is for very different reasons. Most often, the swastika is made into a "solar" sign; if it has become so, it could only have happened accidentally and in a very indirect way: we could repeat here what we said earlier about the wheel and the point in the centre of the circle. Closer to the truth are those who have seen the swastika as a symbol of movement, but this interpretation is still insufficient, for it is not just any movement, but a rotational movement that takes place around a centre or an immutable axis; and it is precisely the fixed point that is the essential element to which the symbol in question directly refers. The other meanings of the same figure all derive from this one: the Centre imparts movement to all things, and since movement represents life, the swastika therefore becomes a symbol of life or, more precisely, of the life-giving role of the Principle in relation to the cosmic order.

If we compare the swastika with the figure of the cross inscribed in the circumference (fig. 2), we can see that they are, in essence, two equivalent symbols; but the rotation, instead of being represented by the circumference, is only indicated in the swastika by the lines added to the ends of the arms of the cross, with which they form right angles; these lines are tangents to the circumference that mark the direction of movement at the corresponding points. As the circumference represents the World, the fact that it is, so to speak, implied clearly indicates that the swastika is not a figure of the World, but of the action of the Principle with respect to it⁶.

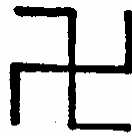


Fig. 5

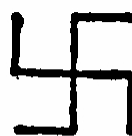


Fig. 6

If the swastika is related to the rotation of a sphere, such as the celestial sphere, around its axis, the symbol must be assumed to be drawn on the equatorial plane, and then the central point will be the projection of the axis onto that plane, which is perpendicular to it. As for the direction of rotation indicated by the figure, it is of secondary importance; in fact, the two forms we have just reproduced are found⁷, without there being in all cases an intention to establish an opposition between them⁸.

⁶The same observation would also apply to the Chi-Rho compared to the wheel.

⁷The word *svastika* is, in Sanskrit, the only one that can be used in all cases to designate the symbol in question; the term *sauvāstika*, which some have applied to one of the two forms to distinguish it from the other (which would then be the true swastika), is in reality nothing more than an adjective derived from *svastika* and means 'belonging to or relating to that symbol or its meanings'.

⁸ The same observation could be made with regard to other symbols, and in particular to the Constantinian Chi-Rho, in which the *P* ['ro'] is sometimes inverted; it has sometimes been thought that it should then be considered a sign of the Antichrist; this intention may indeed have existed in certain cases, but there are others in which it is manifestly impossible to admit it (in the catacombs, for example). Likewise, the corporate "four of the number", which is not, moreover,

We know well that, in certain countries and at certain times, schisms may have occurred whose supporters deliberately gave the figure an orientation contrary to that which was in use in the milieu from which they separated themselves, in order to affirm their antagonism by means of an outward manifestation; but this in no way affects the essential meaning of the symbol, which remains constant in all cases.

The swastika is far from being an exclusively Eastern symbol, as is sometimes believed; in fact, it is one of the most widely spread symbols, found practically everywhere, from the Far East to the Far West, and even among certain indigenous peoples of North America. In the present day, it has been preserved above all in India and in Central and Eastern Asia, and it is probably only in these regions that its meaning is still known; however, even in Europe itself it has not disappeared entirely⁹. In Lithuania and Courland, peasants still draw this sign on their dwellings; they undoubtedly no longer know its meaning and see it only as a kind of protective talisman; but what is perhaps even more curious is that they give it its Sanskrit name of *svâstika*¹⁰. In ancient times, we find this symbol particularly among the Celts and in pre-Hellenic Greece¹¹ and, even in the West, as L. Charbonneau-Lassay (March 1926, pp. 302-303) has said, it was formerly one of the emblems of Christ and remained in use as such until the end of the Middle Ages. Like the point at the centre of the circle and like the wheel, this symbol undoubtedly dates back to prehistoric times; for our part, we see in it, without the slightest doubt, one of the vestiges of the primordial tradition.

We have not yet finished indicating all the meanings of the Centre: if it is first and foremost a point of departure, it is also a point of arrival; everything has come from it, everything must ultimately return to it. Since all things exist only because of the Principle, without which they could not subsist, there must be a permanent link between them and it, represented by the spokes that connect all the points of the circumference to the centre; but these spokes can be travelled in two opposite directions: first from the centre to the circumference, then returning from the circumference to the centre. They are like two complementary phases, the first of which is represented by a centrifugal movement and the second by a centripetal movement; these two phases can be compared to those of respiration, according to a symbolism often referred to in Hindu doctrines; and, on the other hand, there is also a no less remarkable analogy with the physiological function of the heart. Indeed, blood leaves the heart, spreads throughout the body, enlivening it, and then returns; the role of the heart

but rather a modification of the letter *P* in the Chi-Rho symbol (see our article from November 1925), it is found indifferently turned in one direction or the other, without this fact even being attributable to rivalry between different corporations or their desire to distinguish themselves from one another, since both forms appear in trademarks belonging to the same guild.

⁹We are not referring here to the entirely artificial use of the swastika, especially by certain German political groups, which have arbitrarily made it a sign of anti-Semitism, on the pretext that this emblem is characteristic of the so-called "Aryan race"; all this is pure fantasy.

¹⁰ Lithuanian is, moreover, the European language most similar to Sanskrit.

¹¹ There are several variants of the swastika, for example a form of curved branches (resembling two crossed S's), which we have seen particularly on a Gallic coin. On the other hand, certain figures that have retained only a purely decorative character, such as the one called "fret", originally derive from the swastika.

As an organic centre, it is therefore truly complete and corresponds entirely to the idea that we must generally form of the Centre in the fullness of its meaning.

All beings, who in all that they are depend on their Principle, must, consciously or unconsciously, aspire to return to it; this tendency to return to the Centre also has its symbolic representation in all traditions. We refer to ritual orientation, which is properly the direction towards a spiritual centre, the earthly and tangible image of the true "Centre of the World"; the orientation of Christian churches is, in essence, nothing more than a particular case of this symbolism, and refers essentially to the same idea, common to all religions. In Islam, this orientation (*qiblah*) is like the materialisation, if one may say so, of the intention (*niyyah*) by which all the powers of being must be directed towards the divine Principle¹²; and it would be easy to find many other examples. Much could be said on this subject; we will undoubtedly have opportunities to return to it in the continuation of these studies, and so we will content ourselves, for the moment, with briefly indicating the last aspect of the symbolism of the Centre.

In short, the Centre is both the beginning and the end of all things; it is, according to a well-known symbolism, the *alpha* and the *omega*. Better still, it is the beginning, the centre and the end; and these three aspects are represented by the three elements of the monosyllable *Aum*, to which L. Charbonneau-Lassay had alluded as an emblem of Christ (March 1926, p. 303), and whose association with the swastika among the signs of the Carmelite monastery in Loudun seems particularly significant to us. Indeed, this symbol, much more complete than the *alpha* and *omega*, and capable of meanings that could give rise to almost indefinite developments, is, by one of the most astonishing concordances to be found, common to the ancient Hindu tradition and to medieval Christian esotericism; and, in both cases, it is equally and par excellence a symbol of the Word, which is truly and really the "Centre of the World".

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¹² The word "intention" should be taken here in its strictly etymological sense (from *in-tendere*, 'to tend towards').

Chapter IX: THE REFORM OF MODERN MENTALITY

Modern civilisation appears in history as a true anomaly: of all those we know, it is the only one that has developed in a purely material sense, the only one that is not based on any principle of a higher order. This material development, which has been going on for several centuries now and is accelerating more and more, has been accompanied by an intellectual regression that this development is quite incapable of compensating for. Let us be clear: we are referring to true and pure intellectuality, which could equally be called spirituality, and we refuse to give this name to what moderns have applied themselves to above all: the cultivation of the experimental sciences with a view to the practical applications to which they can give rise. A single example would suffice to measure the extent of this regression: St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* was, in its time, a manual for students; where are the students today who are capable of studying it in depth and assimilating it?

The decline did not happen suddenly; its stages can be traced throughout modern philosophy. It is the loss or neglect of true intellectuality that has made possible these two errors, which are only apparently opposed, but are in fact correlative and complementary: rationalism and sentimentalism. Since all purely intellectual knowledge was denied or ignored, as it has been since Descartes, it was logical that this would lead, on the one hand, to positivism, agnosticism and all the 'scientistic' aberrations, and, on the other, to all the contemporary theories which, not content with what reason can provide, seek something else, but seek it on the side of feeling and instinct, that is, below and not above reason, and arrive, with Williams James, for example, at seeing the subconscious as the means by which man can enter into communication with the Divine. The notion of truth, after having been reduced to a mere representation of sensible reality, is finally identified by pragmatism with utility, which is equivalent to suppressing it pure and simple; for what does truth matter in a world whose aspirations are solely material and sentimental?

It is not possible to develop here all the consequences of such a state of affairs; let us limit ourselves to pointing out a few, among them those that refer more particularly to the religious point of view. First of all, it should be noted that the contempt and repulsion felt by other peoples, especially Easterners, towards Westerners stems largely from the fact that the latter generally appear to them as men without tradition or religion, which in their eyes is a true monstrosity. An Oriental cannot accept a social organisation that is not based on traditional principles; for a Muslim, for example, the entire body of law is nothing more than a simple extension of religion. This used to be the case in the West as well; think of what Christianity was like in the Middle Ages; but today the relationship has been reversed. Indeed, religion is now viewed as a mere social fact; instead of the entire social order being linked to religion, on the contrary, when it is still granted a place, it is no longer seen as anything more than one of the constituent elements of the social order; and how many Catholics, alas, accept this view without the slightest difficulty! It is time to react against this tendency, and in this regard, the affirmation of the social Kingdom of Christ is a particularly timely manifestation; but to make it a reality, it is necessary to reform the entire modern mentality.

Let us not hide the fact: those who sincerely believe themselves to be religious, for the most part, have only a very diminished idea of religion; it has hardly any effective influence on their thinking or their way of acting; it is as if it were separated

from the rest of their existence. In practice, believers and non-believers behave in much the same way; for many Catholics, the affirmation of the supernatural has only a purely theoretical value, and they would feel very uncomfortable if they had to verify a miraculous event. This is what could be called practical materialism, materialism in fact; is it not even more dangerous than avowed materialism, precisely because those it affects are not even aware of it?

On the other hand, for the vast majority, religion is nothing more than a matter of sentiment, without any intellectual significance; religion is confused with a vague religiosity, reduced to morality; the place of doctrine, which is nevertheless absolutely essential, that from which everything else must logically follow, is diminished as much as possible. In this respect, Protestantism, which ends up being pure and simple 'moralism', is very representative of the tendencies of the modern spirit; but it would be a great mistake to believe that Catholicism itself is not affected by the same tendencies, not in its principle, certainly, but in the way it is usually presented: under the pretext of making it acceptable to the current mentality, the most annoying concessions are made, thus encouraging what should, on the contrary, be vigorously combated. We will not dwell on the blindness of those who, under the pretext of 'tolerance', become unwitting accomplices of true falsifications of religion, whose hidden intentions they are far from suspecting. Let us only point out in passing, in this regard, the deplorable abuse that is so often made of the word 'religion' itself: are expressions such as 'religion of the homeland', 'religion of science', 'religion of duty' not used all the time? These are not mere linguistic slips: they are symptoms of the confusion that reigns everywhere in the modern world, for language does nothing more than faithfully represent the state of minds; and such expressions are incompatible with the true religious sense.

But let us proceed to what is most essential: we want to refer to the weakening of doctrinal teaching, almost totally replaced by vague moral and sentimental considerations, which may please some more, but which, at the same time, cannot but repel and alienate those who have intellectual aspirations; and, despite everything, there are still some in our time. This is proven by the fact that some, even more numerous than one might think, deplore this lack of doctrine; and we see a favourable sign, despite appearances, in the fact that, from various quarters, there is greater awareness of this today than there was a few years ago. Certainly, it is wrong to claim, as we have often heard, that no one would understand a presentation of pure doctrine. First of all, why always want to stick to the lowest level, on the pretext that it is that of the majority, as if quantity were to be considered rather than quality? Is this not a consequence of that democratic spirit which is one of the characteristic aspects of the modern mentality? And, on the other hand, is it believed that so many people would really be incapable of understanding if they had been accustomed to doctrinal teaching? Should we not even think that those who did not understand everything would nevertheless derive some benefit, perhaps greater than is supposed?

But undoubtedly the most serious obstacle is the kind of mistrust that is evident in too many Catholic and even ecclesiastical circles towards intellectuals in general. He says it is more serious because it is a sign of misunderstanding even among those who are responsible for teaching. They have been touched by the modern spirit to the point of no longer knowing, like the philosophers we mentioned earlier, what true intellectuality is, to the point of sometimes confusing intellectualism with rationalism, thus unwittingly playing into the hands of our opponents.

play into the hands of their adversaries. We believe, precisely, that what matters above all is to restore that true intellectuality, and with it the meaning of doctrine and tradition; it is time to show that there is something else in religion besides sentimental devotion, something else besides moral precepts or consolations for spirits weakened by suffering; that in it one can find the "solid food" of which St. Paul speaks in his *Epistle to the Hebrews*.

We are well aware that this has the disadvantage of going against certain acquired habits that are difficult to break free from; and yet, it is not a question of innovating: far from it, it is, on the contrary, a question of returning to the tradition from which they have strayed, of recovering what has been lost. Would this not be better than making the most unjustified concessions to the modern spirit, such as those found in apologetic treatises, where the author strives to reconcile dogma with everything that is most hypothetical and least founded in current science, only to call everything into question again whenever these seditious scientific theories are replaced by others? It would be very easy, however, to show that religion and science cannot really come into conflict, for the simple reason that they do not refer to the same domain. How can one fail to see the danger in seeking, for a doctrine concerning immutable and eternal truths, a foothold in what is most changeable and uncertain? And what are we to think of certain Catholic theologians who are so affected by the "scientific" spirit that they feel obliged to take into account, to a greater or lesser extent, the results of modern exegesis and "textual criticism", when it would be so easy, provided one has a reasonably secure doctrinal foundation, to demonstrate the futility of all this? How can one fail to see that the so-called "science of religions," as taught in universities, has never really been anything other than a war machine directed against religion and, more generally, against everything that may still remain of the traditional spirit, which those who lead the modern world in a direction that can only lead to catastrophe naturally want to destroy?

There is much to be said about all this, but we have only wanted to indicate very briefly some of the points on which reform is necessary and urgent; and, to conclude with a question that is of particular interest to us here, why is there so much hostility, more or less openly admitted, towards symbolism? Undoubtedly because it is a mode of expression that has become entirely alien to the modern mentality, and because man naturally tends to distrust what he does not understand. Symbolism is the means best suited to teaching higher truths, religious and metaphysical, that is, everything that the modern spirit disdains or rejects; it is the very opposite of what suits rationalism, and its adversaries all behave, some without knowing it, like true rationalists.

As for us, we consider that if symbolism is misunderstood today, this is all the more reason to insist on it, explaining as fully as possible the real meaning of traditional symbols and restoring their full intellectual significance, instead of simply using them as a theme for sentimental exhortations, for which, moreover, the use of symbolism is quite useless.

This reform of the modern mentality, with all that it implies: the restoration of true intellectuality and doctrinal tradition, which for us are inseparable, is certainly a considerable task; but is this a reason not to undertake it? On the contrary, it seems to us that such a task constitutes one of the highest and most important goals that can be proposed for the activity of a society such as that of

the Intellectual Radiation of the Sacred Heart, all the more so since all efforts made in this direction will necessarily be directed towards the Heart of the Incarnate Word, the spiritual Sun and Centre of the world "in which are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge", not of that vain profane science, known only to most of our contemporaries, but of true sacred science, which opens up unsuspected and truly unlimited horizons to those who study it properly.

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Chapter X: THE *OMPHALOS*, SYMBOL OF THE CENTRE

In our last article, we indicated various symbols that, in ancient traditions, represent the Centre and the ideas related to it, but there are others, and one of the most notable is perhaps that of *the Omphalos*, which is also found in almost all peoples, and has been since the most remote times¹.

The Greek word *omphalos* properly means "navel", but it also refers, in a general way, to everything that is central, and more specifically to the middle of a wheel. There are apparently words in other languages that combine these different meanings; such are, in the Celtic and Germanic languages, those derived from the root *nab* or *nav*: in German, *nabe*, middle, and *nabel*, navel; Similarly, in English, *nave* and *navel*, the latter word also having the general meaning of centre or middle, and, in Sanskrit, the word *nâbhi*, whose root is the same, has both meanings². On the other hand, in Gaulish, the word *nav* or *naf*, which is obviously identical to the preceding ones, has the meaning of "chief" and is even applied to God; it is therefore the idea of the central Principle that we find here³.

It seems to us that, among the ideas expressed by these words, that of the middle has, in this respect, a very particular importance: the World being symbolised by the wheel as we have explained above, its hub naturally represents the "Centre of the World". This centre, around which the wheel turns, is also its essential part; and we can refer on this point to the Far Eastern tradition: "Thirty spokes joined together, says Lao-Tzu, form a wheel hub; alone, they are useless; it is the void that unites them, that makes them a wheel that can be used"⁴. At first glance, one might think that this text refers to the space that remains empty between the spokes; but it cannot be said that this space unites them, and in reality, it is the central void that is meant. Indeed, in Eastern doctrines, emptiness represents the *principal* state of "non-manifestation" or "non-action": the "Activity of Heaven", it is said, is a "non-acting activity" (*wei wuwei*), and yet it is the supreme activity, the principle of all others, without which nothing could act; it is therefore the equivalent of Aristotle's "unmoved mover"⁵.

¹W. H. Roscher, in a work entitled *Omphalos*, published in 1913, has gathered a considerable amount of documentation establishing this fact for a wide variety of peoples; but he is wrong in claiming that this symbol is linked to these peoples' idea of the shape of the earth, because he imagines that it refers to the belief in a centre on the earth's surface, in the most crudely literal sense; this opinion implies a lack of understanding of the deeper meaning of symbolism. The author imagines that it is a belief in a centre of the Earth's surface, in the most crudely literal sense. We will use below some information contained in a study by M. J. Loth on the *Omphalos among the Celts*, which appeared in the *Revue des Etudes Anciennes* (July-September 1915).

²The word *nave*, as well as the hub of a wheel, refers to the nave of a church, but this coincidence seems to be accidental, since *nave*, in the latter case, must be derived from the Latin *navis*.

³*Agni*, in the *Rig-Veda*, is called the 'navel of the earth', which is even more closely associated with the same idea; often the swastika, as we have already said, is the symbol of *Agni*.

⁴*Tao-te-King*, 11

⁵ In Hindu symbolism, the being who is liberated from change is represented as leaving the "elemental world" (Aristotle's "sublunary sphere") through a passage compared to the cube of the

As for the *Omphalos*: this symbol essentially represented the "Centre of the World", even when it was located in a place that was simply the centre of a particular region, a spiritual centre rather than a geographical centre, although the two may have coincided in certain cases. To understand this, it is necessary to remember that every regularly constituted spiritual centre was considered to be the image of a supreme Centre, where the repository of primordial Tradition was kept intact; we have referred to this fact in our study on the legend of the Holy Grail (August-September 1925). The centre of a given region was therefore, for the people who inhabited that region, the visible image of the 'Centre of the World', just as the tradition of that people was, in principle, nothing more than an adaptation, in the form most suited to their mentality and conditions of existence, of the primordial Tradition, which was always, however much those who dwell on outward appearances might think otherwise, the only true Religion of all humanity.

The *Omphalos* of the temple at Delphi is particularly well known; this temple was truly the spiritual centre of ancient Greece, and, without dwelling on all the reasons that could justify this assertion, we will only point out that it was there that the council of Amphictyons, composed of representatives of all the Hellenic peoples, met twice a year and formed the only effective link between these peoples, who were politically independent of one another. The strength of this link lay precisely in its essentially religious and traditional character, the only possible principle of unity for a civilisation built on normal foundations: think, for example, of what Christianity was in the Middle Ages, and, unless one is blinded by modern prejudices, one can understand that these are not empty words.

The material representation of *the Omphalos* was generally a sacred stone, often called a "betyl"; and this latter word is also one of the most remarkable. It seems, in fact, to be nothing other than the Hebrew *Beith-El*, 'house of God', the very name that Jacob gave to the place where the Lord had appeared to him in a dream: 'And Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven! And Jacob rose early in the morning and took the stone that he had placed at his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it (to consecrate it). And he named that place *Bethel*, but the first name of that city was Luz" (Genesis, XXVIII, 16-19). This name Luz also has considerable importance in Hebrew tradition, but we cannot dwell on it at present, as it would entail too long a digression. Similarly, we can only briefly recall that *Beith-El*, "house of God", is said to have subsequently become *Beith-Lehem*, "house of bread", the city where Christ was born; the symbolic relationship between stone and bread would also be very worthy of attention, but we must limit ourselves⁶. What needs to be pointed out once again is that the name *Beith-El* does not

wheel of a cart, that is, a fixed axis around which the mutation takes place, from which it will escape in the future.

⁶And the tempter came and said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." (St *Matthew*, c. 4:3; Cf.: St *Luke*, c. 4:3). These words have mysterious meanings in relation to what we indicate here: Christ had to accomplish a similar transformation, but spiritually and not materially as the tempter requested; now, the spiritual order is analogous to the material order, but in reverse, and the sign of the devil is that

applies not only to the place, but also to the stone itself: "And this stone, which I have raised as a pillar, shall be the house of God (ibid., 22)". It is therefore this stone that must properly be the divine dwelling place (*mishkan*), following the designation that will later be given to the Tabernacle; and when we speak of the "cult of stones", which was common to so many ancient peoples, we must understand that this cult was not directed at the stones themselves, but at the Divinity of which they were the residence⁷.

The stone representing the *Omphalos* could take the form of a pillar, like Jacob's stone; it is very likely that among the Celtic peoples, some menhirs were nothing more than representations of it. Such is especially the case with the stone of Ushnag in Ireland, which we will discuss later; and oracles were given near such stones, as at Delphi, which is easily explained since they were considered the dwelling place of the divinity; moreover, the "house of God" was very naturally identified with the "Centre of the World"⁸.

The *Omphalos* could also be represented by a conical stone, such as the black stone of Cybele, or an ovoid; the cone recalled the sacred mountain, symbol of the 'Pole' or 'Axis of the World', as we said earlier (March and May 1926); as for the ovoid shape, it refers directly to another very important symbol, that of the "Egg of the World", which we will also have to consider in the continuation of these studies. Sometimes, and in particular in certain Greek *omphaloi*, the stone was surrounded by a serpent; this serpent is also seen coiled at the base or summit of Chaldean cairns, which should be considered as true "betyls"⁹. On the other hand, as we have already pointed out, the symbol of the stone is generally closely connected with that of the serpent, and the same is true of the egg, especially among the Celts and Egyptians.

A notable example of the *Omphalos* figure is the boulder of Kermaria, near Pont-l'Abbé (Finistère), whose general shape is that of an irregular cone, rounded at the top¹⁰. At the bottom there is a sinuous line, which appears to be nothing more than a stylised form of the serpent we have just mentioned; the summit is surrounded by a fret pattern. On one of the sides there is a swastika (see our article from May 1926); and the presence of this sign (from which the fretwork is also derived) would suffice to confirm, as clearly as possible, the significance of this curious monument. On another side there is another symbol that is no less interesting: it is a figure with eight spokes, circumscribed by a square instead of a circle

take everything backwards. It is Christ himself who, as the manifestation of the Word, is the "living bread that came down from heaven"; and it is this bread that was to replace the stone as the "house of God" in the New Covenant; and, we might add, that is why the oracles have ceased.

⁷We cannot expand as much as would be necessary on the general symbolism of sacred stones; perhaps we will have occasion to return to this later. On this subject, we would like to point out the little-known work by Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Dieu et les Dieux*, which contains information of great interest.

⁸ All this is related to the question of spiritual influences (in Hebrew *berakoth*), a very complex question that does not seem to have ever been dealt with as a whole.

⁹Several examples of such boundary stones can be seen in the Louvre Museum.

¹⁰ M. J. Loth, in the aforementioned study, has provided photographs of this betyl, as well as some other stones of the same type.

such as the wheel; this figure is therefore entirely comparable to the six-spoked wheel occupying the upper corner of the British pavilion (see November 1925, p. 395), which must also be of Celtic origin. What is even stranger is that this sign on the Kermaria betyl is reproduced exactly, in several copies, in the graffiti on the tower of Chinon, well known to readers of *Regnabit*; and, in the same graffiti, the eight-spoked figure can still be seen traced on the oval shield held by a kneeling figure¹¹. This sign must have played a fairly important role in the symbolism of the Knights Templar¹², as "it is also found in ancient commands of the Temple; it can also be seen as a heraldic sign on a large shield at the head of a 13th-century Templar funerary statue from the commandery of La Roche-en-Cloué (Vienne), and on a carved stone at the commandery of Mauléon, near Chatillon-sur-Sèvres" ¹³. This last representation is also that of a wheel proper ¹⁴; and this is just one example, among many others, of the continuation of Celtic traditions throughout the Middle Ages. We have omitted to point out earlier, with regard to this symbol, that one of the main meanings of the number 8 is that of "justice" and "balance", ideas which, as we have shown, are directly linked to that of the Centre¹⁵.

With regard to *the Omphalos*, it should also be added that although it was more commonly represented by a stone, it could also have been represented by a mound, a kind of burial mound. Thus, in China, in the centre of each kingdom or feudal state, there was once a mound in the shape of a quadrangular pyramid, formed from the earth of the "five regions": the four sides corresponded to the four cardinal points, and the summit to the very centre¹⁶. Curiously, we find these five regions in Ireland, where the 'chief's raised stone' was similarly erected in the centre of each domain¹⁷.

Indeed, it is Ireland that, among the Celtic countries, provides the largest amount of data relating to *the Omphalos*; it was once divided into five kingdoms, one of which was called *Mide* (which became, in its Anglicised form,

¹¹ This shield clearly recalls the eight-spoked wheel, like that of the allegorical figure of Albion, which has the same shape, reminiscent of the six-spoked wheel, as we have already noted.

¹² The same figure has also been preserved in modern Freemasonry, but it is considered only as "the key to numbers", and it is shown that it is indeed possible to break it down in such a way as to obtain all the Arabic numerals in a more or less schematic form.

¹³ L. Charbonneau-Lassay, *Le Coeur rayonnant du donjon de Chinon*, p. 16. The text is accompanied by reproductions of the two examples mentioned here.

¹⁴ A very similar wheel is depicted on a tiled floor in the Musée des Antiquaires de l'Ouest in Poitiers, which probably dates from the 15th century and whose impression has been communicated to us by Mr Charbonneau.

¹⁵ We also know the importance of the Ogdoad for the Pythagoreans. On the other hand, we have already indicated (November 1925, p. 396) the meanings of the number 6, which, together with the number 8, is the most frequently used for the spokes of symbolic wheels; the meaning of 'mediation' also has a very close and obvious connection with the idea of the Middle or the Centre.

¹⁶ The number five has a very particular symbolic importance in Chinese tradition.

¹⁷ *Brehon Laws*, quoted by J. Loth.

Meath), which is the ancient Celtic word *medion*, 'middle', identical to the Latin *medius*. This kingdom of *Mide*, which had been formed from portions taken from the territories of the other four, became the patrimony of the supreme king of Ireland, to whom the other kings were subordinate. In Ushnagh, which represents quite accurately the centre of the country, stood a gigantic stone called the "navel of the Earth", also known as the "stone of portions" (*ail-na-meeran*), because it marked the place where the dividing lines of the five kingdoms converged. A general assembly was held there annually on 1 May, entirely comparable to the annual meeting of the Druids at the 'central sacred place' (*medio-lanon or medio-nemeton*) of Gaul, in the country of the Carnutes; and the similarity to the assembly of the Amphictyons at Delphi is equally striking.

This division of Ireland into four kingdoms, plus the central region which was the residence of the supreme chief, is linked to very ancient traditions. Indeed, Ireland was, for this reason, called the "island of the Four Masters" ¹⁸, but this name, like that of "green island" (*Erin*), was previously applied to another land much further north, now unknown, perhaps disappeared (*Thule or Ogygia*), which was one of the main spiritual centres of prehistoric times. The memory of this "Island of the Four Masters" is even found in Chinese tradition, which seems to have never been pointed out; here is a Taoist text that attests to this: Emperor Yao made great efforts and imagined that he had reigned ideally well. After visiting the four Masters on the distant island of *Kou-chee* (inhabited by "transcendent men" *, *tchenn-jen*), he recognised that he had ruined everything. The ideal is the indifference (or rather detachment, in "non-acting" activity) of the superman, who lets the cosmic wheel turn¹⁹.

The last sentence of this passage still refers us to the symbol of the "wheel of the World": The "indifference" in question should not be understood in the ordinary sense, but is properly "non-action"; the transcendent man, being placed at the Centre, no longer participates in the movement of things, but directs that movement by his mere presence, because the "Activity of Heaven" ²⁰is reflected in him. If this were to be translated into Western language, it could be related very precisely to the "spiritual habitat" in the Heart of Christ ²¹, on condition, let it be understood, that this habitat is considered in its full effective realisation, and not as a mere more or less sentimental aspiration.

Perhaps some will see in some of the comparisons we have pointed out here nothing more than a matter of simple curiosity; but we must declare that they have

¹⁸ The name of St. Patrick, which was normally known only in its Latinised form, was originally *Cothraige*, which means "the servant of the four".

* The *tchen jen* are in fact "true men". The author corrected this slip in *Le Roi du Monde* (Translator's note).

¹⁹ *Tchuang-Tsé*, chap. I; trans. by P. L. Wieger, p. 213. Emperor Yao is said to have reigned in the year 2356 BC.

²⁰It should hardly be necessary to point out that this "non-action" has nothing in common with any kind of "quietism".

²¹ See Mr Charbonneau-Lassay's article on this subject (January 1926), and also the end of our article of March 1926.

for us a much greater scope, like everything that allows us to rediscover and gather together the scattered vestiges of the primordial Tradition.

P. –S- .To complete our article on "The Radiant Heart and the Heart on Fire" (April 1926), we reproduce these lines taken from Mr. Charbonneau-Lassay²²: "Rays, in heraldry and iconography of the Middle Ages, were the special sign, the reserved sign of the glorious state; flames symbolised love or ardour (in the human and mystical sense) that consume like fire, but not glory. Rays, brightness and dazzling light, signified triumph, supreme and total glorification. In ancient French heraldry, so clearly expressive, rays were also the emblem of glory thus understood, and especially in a religious composition, of heavenly glory, where radiant crosses bear, in the highly expressive language of the coat of arms, the name of divine crosses" (see the figure taken from Vulson de la Colombière's treatise on heraldry, 1669)²³.

Therein lies another reason, in addition to those already mentioned, for the preponderant importance of the representation of the radiant Heart prior to modern times: it can be seen that it corresponded to a higher, in a certain sense more exclusively divine, aspect of the symbolism of the Heart.

For the flames, the heraldic meaning is exactly as we have indicated on the basis of considerations of another order; for the rays, as the connection may not be immediately apparent, a further explanation is needed, which can, however, be given in a few words. In fact, the heraldic significance of the rays is essentially related to the "light of glory," in and through which the beatific vision operates; now, this is of a purely intellectual order, it is the highest knowledge, the most complete realisation of intelligence, since it is the direct contemplation of the supreme truth.

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²² *Le Coeur rayonnant du donjon de Chinon*, 21.

²³Vulson de la Colombière, *La Science Héroïque*, chap. XIII, p. 115, fig. XXXIV.

Chapter XI: THE HEART OF THE WORLD IN HEBREW KABBALAH

We have previously referred (February 1926, p. 220) to the role played in the Hebrew tradition, as in all other traditions, by the symbolism of the heart, which, here as elsewhere, essentially represents the 'Centre of the World'. What we want to talk about is what is called Kabbalah, a word which, in Hebrew, means nothing other than 'tradition', the doctrine transmitted orally for many centuries before being recorded in written texts; it is in this tradition that we can find interesting information on the subject in question.

In the *Sepher Yetsiráh*, there is mention of the "Holy Palace" or "Inner Palace," which is the Centre of the World: it is at the centre of the six directions of space (above, below, and the four cardinal points) which, together with the centre itself, form the septenary. The three letters of the divine name *Jehovah*, formed of four letters, *iod*, *hé*, *vau*, *hé*, but among which there are only three that are distinct, the *hé* being repeated twice), by their sixfold permutation following these six directions, indicate the immanence of God within the World, that is, the manifestation of the creative Word at the centre of all things, at the primordial point from which indefinite extensions are nothing more than expansion or development: "He formed something out of *Tohu* (emptiness) and made something that did not exist into something that does exist. He carved great columns from the incomprehensible ether¹. He reflected, and the Word (*Memra*) produced every object and all things by his Name alone" (*Sepher Yetsiráh*, IV, 5).

Before going any further, we will point out that in Eastern doctrines, and in particular in Hindu doctrine, there is also frequent reference to the seven regions of space, which are the four cardinal points, plus the zenith and the nadir, and finally, the centre itself. It can be seen that the representation of the six directions, opposite each other in pairs from the centre, forms a three-dimensional cross, three rectangular diameters of an undefined sphere. It can also be noted, by way of concordance, that St Paul alludes to the symbolism of the directions or dimensions of space when he speaks of the "breadth, length, height and depth of the mystery of the love of Jesus Christ" (*Ephesians*, III, 18); but here there are only four terms stated distinctly instead of six, because width and length correspond respectively to the two horizontal diameters taken as a whole, while height and depth correspond to the upper and lower halves of the vertical diameter.

On the other hand, in his important work on *Jewish Kabbalah*², Paul Vulliaud adds the following regarding the passages from *the Sepher Yetsiráh* that we have just quoted: "Clement of Alexandria says that from God, the Heart of the Universe, infinite extensions emanate, one towards the top, the other towards the bottom, one to the right, the other to the left, one forward and the other backward. Turning his gaze towards these six

¹ These are the "columns" of the Sephirotic Tree: the middle column, the right column and the left column (see our articles of December 1925, p. 292).

² 2 vols. In 8°, Paris, 1923. —This work contains a great deal of interesting information, some of which we will use here. It can be criticised for giving too much space to discussions of secondary importance, for not going deep enough into the doctrine, and for a certain lack of order in its presentation. Nevertheless, it is nonetheless a very serious work and very different in this respect from most other books written by modern authors on the subject.

extensions as towards an ever-equal number, he ended the world; he is the beginning and the end (the alpha and the omega), in him the six infinite phases of time end, and it is from him that they receive their extension towards infinity; such is the secret of the number 7"³. We have had to reproduce this quotation verbatim, and we regret that its exact reference is not indicated; the word "infinite", which appears three times, is inappropriate and should be replaced by "indefinite": only God is infinite; space and time can only be indefinite. The analogy, not to say identity, with Kabbalistic doctrine is most remarkable; and there is, as will be seen later, material for other comparisons that are even more surprising.

The primordial point, from which the creative Word is uttered, develops not only in space but also in time; it is the Centre of the World in every respect, that is to say, it is both the centre of space and the centre of time. This, let it be clearly understood, concerns only our world, the only one whose conditions of existence can be directly expressed in human language; it is the sensible world that is subject to space and time, and it would be necessary, in order to pass to the supersensible order (since we are dealing with the Centre of all worlds), to carry out a kind of analogical transposition in which space and time would no longer have any meaning other than a purely symbolic one; this is indeed possible, but we need not concern ourselves with it here, and we can limit ourselves to the cosmogonic point of view as it is usually understood.

Clement of Alexandria speaks of six phases of time corresponding to the six directions of space: these are six cyclical periods, subdivisions of another more general period, sometimes represented as six millennia. The *Zohar*, like the *Talmud*, divides the duration of time into millennial periods: "The world will subsist for six thousand years, to which the first six words of Genesis allude (*Siphra di Zeniutha: Zohar*, II, 176 b); and these six millennia are analogous to the six 'days' of creation ('A thousand years are like a day in the eyes of the Lord', says Scripture). The seventh millennium, like the seventh 'day', is the *Sabbath*, that is, the phase of return to the Beginning, which naturally corresponds to the centre, considered as the seventh region of space. There is a kind of symbolic chronology here, which should certainly not be taken literally; Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, I, 4) observes that six thousand years make ten "great years", the "great year" being six centuries (it is the *Naros* of the Chaldeans); but, on the other hand, what is designated by this same expression is a much longer period, ten or twelve thousand years among the Greeks and Persians. This, however, does not matter here, where it is not a question of making conjectures about the real duration of our world, but only of taking these divisions at their symbolic value: they may be six indefinite phases, and therefore of indeterminate duration, plus a seventh that corresponds to the end of all things and their restoration to their original state (this last millennium is undoubtedly comparable to the "thousand-year kingdom" mentioned in the Apocalypse).

Now, consider the radiant Heart of the astronomical marble of Saint-Denis d'Orques, studied here by L. Charbonneau-Lassay (February 1924), which we reproduce here again. This Heart is located at the centre of the planetary circle and the zodiacal circle, which represent respectively the indefiniteness of the

³ *La Kabbale juive*, volume I, pp. 215-216.

spaces and that of time⁴ ; is there not a striking similarity here with the "Holy Palace" of Kabbalah, also located at the centre of spaces and times, and which is effectively, in the words of Clement of Alexandria, the "Heart of the Universe"? But that is not all, and there is something in this same figure that is perhaps even stranger, which we will discuss next.

Let us return to the cosmogonic doctrine of *the Sepher Yetziráh*: "it is," says Paul Vulliaud, "the development from Thought to the modification of Sound (the Voice), from the impenetrable to the comprehensible. It will be noted that we are in the presence of a symbolic exposition of the mystery that has as its object universal genesis and is related to the mystery of unity. In other passages, it is about the 'point' that develops in lines in all directions, and which becomes comprehensible only through the 'Inner Palace'. It is in the incomprehensible ether (*Avir*) that concentration takes place, from which light emanates (*Aor*)⁵. The point is, as we have already said (May 1926), the symbol of unity: it is the principle of extension, which exists only through its radiation (the previous "void" being nothing more than pure virtuality), but it can only be understood by situating itself in this extension, of which it is then the centre. The emanation of light, which gives reality to extension, "making something out of the void and what did not exist into what exists", is an expansion that follows concentration; these are the two phases of inhalation and exhalation that are often discussed in Hindu doctrine, the second of which corresponds to the production of the manifested world; and we have already noted the analogy that also exists in this regard with the movement of the heart and the circulation of blood.

But let us continue: "Light (*Aor*) springs from the mystery of ether (*Avir*). The hidden point was manifested, that is, the letter *iod*" ⁶. This letter represents the Principle in hieroglyphics, and it is also said that all the other letters of the Hebrew alphabet are formed from it. It is also said that the incomprehensible primordial point, which is the unmanifested One, forms three, which are the Beginning, the Middle and the End (like the three elements of the monosyllable *Aum* in Hindu symbolism and in ancient Christian symbolism), and that these three points together constitute the letter *iod*, which is thus the manifested One (or more precisely affirmed as the principle of universal manifestation), God becoming the Centre of the World through his Word. When that *iod* has been produced, says the *Sepher Yetsiráh*, what remained of that mystery or of the hidden *Avir* (ether) was *Aor* (light)"; and, indeed, if the *iod* is removed from the word *Avir*, *Aor* remains.

Paul Vulliaud quotes, in this regard, the commentary of Moses de León: 'Having recalled that the holy one, blessed be He, unknowable, can only be apprehended according to His attributes (*middoth*) by which He created the worlds, let us begin with the first word of the *Torah*: *Bereshith* (the word with which *Genesis* begins: *In the beginning*). Ancient authors have taught us about this mystery, which is hidden in the supreme degree, the pure and impalpable ether. This degree is the sum total of all the posterior (i.e., exterior) mirrors, which proceed from the mystery of the

⁴ Mr. Charbonneau has shown us a curious document that he has found since the publication of his article; it is a medal of Antoninus, minted in Egypt, on the reverse of which appears Jupiter-Serapis, surrounded by what appear to be the planetary and zodiacal circles; the similarity is noteworthy.

⁵ *La Kabbale juive*, vol. I, p. 217.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

point which is itself an occult degree emanating from the mystery of pure and mysterious ether. The first degree, which is absolutely occult, cannot be apprehended. Similarly, the mystery of the supreme point, although deeply occult, can be apprehended in the mystery of the inner Palace. The "mystery of the supreme Crown (*Kether*, the first of the ten *Sefiroth*) corresponds to that of the pure and incomprehensible ether (*Avir*). He is the cause of all causes and the origin of all origins. It is in this mystery, the invisible origin of all things, that the hidden point from which everything proceeds is born. That is why it is said in the *Sepher Yetsiráh*: "Before the One, what can you take into account?" That is, before that point, what can be counted or understood? Before that point there was nothing except *Ain*, that is, the mystery of pure and incomprehensible ether, so named (by simple negation) because of its incomprehensibility. The comprehensible beginning of existence is found in the mystery of the supreme "point". And since that point is the beginning of all things, it is called "Thought" (*Mahasheba*). The mystery of creative Thought corresponds to the hidden "point". It is in the Inner Palace that the mystery connected with the hidden "point" can be understood, for the pure and incomprehensible ether always remains mysterious. The 'point' is the ether made palpable in the mystery of the inner Palace or Holy of Holies. Everything, without exception, was first conceived in Thought⁷. And if anyone were to say, 'Behold, there is someone new in the world!', silence them, for this was previously conceived in Thought. From the hidden 'point' emanates the Holy inner Palace. It is the Holy of Holies, the fiftieth year (an allusion to *the Jubilee*, which represents the return to the primordial state), which is also called the Voice emanating from Thought⁸. All beings and all causes then emanate by the force of the "point" from above. This is what relates to the mysteries of the three supreme *Sefiroth*⁹. We have chosen to include this passage in its entirety, despite its length, because, in addition to its intrinsic interest, we will undoubtedly have to refer to it in the continuation of these studies in order to establish comparisons with other traditional doctrines.

The symbolism of the letter *iod* should still hold our attention: we have previously recalled (February 1926) the fact, already pointed out by R. P. Anizan, that in an engraving drawn and engraved by Callot for a thesis defended in 1625, the Heart of Christ is seen containing three *iod*, which can be considered as representing the Trinity. Moreover, as we have seen before, the *letter iod*, formed by the union of three dots, is in itself an image of the triune God; and undoubtedly the three *iod* represent very well the three Persons of the Trinity. On the other hand, it has been pointed out to L. Charbonneau-Lassay that, in the heart of Saint-Denis d'Orques, the wound is in the shape of an inverted *iod*; is this a purely accidental resemblance or should we see something intentional in this shape? We would not dare to say anything on the subject, and we even admit that the person who draws a symbol is not necessarily aware of everything that it actually contains; however, the Carthusian monk who sculpted the astronomical marble has shown sufficient knowledge for it not to be implausible that there was an effective intention on his part; and, in any case, this

⁽⁷⁾ "Is the Word as divine Intelligence, which is the "place of possibilities".

⁸ It is also the Word, but as divine Word: it is first pure Thought, and then Word in the external world, the Word being the manifestation of Thought (see our article of January 1926), and the first word uttered is the *Iehi Aor* (*Fiat Lux*) of Genesis.

⁹ Quoted in *La Kabbale juive*, volume I, pp. 405-406

iod, whether loved or not, appears to us to be full of meaning. Even its inverted position is not without meaning: it may be an allusion to the Incarnation, or, more generally, to the manifestation of the Word in the World, considered in a certain way as a "descent" (such is the exact meaning of the Sanskrit term *avatâra*, which designates all divine manifestation). As for the *iod* itself, it has the meaning of 'beginning', as we have said before, and also of 'seed' (a word which, let us say in passing, is applied to Christ in various passages of scripture): the *iod* in the heart is in a way the seed enclosed in the fruit. It also indicates a very close relationship between the symbol of the Heart and that of the "World Egg," to which we have already alluded. We will have occasion to return to this, and we will then explain ourselves more fully on this point, which is important enough to deserve separate treatment; we will not dwell on it further for the moment.

Here now is that strange thing we mentioned earlier: the heart of Saint-Denis d'Orques, with its *Yod-shaped* wound, radiates light (*Aor*)¹⁰ in such a way that we have here both the *Yod* and the *Aor*, that is, the two terms of the differentiation of the primordial *Avir*. Furthermore, this *iod* and this *Aor* are placed respectively inside and outside the Heart, as is fitting, since the former comes from concentration and the latter from expansion, and it is from this successive concentration and expansion that the very distinction between inside and outside arises. For the rest, we do not claim that all this was expressly intended by the sculptor, for we have no means of acquiring certainty about it; but it must be agreed that, if it is unintentional, there is an unconscious encounter with Kabbalistic doctrine, and that is even more extraordinary, that the Carthusian monk has supplemented the science he lacked with an intuition of the most surprising kind; we will leave everyone free to choose between the two hypotheses.

Be that as it may, what is indisputable is that the Heart itself, in this remarkable representation, is identified with the "Holy Palace" of Kabbalah; it is also that same Heart, the centre of all things, which Hindu doctrine, for its part, describes as the "Divine City" (*Brahma-pura*). The "Holy Palace" is also called the "Holy of Holies," as we have seen in the quotation from Moses de León; and, in the Temple of Jerusalem, the "Holy of Holies" was nothing other than a figure of the true "Centre of the World", a very real figure indeed, since it was also the place of divine manifestation, the dwelling place of the *Shekinah*, which is the effective presence of the Divinity.

There is another aspect of the symbolism of the heart in Hebrew tradition, closely linked to the previous one, which will be the subject of our next article.

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¹⁰Perhaps there is also a symbolic intention in the alternation of the two types of rays, straight and sinuous, which may represent two different movements in the propagation of light, or even two secondary aspects of it.

Chapter XII: THE HOLY LAND AND THE HEART OF THE WORLD

At the end of our last article, we spoke of the *Shekinah*, which in Hebrew tradition is the real presence of the divinity; the term that designates it derives from *zhakan*, which means 'to dwell' or 'to reside'. It is the divine manifestation in this world, or, in a certain sense, God dwelling among men; hence its very close relationship with the Messiah, who is *Emmanuel*, 'God with us': *Et habitabit in novis*, says St John (1:14). It should also be noted that the passages of Scripture where the *Shekinah* is specifically mentioned are mainly those dealing with the establishment of a spiritual centre: the construction of the Tabernacle, which is itself called *mishkan* in Hebrew, a word from the same root and meaning properly the divine dwelling place; the building of Solomon's Temple, then that of Zerubbabel. Such a centre was, in fact, essentially intended to be the residence of the *Shekinah*, that is, the place of divine manifestation; always represented as "Light"; and the *Shekinah* is sometimes referred to as the "Light of the Messiah": *Erat Lux vera quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum*, says St John (I, 9); and Christ says of himself: "I am the Light of the world" (*ibid.*, VIII, 12).

This illumination of which St John speaks occurs in the centre of being, which is represented by the Heart, as we have already explained¹, and which is the point of contact between the individual and the Universal, or, in other words, between the human and the Divine. The *Shekinah* "bears this name," says the Hebrew scholar Louis Cappel², "because she dwells in the hearts of the faithful, a dwelling place symbolised by the Tabernacle where God is considered to reside". In truth, this symbol is at the same time a reality, and one can speak of the residence of the *Shekinah*, not only in the hearts of the faithful, but also in the Tabernacle, which, for this reason, was considered the "Heart of the World". There are, in fact, several points of view to be distinguished here; but first, we can emphasise that the above would suffice to justify the cult of the Sacred Heart entirely. Indeed, if we apply to Christ, giving him the fullness of his meaning, what in a certain sense and at least virtually is true of every human being (St John's *omnem hominem* is the explicit statement of this), we can say that the "Light of the Messiah" was in a certain way concentrated in his Heart, from where it radiated as from a shining home; and that is precisely what the figure of the "Radiant Heart" expresses. On the other hand, we also see, from what has just been said, that the Sacred Heart is, so to speak, the place where the mystery of the theandric being is properly realised, where the union of the two natures, divine and human, is brought about in the person of Christ. In the Gospel, Christ's humanity is compared to the Temple³: "Destroy the Temple of God and I will rebuild it in three days" (St John, II, 19; Cf. St Matthew, XXVI, 61, and St Mark, XIV, 58); and the Heart is, in its humanity, what the Tabernacle or the "Holy of Holies" is in the Temple.

¹ We refer in particular to our article on *The Radiant Heart and the Heart on Fire* (April 1926).

² *Crítica sacra*, p. 311, Amsterdam edition, 1689; quoted by Paul Vulliaud. *La Kabbale Juive*, T. I, p. 193.

³We say the humanity of Christ and not just his body, because it is indeed the human composite that, as such, is destroyed by death.

Let us now return to the distinction we mentioned a moment ago; it follows immediately from the fact that religion, in the proper and etymological sense of the word, that is, 'that which reconnects' man to his divine Principle, concerns not only each man individually, but also humanity collectively; in other words, it has both an individual and a social aspect⁴. The *Shekinah's* dwelling in the heart of the faithful corresponds to the first of these two points of view; its dwelling in the Tabernacle corresponds to the second. Moreover, the name *Emmanuel* also means both of these things: "God with us", that is, in the midst of men; and St John's *in nobis*, which we recalled earlier, can also be interpreted in both senses. Jewish tradition takes the second point of view when it says that "when two people converse about divine mysteries, the *Shekinah* remains between them"; and Christ said exactly the same thing, and in almost the same terms: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (St Matthew, XVIII, 20). This is also true, as the Gospel text specifies, "wherever they are gathered together"; but this, from the Jewish point of view, relates only to special cases, and for the people of Israel as an organised community (and organised theocratically, in the truest sense of the term), the place where the *Shekinah* resided in a constant, normal way was the Temple in Jerusalem; therefore, sacrifices, constituting public worship, could not be offered anywhere else.

As a spiritual centre, the Temple, and more especially the part called the "Holy of Holies", was an image of the "Centre of the World", which Kabbalah describes as the "Holy Palace" or "Inner Palace", as we have seen in our previous article; and we have pointed out that this "Holy Palace" was also called the "Holy of Holies". Moreover, as we have already said in our study on the *Omphalos* (June 1926), the "House of God", the place of divine manifestation, whatever it may be, is naturally identified with the "Centre of the World", which it represents symbolically, but also in reality.

The spiritual centre for a particular people is not necessarily a fixed place; it can only be so if that people is itself permanently established in a particular country. When it comes to a nomadic people, the conditions are very different, and their spiritual centre must move with them, while remaining the same throughout the journey; this was precisely the case with the Tabernacle while Israel was wandering. Here is what P. Vulliaud says on this subject in the work we have already quoted: "Until the coming of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the patriarchs, drawing the *Shekinah* down here, prepared three thrones for her. But her residence was not fixed. Since then, Moses built the Tabernacle, but she was a pilgrim like her people. It is also said that she did not reside here below (in a specific place), but in the midst of the Israelites. She had no fixed abode until the day the temple was built, for which David had prepared the gold, silver, and everything Solomon needed to complete the work⁵. The Tabernacle of the Holiness of *Jehovah*, the residence of the *Shekinah*, is the Holy of Holies

⁴ There is even a third aspect, which concerns humanity as a specific nature, and therefore refers directly to the cosmic order.

⁵ Some of the expressions used here evoke (perhaps through ignorance on the part of the author who recounts these things) the assimilation often made between the construction of the Temple, considered in its ideal meaning, and the "Great Work" of the Hermeticists.

Saints who are the Heart of the Temple, which is itself the centre of Zion (Jerusalem), just as holy Zion is the centre of the Land of Israel, just as the Land of Israel is the centre of the world⁶. The expression "Heart of the World", applied to Zion, is found especially in the *Zohar*, and also in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* ⁷; and, in the last sentence we have just quoted, it can be noted that there is a series of extensions gradually given to the idea of the centre in the successive applications.

One can also take things in reverse order, and even push them further than what has just been said: not only everything that has been listed, that is, the Land of Israel, Mount Zion, the Temple, the Holy of Holies or the Tabernacle, but also, after this, the Ark of the Covenant that was in the Tabernacle, and, finally, above the Ark of the Covenant itself, the precise place of the manifestation of the *Shekinah*, located between the two *Cherubim*, represent so many successive approximations of what we can call the "spiritual Pole", according to a symbolism common to all traditions and which we have already had occasion to indicate previously: it is, one might say, like the point of contact between Heaven and Earth. We have explained elsewhere⁹ that Dante, for his part, has presented Jerusalem precisely as the "spiritual pole" of our world; and it is so in another sense, and more effectively than ever, since Christianity, as the place where the cross of the Saviour has been raised, which is identified with the "Tree of Life", that is, with the "Axis of the World"¹⁰ ; its function, which in the past was especially related to the Hebrew people, has become universalised in a certain way since the mystery of Redemption was fulfilled.

We have just seen that the appeal of "Heart of the World" or "Centre of the World" is extended to the entire Land of Israel, insofar as it is considered the "Holy Land"; and it should also be noted that it receives, in the same regard, various other names, among which "Land of the Living" is one of the most notable. There is talk of "the Land of the Living comprising seven lands", and P. Vulliaud observes that "this land is Canaan, in which there were seven peoples"¹¹, which is accurate in the literal sense, although a symbolic interpretation is equally possible, and therefore it is said: "I will walk before the Lord in the Lands of the Living (*be-aretsoth ha-hayim?*)" (Ps., CXVI, 9). It is known that Catholic liturgy uses this appeal of "Land of the Living" for the heavenly dwelling place of the elect ¹², which was in effect represented by the Promised Land, since Israel, entering it, was to

⁶ *La Kabbale Juive*, vol. I, p. 509.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 353.

⁸ See our article on *The Idea of the Centre in Ancient Traditions* (May 1926).

⁹ In our study on *The Esotericism of Dante*.

¹⁰ See our article on *The Trees of Paradise* (March 1926). There is a very clear allusion to this identification of the cross with the "Axis of the World" in the motto of the Carthusians: *Stat Crux dum volvitur orbis*.

¹¹ *La Kabbale Juive*, Volume II, p. 116.

¹² The expression "Land of the Living", on the other hand, is effectively synonymous with "abode of immortality"; it is also, originally, one of the designations of the earthly Paradise, which is the "Holy Land" par excellence.

see the end of their tribulations; and, from yet another point of view, the Holy Land, as a spiritual centre, was an image of Heaven, for, according to Jewish tradition, "everything that the Israelites do on earth is fulfilled according to the types of what happens in the celestial world"⁽¹³⁾.

It should also be noted that the people of Israel are not the only ones to have assimilated their country to the "Heart of the world" and to have considered it as an image of Heaven, two ideas which, moreover, are in reality one and the same; the use of the same symbolism is found in other peoples who also had a "Holy Land", that is, a country where a spiritual temple was established, serving a function comparable to that of the Temple of Jerusalem for the Hebrews. We can repeat here what we have already said about the *Omphalos*, which was always the visible image of the "Centre of the World" for the people who inhabited the region where it was located; and we will also refer to what we added at that time (June 1926, p. 46) about the different particular traditions and their connection to the primordial tradition. It can thus be understood that different countries have been symbolically described as the "Heart of the World", with all the corresponding spiritual centres having a similar constitution, often even in very precise details, as if they were so many images of the same single and supreme Centre.

This symbolism is particularly evident among the ancient Egyptians; indeed, according to Plutarch, "the Egyptians give their country the name of *Chémia*¹⁴, and compare it to a heart"¹⁵. The reason given by this author is rather strange: "This country is indeed warm, humid, contained in the southern parts of the inhabited earth, extending to the south, just as in the human body the heart extends to the left", because "the Egyptians consider the East to be the face of the world, the North to be on the right, and the South to be on the left"¹⁶. These are nothing more than rather superficial similarities, and the real reason must be very different, since the same comparison with the heart has been applied equally to every land to which a sacred and "central" character was attributed, in the spiritual sense, regardless of its geographical location. On the other hand, what further justifies the interpretation we are considering is that, in Plutarch's own account, the heart, which represented Egypt, also represented Heaven, which could not age since it is eternal, by means of a heart placed on a brazier whose flame keeps it alive

¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 501.

¹⁴ *Kêmi*, in the Egyptian language, means "black earth"; from this word came the word *alchemy* (which is *nothing* more than the Arabic article), which originally designated the hermetic science, that is, the priestly science of Egypt.

¹⁵ *Isis and Osiris*, 33; translation by Mario Meunier.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 32, p. 112. In India, on the contrary, it is Midday that is designated as the "right side", *dakshina*, but, despite appearances, this refers to the same thing, as it must be understood as the side that is on the right when one turns towards the East, and it is easy to imagine the left side of the world as extending to the right of the observer, and vice versa, as is the case for two people standing face to face.

ardour”¹⁷ . Thus, while the heart itself is represented hieroglyphically by the vessel¹⁸ , it is at the same time the hieroglyph for Egypt and for Heaven¹⁹ .

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10, p. 49. It should be noted that this symbol, with the meaning given to it here, seems to be comparable to that of the phoenix.

¹⁸ See Charbonneau-Lassay's article on *The Human Heart and the Notion of the Heart of God in the Religion of Ancient Egypt* (November 1924), and also our article on *The Sacred Heart and the Legend of the Holy Grail* (August-September 1925).

¹⁹M. G. Ferrero (*The Psychological Laws of Symbolism*, p. 142) says that "Wilkinson gives a curious drawing of an Egyptian house on the façade of which there is a cross coming out of a clumsily drawn heart, extremely similar to those found in certain Catholic paintings". We limit ourselves to reporting this fact, as we cannot interpret it with certainty in the absence of more precise data.

We must also point out, on this occasion, a curious observation about the symbolism of the ibis, which was one of the emblems of Thoth (called Hermes by the Greeks), that is, of Wisdom. Elien, indicating the various reasons that contributed to giving this bird a sacred character, says that "when the ibis folds its head and tail under its wings, it takes the shape of a heart, and the Egyptians represented Egypt hieroglyphically by a heart" ²⁰. Finally, since we have returned to this question of the heart in ancient Egypt, let us recall one last text from Plutarch, already quoted here by Charbonneau-Lassay: "Of all the plants that grow in Egypt, the *persea*, it is said, is particularly consecrated to Isis, because its fruit resembles a heart, and its leaf a ^{tongue}."; and let us compare it with what Charbonneau-Lassay also indicated earlier regarding the funerary inscription of a priest of Memphis, from which "it appears that the theologians of the Memphis school distinguished in the work of the Creator God the function of creative thought, which they call the part of the Heart, and that of the instrument of creation, which they call the part of the ^{Tongue}." This Heart and this Tongue are exactly what the Kabbalistic texts we reproduce in our last article call Thought and Voice, that is, the two inner and outer aspects of the Word; there is here, between the Hebrew tradition and the Egyptian tradition, a similarity as perfect as it is possible. Does this concordance of traditions, which could undoubtedly be established on many other points as well, not explain why the Hebrews and Egyptians, each applying it to their own country, could have had the same idea of the "Holy Land" as the "Heart of the World" and image of Heaven?

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²⁰*De Natura animalium*, X, 28, quoted by Mario Meunier in a note in his translation of *Isis and Osiris*, p. 218. Charbonneau-Lassay, to whom we have referred this text, has made a comparison with the design on an old piece of jewellery, which appears to be of Spanish origin, where, in the middle of an ellipsoidal medallion, like medieval ecclesiastical seals, a heron or a stork, the Western equivalent of the ibis, arranged in such a way that its schematic form resembles that of certain ancient vessels, otherwise close to that of a heart; and this fact further suggests the symbolic assimilation of the vessel and the heart among the Egyptians.

²¹ *The Heart and the Lyre* (February 1926, pages 209-210).

²² *Isis and Osiris*, 68, p. 198. Note in particular the assimilation established between the heart and the fruit; we have already alluded to this comparison in our last article, reserving the right to return to it later.

²³ *Ibid.*

Chapter XIII: CONSIDERATIONS ON SYMBOLISM I: MYTHS AND SYMBOLS

We have already presented some general considerations on symbolism here, especially in our article on *The Word and the Symbol* (January 1926), where we have endeavoured above all to show the fundamental *raison d'être* of this mode of expression, which is so little known in our time. This very unfamiliarity, this general ignorance of modern people regarding issues related to it, requires that we return insistently to consider them in all their aspects; the most elementary truths in this line of thought seem to have been almost entirely lost sight of, so that it is always appropriate to recall them whenever the occasion arises. That is what we propose to do today, and undoubtedly in the future as well, as circumstances permit, even if only by correcting the erroneous opinions we encounter here and there on this subject. Recently, we have found two that seem to us to be noteworthy as they may give rise to some interesting clarifications, and their examination will be the subject of this article and the one that follows.

1.- Myths and symbols

A magazine devoted more specifically to the study of Masonic symbolism has published an article on the "interpretation of myths", in which certain points of view are quite accurate, while others are much more debatable or even completely distorted by the ordinary prejudices of the modern mind; but we do not intend to deal here with more than one of the points raised. The author of this article establishes a distinction between "myths" and "symbols" that we do not consider well-founded: for him, while a myth is a story with a meaning other than that directly expressed by the words that compose it, a symbol is essentially a figurative representation of certain ideas through a geometric pattern or any other drawing; the symbol would therefore be a graphic mode of expression, and the myth a verbal mode. There is, in regard to the meaning given to the symbol, a restriction that we find unacceptable; in fact, any image taken to represent an idea, to express or suggest it in any way, can be considered a sign or, which amounts to the same thing, a symbol of this idea; it matters little whether it is a visual image or any other type of image, as this does not introduce any essential difference here and does not change anything at all in the very principle of symbolism. In all cases, it is always based on a relationship of analogy or correspondence between the idea being expressed and the image, whether graphic, verbal or other, by which it is expressed; and that is why we said, in the article we referred to at the beginning, that words themselves are not and cannot be anything other than symbols. Instead of speaking of an idea and an image as we have just done, we could even speak more generally of any two realities of different orders between which there is a correspondence that is based on the nature of both: in these conditions, a reality of a certain order can be represented by a reality of a different order, and the latter is then a symbol of the former.

Symbolism understood in this way (and, once its principle has been established in the manner we have just recalled, it is hardly possible to understand it in any other way) is obviously susceptible to a multitude of different modalities; myth is but a simple particular case, constituting one of these modalities; one could say that the symbol is the genus, and myth one of the species. In other words, a symbolic narrative can be considered

symbolic story, just as much and in the same way as a symbolic drawing or many other things that have the same character and play the same role; myths are symbolic stories, just as the parables of the Gospel are; we do not think that there is anything here that could give rise to the slightest difficulty, once the general notion of symbolism has been properly understood.

But it is still necessary to make other observations on this subject that are not without importance; we refer to the original meaning of the word 'myth'. This word is commonly taken as a synonym for "fable", meaning simply any fiction, most often clothed in a more or less poetic character; it seems that the Greeks, from whose language this term is taken, bear some responsibility for what is, in truth, a profound alteration and deviation from its original meaning; among them, in fact, individual imagination began quite early to take free course in all forms of art, which, instead of remaining properly hieratic and symbolic as among the Egyptians and the peoples of the East, very soon took another direction, aiming much less to instruct than to please, and leading to productions most of which are almost devoid of any real meaning; this is what may be called profane art. This aesthetic fantasy was exercised in particular on myths: poets, developing and modifying them at the whim of their imagination, surrounded them with superfluous and vain ornaments, obscuring and distorting them so well that it often became very difficult to rediscover their meaning and extract their essential elements, and it could be said that in the end the myth was, at least for the majority, nothing more than a misunderstood symbol, as it has remained for moderns. But this is nothing more than abuse; what must be considered is that the myth, before any distortion, was properly and essentially a symbolic story, as we have already said; and, from this point of view, 'myth' is not synonymous with 'fable', since the latter word (in Latin *fabula*, from *fari*, to speak) etymologically designates only any story, without specifying in any way its intention or character; here too, moreover, the meaning of 'fiction' has only been linked to it later. What is more, these two terms, 'myth' and 'fable', which have come to be taken as equivalents, are derived from roots that actually have opposite meanings, for while the root of 'fable' designates the word, that of 'myth', strange as it may seem at first glance when dealing with a story, designates silence.

In fact, the Greek word *muthos*, 'myth', comes from the root *mu*, which (found in the Latin *mutus*, 'mute') represents a closed mouth and, consequently, silence. Such is the meaning of the verb *muein*, to close the mouth, to be silent (and, by extension, it also comes to mean to close the eyes, in both the literal and figurative sense); an examination of some of the derivatives of this verb is particularly instructive¹. But, one might ask

how is it that a word with this origin has come to be used to designate a certain type of story? The fact is that this idea of 'silence' must be related here to things which, by their very nature, are inexpressible, at least directly and through ordinary language; one of the general functions of symbolism is

¹ From *muô* (infinitive of *muein*) two other verbs are immediately derived that differ very little in form, *muaô* and *mueô*; the first has the same meanings as *muô*, and it is necessary to add another derivative, *mullô*, which also means to close the lips and murmur without opening the mouth (the Latin *murmur* is nothing more than the root *mu* prolonged by the letter *r* and repeated, so that it represents a dull, continuous noise produced with the mouth closed). As for *mueô*, it means to initiate (into the "mysteries", whose name is also derived from the same root, as will be seen later, precisely through *mueô* and *mustês*), and, consequently, to instruct (although mainly to instruct without words, as was indeed the case in the mysteries) and to consecrate; from this latter meaning has come, in Christian ecclesiastical language, that of conferring ordination.

effectively suggesting the inexpressible, making it felt, or rather "assented to", through the transpositions it allows to be made from one order to another, from the lower to the higher, from what is more immediately apprehensible to what is not, but much more difficult; and such is precisely the primary purpose of myths. Thus, for example, Plato resorts to the use of myths when he wishes to expound conceptions that go beyond the scope of his usual dialectical procedures; and these myths, far from being merely the more or less negligible literary embellishments that modern commentators and "critics" too often see them as, correspond, on the contrary, to what is most profound in his thought, and which he cannot, because of this very profundity, express except symbolically. In myth, what is said is therefore different from what is meant², but it suggests it through this analogical correspondence, which is the foundation and very essence of all symbolism; thus, one might say, silence is kept by speaking, and hence the myth has received its name. Moreover, this is also the meaning of Christ's words: "To those who are outside, and who hear but do not hear anything" (St Matthew, XIII, 13; St Mark, IV, 11-12; St Luke, VIII, 10); this refers to those who understand only what is said literally, who are incapable of going beyond that to grasp the inexpressible, and to whom, consequently, 'the mystery of the <Kingdom of Heaven>'

We recall this last sentence from the Gospel text because it is precisely the relationship between the words 'myth' and 'mystery', both of which come from the same root, that we now wish to draw attention to. The Greek word *mustêrion*, 'mystery', is also directly related to the idea of 'silence'; and this, on the other hand, can be interpreted in many different ways, but all linked to each other, and each of which has its *raison d'être* from a certain point of view. In the most immediate sense, which we would readily call the crudest or at least the most superficial, mystery is that which must not be spoken of, something about which it is advisable to remain silent, or which is forbidden to reveal to outsiders; this is how it is commonly understood, even when it comes to ancient mysteries. However, we believe that this prohibition on revealing certain teachings should in fact, leaving aside considerations of expediency that have certainly often played a role, be considered as also possessing, in a certain way, a symbolic value; the "discipline of secrecy", which was strictly enforced in both the early Christian Church and the ancient mysteries, does not seem to us to be merely a precaution against hostility due to the incomprehension of the profane world, and we see other reasons of a much deeper order³. These reasons will be indicated to us by the other meanings contained in the word "mystery". According to the second meaning, which is less external, this word designates what must be received in silence, that which it is not convenient to discuss; from this point of view, all the dogmas of religion can be called mysteries, since they are truths which, by their very nature, are beyond all discussion. Now, it can be said that to propagate such mysteries recklessly among the profane would be

² This is also the etymological meaning of the word "allegory", from *allo agoreuin*, literally, "to say something else".

³ It is no mere coincidence that there is a close similarity between the words "sacred" (*sacratum*) and "secret" (*secretum*): in both cases, it refers to that which is set apart (*secernere*), to put aside, hence the participle *secretum*, reserved, separated from the profane domain. Similarly, the consecrated place is called *templum*, whose root is *tem* (which appears in the Greek *temnô*, to cut, trim, separate, hence *temenos*, sacred enclosure) and expresses exactly the same idea.

inevitably expose them to discussion, with all the inconveniences that may result from it and which is perfectly summed up by the word "desecration", which must be taken here in its most literal and complete sense; and therein lies the meaning of this precept of the Gospel: "Do not give holy things to dogs, and do not throw pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot and, turning around, tear you to pieces" (St Matthew, VIII, 6). Finally, there is a third meaning, the deepest of all, according to which mystery is properly inexpressible and can only be contemplated in silence; and, since the inexpressible is at the same time and for that very reason the uncommunicable, the prohibition against revealing sacred teaching symbolises, from this new point of view, the impossibility of expressing in words the true mystery of which this teaching is, so to speak, only the garment, which both manifests and veils it. Teaching concerning the inexpressible can obviously only be suggested with the help of appropriate images, which serve as supports for contemplation; after what we have explained, this means that such teaching necessarily takes symbolic form. Such has always been, in all peoples, one of the essential characteristics of initiation into the mysteries, whatever name may have been given to them; it can therefore be said that symbols (and in particular myths, when this teaching is translated into words) truly constitute the language of this initiation.

To complete this study, we need only recall one last term closely related to those whose relationship we have just established: the word 'mysticism', which, etymologically, applies to everything concerning the mysteries⁴. We will not examine here the more or less special nuances that have subsequently restricted the meaning of this word somewhat; we will limit ourselves to considering it in its original sense, and since the most essential and central meaning of mystery is the inexpressible, could it not be said that what are called mystical states are states in which man directly attains that which is inexpressible? This is precisely what St Paul declares, speaking from his own experience: "I know a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago, was caught up to the third heaven (whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know. God knows). And I know that this man (whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know, God knows) was caught up into paradise and heard inexpressible things, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (II Corinthians, XII, 2-3). In such conditions, anyone who wants to translate something of the knowledge they have acquired in those states, to the extent that this is possible, and even knowing that any expression will be imperfect and inadequate, will inevitably have to resort to symbolic form; and true mystics, when they have written, have never done anything else; should this not give certain opponents of symbolism pause for thought?

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⁴*Mustikos* is the adjective form of *mustês*, initiated, and therefore originally equates to 'initiatory' and designates everything related to initiation, in its teaching and in its very object.

Chapter XIV: SYMBOLISM AND PHILOSOPHY

2. Symbolism and philosophy

We have found, not this time in a Masonic magazine, but in a Catholic magazine¹, a statement that may seem very strange: "Symbolism, it was said, arises not from philosophy, but from literature". To tell the truth, we are not inclined to protest against the first part of this assertion, and we will explain why in a moment; but what we found surprising and even disturbing is the second part. The Gospel parables, the visions of the prophets, the Apocalypse, and many other things contained in Holy Scripture, all of which are of the most indisputable symbolism, would therefore be nothing more than "literature". And we have remembered that precisely the university and modernist "criticism" willingly applies this word to the sacred books, with the intention of implicitly denying their inspired character, reducing them to purely human proportions. This intention, however, is certainly not in the sentence we have just quoted; but how dangerous it is to write without sufficiently weighing the terms used! We see only one plausible explanation: that the author is completely ignorant of true symbolism, and that this term has evoked in him nothing more than the memory of a certain poetic school which, some thirty years ago, called itself "symbolist", for reasons that are not entirely clear. Undoubtedly, this supposed symbolism was nothing more than literature; but to take what is merely an abusive use of a word for its true meaning is a regrettable confusion on the part of a philosopher. However, in the present case, we are only half surprised, precisely because he is a philosopher, a 'specialist' who confines himself to philosophy and wants to know nothing outside it; therefore, everything related to symbolism inevitably escapes him.

There is one point we wish to emphasise: we too say that symbolism does not spring from philosophy, but the reasons for this are in no way those given by our philosopher. He states that, if this is so, it is because symbolism is a 'form of thought' ²; we would add: and because philosophy is another, radically different, even opposed in certain respects. We will go even further: this form of thought represented by philosophy corresponds only to a very special point of view and is valid only in a fairly restricted domain; symbolism has a very different scope; if these are two forms of thought, it would be a mistake to try to place them on the same level. The fact that philosophers have other pretensions proves nothing; to put things in their proper place, it is necessary above all to consider them impartially, which they cannot do in this case. We certainly do not intend to prohibit philosophers from dealing with the most diverse subjects; they may, for example, attempt to construct a "psychology of symbolism", and some have not refrained from doing so; this may always lead them to raise interesting questions, even if they must leave them unresolved; but we are convinced that, as philosophers, they should not

¹ We apologise for not giving more precise references to the journals and articles to which we refer; the reason for this is that we wish to carefully avoid, in these purely doctrinal studies, anything that might provide the slightest pretext for controversy.

² It seems, according to the same author, that philosophy does not study the forms of thought that "study only acts"; these are subtleties whose interest escapes us.

They will never penetrate the profound meaning of the smallest symbol, because there is something there that is entirely beyond their way of thinking and exceeds their competence.

We cannot even dream of addressing the issue with all the developments it would entail, but we will at least give some indications that, we believe, will sufficiently justify what we have just said. First, those who are surprised to see us attribute only secondary importance to philosophy, a somewhat subordinate position, need only reflect on what we have already stated in one of our previous articles (*Le Verbe et le Symbole*, January 1926): ultimately, all expression, whatever it may be, necessarily has a symbolic character, in the most general sense of the word; philosophers can do nothing but use words, and these words, in themselves, are not and cannot be anything more than symbols; it is therefore, in a way, philosophy that enters the domain of symbolism, and is consequently subordinate to it, and not the other way around.

However, there is, from another point of view, a contrast between philosophy and symbolism, if the latter is understood in the somewhat more restricted sense that is usually given to it. We have also pointed out this opposition in the same article; philosophy (which we did not specifically mention at the time) is, like everything expressed in the ordinary forms of language, essentially analytical, while symbolism proper is essentially synthetic. Philosophy represents the type of discursive thought, and this is what imposes limitations on it that it cannot overcome; on the contrary, symbolism is, one might say, the support of intuitive thought and, in this way, it opens up truly unlimited possibilities.

Philosophy, due to its discursive nature, is something exclusively rational, since this is the nature that belongs properly to reason itself; the domain of philosophy and its possibilities cannot therefore extend beyond what reason is capable of achieving; and even so, it represents only a very particular use of this faculty, for there are many things in the very order of rational knowledge that do not fall within the purview of philosophy. We do not, however, dispute the value of reason in its domain; but this value can only be relative, as is this domain itself; and, moreover, did not the word *ratio* originally mean 'relation'? Nor do we dispute the legitimacy of dialectic, even though philosophers abuse it too often; but this dialectic, in any case, must never be anything but a means and not an end in itself, and, moreover, this means may not be applicable indiscriminately to everything; to realise this, one need only step outside the limits of dialectic, and this is something that philosophy as such cannot do.

Even admitting that philosophy can go as far as it is theoretically possible, and by this we mean to the extreme limits of the domain of reason, this will still be very little indeed, for, to use an expression from the Gospel, 'only one thing is necessary', and it is precisely this 'thing' that will always remain forbidden to it, because it is above and beyond all rational knowledge.

What can the philosopher's discursive methods do in the face of the inexpressible, which is, as we explained earlier, the "mystery" in the deepest and truest sense of the word? On the contrary, symbolism has the essential function of making this inexpressible "assent", of providing the support that will allow intellectual intuition to effectively reach it;

Who, then, having understood this, would still dare to deny the immense superiority of symbolism and question that its scope incomparably exceeds that of any possible philosophy? However excellent and perfect in its genre a philosophy may be (and it is certainly not modern philosophies that we have in mind when we admit

such a hypothesis), it is nevertheless still only "straw"; it is St. Thomas Aquinas himself who has said so, and we can believe him.

But there is still more: considering symbolism as a "form of thought", it is approached purely from a human point of view, which is obviously the only one under which a comparison with philosophy is possible; it must certainly be considered as such, insofar as it is a mode of expression used by man, but, to tell the truth, this is far from sufficient. Here, in order not to repeat ourselves too much, we are obliged to refer to our article on *The Word and the Symbol*: there we explained how there is in symbolism what could be called a divine aspect, but which is essentially based on the correspondence between the natural order and the supernatural order, a correspondence by virtue of which the whole of nature only receives its true meaning when considered as a support for elevating us to the knowledge of divine truths, which is precisely the function of symbolism. This profound connivance with the divine plan makes symbolism something 'non-human', according to the Hindu term we quoted at the time, something that goes higher and further than humanity, since its origin lies in the very work of the Word: it is first in creation itself, and then in the primordial Revelation, in the great Tradition from which all others are but derivative forms, and which was always in reality, as we have already said (June 1926, p. 46), the only true religion of all humanity³.

Faced with these titles of symbolism, which give it its transcendent value, what are those that philosophy could claim? The origin of symbolism is truly confused with the origin of time, and even, in a sense, is beyond time; and, note well, there is no truly traditional symbol that can be related to a human inventor, of which it can be said that it was imagined by this or that individual; and should this not give pause for thought to those who are capable of it? All philosophy, on the contrary, dates back only to a certain period and, in short, is always recent, even when it comes to classical antiquity, which is only a very relative antiquity (which proves, moreover, that even humanly speaking, this particular form of thought has nothing essential about it⁴); it is the work of a man whose name is known to us, as is the date on which he lived, and it is usually this name that is used to designate it, which clearly shows that there is nothing here that is not human and individual. This is why we said a moment ago that one cannot even dream of establishing any comparison between philosophy and symbolism unless one limits oneself to considering the latter exclusively from the human point of view, since, in all other respects, one could find neither equivalence nor correspondence of any kind in the philosophical order.

Philosophy is, if you will, 'human wisdom', but it is nothing more than that, and that is why we say it is very little; and it is nothing more than that because it is a completely rational speculation, and reason is a purely human faculty.

³ We must state clearly in this regard, so as to leave no room for misunderstanding, that we absolutely reject the use of the term "tradition" for all purely human and "profane" things to which it is often abusively applied, and in particular to any philosophical doctrine whatsoever.

⁴One might ask why philosophy arose in the sixth century BCE, a period with very unique characteristics.

human, even with that which essentially defines individual human nature as such. "Human wisdom" is tantamount to saying "worldly wisdom", in the sense in which the "world" is specially understood in the Gospel⁵; we could also, in the same sense, say "profane wisdom"; all these expressions are basically synonymous, and clearly indicate that this is not true wisdom, of which it is but a shadow.

To conclude this point, we can summarise the essence of our thinking in a few words: philosophy is properly speaking nothing more than "profane knowledge", while symbolism, understood in its true sense, is essentially part of "sacred science". Unfortunately, especially in our time, there are those who are incapable of making the proper distinction between these two orders of knowledge; but it is not to them that we are addressing ourselves, for, let us state very clearly on this occasion, it is solely "sacred science" that we intend to deal with on our part.

P.S. A friend of *Regnabit* has sent us two articles, one published in *L'Illustration* on 20 March and the other in *Nature* on 26 June 1926, concerning a mysterious symbol engraved on the wall of a steep cliff bordering the Peruvian Andes. This sign, which is known only to have existed at the time of the arrival of the Spanish, is called the candelabra of the three crosses, a name that gives a fairly accurate idea of its general shape. Its lines are made up of deep grooves carved into the wall; its height appears to be between 200 and 500 metres, and on a clear day it is visible to the naked eye from a distance of 21 kilometres. The author of the two notes in question, M. V. Forbin, does not propose any interpretation of this symbol; based on the unfortunately blurred photographs accompanying his text, we believe that it must be a representation of the "Tree of Life", and as such we think it is interesting to mention it here, as a complement to our article on *The Trees of Paradise* (March 1926). In that article, we discussed the triple tree whose central trunk represents the "Tree of Life", while the other two represent the dual nature of the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil"; Here we have an iconographic example that is all the more remarkable in that the shape given to the three trunks evokes the symbolically equivalent whole, as we explained at the time, which is constituted by the cross of Christ and those of the two thieves. It is also known that, in the sculptures of the ancient temples of Central America, the "Tree of Life" is often represented in the form of a cross, which strongly confirms our interpretation.

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⁵In Sanskrit, the word *laukika*, "worldly" (adjective derived from *loka*, "world") is often taken with the same meaning as in evangelical language, and this concordance seems to us very worthy of note.

Chapter XV: HEART AND BRAIN

We recently read a study in the magazine *Vers l'Unité* (July-August and September-October 1926), signed by Mrs. Th. Darel, which contains some considerations that are quite similar, in certain respects, to those we have had occasion to express ourselves. Perhaps we should express some reservations about certain expressions, which do not seem to us to be as precise as we would like, but that does not make us any less interested in reproducing various passages from this study for the readers of *Regnabit*.

"...If there is an essential movement, it is the one that has made man a vertical being, of voluntary stability, a being whose impulses of idealism, whose prayers, whose highest and purest feelings rise like incense to the heavens. From that being, the Supreme Being has made a temple in the Temple and for that purpose has endowed him with a heart, that is, an immutable point of support, a centre of movement that makes man adequate to his origins, similar to his First Cause. At the same time, it is true that man was provided with a brain; but this brain, whose innervation is characteristic of the entire animal kingdom, is *in fact* subject to a secondary order of movement (with respect to the initial movement). The brain, an instrument of thought enclosed in the world, and a transformer, for the use of man and the world, of that *latent Thought*, makes it realisable through itself. But only the heart, through a secret inhalation and exhalation, allows man, while remaining united to his God, to be *living Thought*. Thus, thanks to this regal pulsation, man preserves his word of divinity and operates under the aegis of his Creator, observant of his Law, happy with a joy that belongs to him alone, of rapturing himself, departing from the secret path that leads from his heart to the universal Heart, to the divine Heart... Having fallen to the level of animality, however superior he may have the right to call himself, man now has to make use only of his brain and its appendages. Acting in this way, he lives on his own transformative possibilities alone; he lives on the latent Thought expanded in the world; but it is no longer in his power to be living thought. However, religions, saints, and even monuments erected under the sign of a vanished spiritual order speak to man of his origin and his privileges. However little he may want it, his attention, directed exclusively to the needs inherent in his relative state, can be devoted to restoring balance within him, to regaining happiness... The excess of his missteps leads man to recognise their futility. Breathless, he instinctively withdraws into himself, takes refuge in his own heart, and timidly tries to descend into his silent crypt. There, the vain noises of the world are silenced. If they still remain, it means that the silent depths have not yet been reached, that the august threshold has not yet been crossed... The world and man are one. And the Heart of man, the Heart of the world, are *one Heart*."

Those who have read our previous articles will easily recognise in this text the idea of the heart as the centre of being, an idea which, as we have explained (and will return to), is common to all ancient traditions, originating from that primordial Tradition whose traces can still be found everywhere for those who know how to see them. They will also notice the idea of the fall that rejects man far from his original centre and interrupts his direct communication with the "Heart of the World", as

as it was normally and permanently established in the Edenic state¹. Finally, with regard to the central role of the heart, they will notice the indication of the double centripetal and centrifugal movement, comparable to the two phases of breathing² ; it is true that, in the passage we will quote below, the duality of these movements refers to that of the heart and the brain, which at first glance seems to introduce some confusion, even though this is also tenable from a somewhat different point of view, in which the heart and brain are seen as constituting, in a certain way, two poles in the human being.

In man, the centrifugal force has the *brain* as its organ, and the centripetal force has the *heart*. The heart, seat and preserver of the initial movement, is represented in the corporeal organism by the movement of diastole and systole, which continually returns the blood that generates physical life to its propellant and rejects it to irrigate the field of its action. But the heart is also something else. Like the sun, which, while spreading the effluvia of life, keeps the secret of its mystical royalty, the heart has subtle functions, not discernible to those who have not inclined towards deep life and have not concentrated their attention on the inner realm of which it is the Tabernacle... The Heart is, in our opinion, the seat and preserver of cosmic life. The religions knew this when they made the Heart a sacred symbol, as did the builders of cathedrals who erected the holy place in the heart of the Temple. Those who, in the most ancient traditions and most secret rites, abstracted themselves from discursive intelligence and imposed silence on their brains in order to enter the Sanctuary and rise beyond their relative being to the Being of being, also knew this. This parallelism between the Temple and the Heart leads us back to the double mode of movement, which, on the one hand (vertical mode), elevates man beyond himself and detaches him from the process of manifestation itself, and, on the other hand (horizontal or circular mode), makes him participate in that manifestation in its entirety."

The comparison between the Heart and the Temple, to which reference is made here, is found more particularly in the Hebrew Kabbalah³ , and, as we indicated above, it can be linked to the expressions of certain medieval theologians who assimilate the Heart of Christ to the Tabernacle or the Ark of the Covenant⁴ . Furthermore, with regard to the consideration of vertical and horizontal movements, there is a reference to an aspect of the symbolism of the cross, especially developed in certain schools of Muslim esotericism, which we may discuss at some point. In fact, this symbolism is dealt with in the continuation of the same study, from which we will extract a final quotation, the beginning of which can be related to what

¹ See "Le Sacré-Coeur et la légende du Saint Graal", August-September 1925.

²See "La Idée du Centre dans les traditions antiques", May 1926, p. 485.

³ See "Le Cœur du Monde dans la Kabbale hébraïque" (The Heart of the World in Hebrew Kabbalah), July-August 1926; "La Terre Sainte et le Cœur du Monde" (The Holy Land and the Heart of the World), September-October 1926.

⁴ "A propos des signes corporatifs et de leur sens original", February 1926.

We have already discussed, in relation to the symbols of the centre, the cross in the circle and the swastika⁵.

"The Cross is the cosmic sign par excellence. As far back as we can go in the past, the Cross represents what unites the vertical and the horizontal in its double meaning; it makes them participate, in their own movement, in a single centre, in the same generator... How can we not give a metaphysical meaning to a sign capable of responding so completely to the nature of things? Having become the almost exclusive symbol of divine crucifixion, the Cross has only accentuated its sacred significance. Indeed, if from the beginning this sign was representative of the relationship between the world and man with God, it was impossible not to identify Redemption with the Cross, not to nail to the Cross the Man whose Heart is in the highest degree representative of the divine in a world that has forgotten this mystery. If we were to engage in exegesis here, it would be easy to show the extent to which the Gospels and their profound symbolism are significant in this regard. Christ is more than a fact, more than the great Event of two thousand years ago. His figure belongs to all ages. He rises from the tomb where relative man descends, to be resurrected incorruptible in the divine Man, in the Man redeemed by the universal Heart that beats in the heart of Man, and whose blood is shed for the salvation of man and the world."

The last observation, although formulated in somewhat obscure terms, essentially coincides with what we were saying about the symbolic value that historical events, and especially events in sacred history⁶, have apart from their own reality (and, let it be clearly understood, without this being affected in any way); but we now wish to emphasise these considerations. Our purpose is to return, taking advantage of the opportunity thus offered to us, to the subject of the relationship between the heart and the brain, or between the faculties represented by these two organs; we have already given some indications in this regard⁷, but we believe that it will not be useless to provide further developments.

We have just seen that, in a certain sense, the heart and the brain can be considered as two poles, that is, as two complementary elements; this view of complementarity effectively corresponds to reality in a certain order, at a certain level, if one may say so; and it is even less external and superficial than the view of pure and simple opposition, which nevertheless also contains a part of the truth, even if only in terms of the most immediate appearances. With the consideration of complementarity, the opposition is already reconciled and resolved, at least to a certain extent, since its two terms are balanced in a certain way by each other. However, this point of view is still insufficient, due to the very fact that it allows a duality to remain: that there are two poles or two centres in man, between which, moreover, there may be antagonism or harmony depending on the case, which is true when viewed in a certain state; but is this not a state that could be described as 'disunited' or 'off-centre', and which, as such, characterises only the

⁵ "L'Idée du Centre dans les traditions antiques" ("The Idea of the Centre in Ancient Traditions"), May 1926.

⁶ "Les Arbres du Paradis", in *Regnabit*, March 1926, p. 295.

⁷ "Le Cœur rayonnant et le Cœur enflammé", in *Regnabit*, April 1926, p. 384.

fallen man, that is, separated from his original centre, as we recalled a little earlier? At the very moment of the fall, Adam acquires "the knowledge of good and evil" (*Genesis*, III, 22), that is, he begins to consider all things according to the aspect of duality; the dual nature of the "Tree of Knowledge" appears to him when he finds himself expelled from the place of first unity, to which the "Tree of Life" corresponds ⁸.

Be that as it may, the truth is that if duality does indeed exist in being, it can only be from a contingent and relative point of view; from another, deeper and more essential point of view, or by focusing on being in the state that corresponds to that point of view, the unity of that being must be restored ⁹. Then, the relationship between the two elements, which at first appeared as opposites and later as complementary, is transformed into another: it is a relationship, no longer of correlation or coordination, but of subordination. The two terms of this relationship cannot, in fact, be placed on the same plane, as if there were a kind of equivalence between them; on the contrary, one depends on the other as having its principle in it; and such is the case for what the brain and the heart respectively represent.

To make this clear, we will return to the symbolism already mentioned¹⁰, according to which the heart is likened to the sun and the brain to the moon. Now, the sun and the moon, or rather the cosmic principles represented by these two celestial bodies, are often depicted as complementary, and indeed they are so from a certain point of view; a kind of parallelism or symmetry is thus established between them, examples of which are easy to find in all traditions. Thus, Hermeticism makes the sun and the moon (or their alchemical equivalents, gold and silver) the image of the two principles, active and passive, or masculine and feminine according to another mode of expression, which certainly constitute the two terms of a true complementarity. On the other hand, if we consider the appearances of our world, as is legitimate to do, the sun and the moon do indeed have comparable and symmetrical roles, being, according to the biblical expression, "the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night" (*Genesis*, 1:16); and some Far Eastern languages (Chinese, Annamite, Malay) designate them with terms that are, analogously, symmetrical, as they mean "eye of the day" and "eye of the night" respectively. However, if we look beyond appearances, it is no longer possible to maintain this kind of equivalence, since the sun is itself a source of light, while the moon merely reflects light

⁸ See "Les Arbres du Paradis", March 1926. From certain comparisons that can be made between biblical and apocalyptic symbolism and Hindu symbolism, it is very clear that the essence of the "Tree of Life" is properly the "Indivisible" (in Sanskrit, *Aditi*); but to develop this would take us too far from our subject.

⁹ It is worth recalling here the scholastic adage: "*Esse et unum convertuntur*".

¹⁰ "Le Coeur rayonnant et le Coeur enflammé", April 1926, p. 384.

¹¹ On the other hand, it should be noted that, in a certain respect, each of the two terms can in turn be polarised into active and passive, hence the figurations of the sun and moon as androgynous; thus, Janus, in one of his aspects, is *Lunus-Moon*, as we have pointed out above ["A propos de quelques symboles hermético-religieux", in *Regnabit*, December 1925]. It can be understood, by analogous considerations, that centrifugal and centripetal forces refer respectively, from a certain point of view, to the brain and the heart, and that, from another point of view, they both refer to the heart, as corresponding to two complementary phases of its central function.

which it receives from it¹². (12) Moonlight is in reality nothing more than a reflection of sunlight; it could therefore be said that the moon, as a "luminary", exists only because of the sun.

What is true of the sun and the moon is also true of the heart and the brain, or, to put it better, of the faculties to which these two organs correspond and which are symbolised by them, that is, intuitive intelligence and discursive or rational intelligence. The brain, as the organ or instrument of the latter, truly plays only the role of a "transmitter" or, if you will, a "transformer"; and it is not without reason that the word "reflection" is applied to rational thought, by which things are seen only as in a mirror, *quasi per speculum*, as St. Paul says. It is also not without reason that the same root, man- or men-, has been used in various languages to form the numerous words that designate, on the one hand, the moon (Greek *mênê*, English *moon*, German *Mond*)¹³ and, on the other, the rational faculty or the "mental" (Sanskrit *manas*, Latin *mens*, English *mind*)¹⁴, and also, consequently, to man considered more especially according to the rational nature by which he is specifically defined (Sanskrit *manava*, English *man*, German *-Mann* and *Mensch*)¹⁵. Reason, in fact, which is nothing more than a faculty of mediate knowledge, is the properly human mode of intelligence; intellectual intuition can be called superhuman, since it is a direct participation in universal intelligence, which, residing in the heart, that is, in the very centre of being, where its point of contact with the Divine is, penetrates that being from within and illuminates it with its radiance⁽¹⁶⁾.

Light is the most common symbol of knowledge; therefore, it is natural to represent direct, or intuitive, knowledge, which is that of the pure intellect, by means of sunlight, and reflective, or discursive, knowledge, which is that of reason, by means of moonlight. Just as the moon cannot give its light unless it is itself illuminated by the sun, so reason cannot function validly, in the order of reality that is its proper domain, except under the guarantee of principles that illuminate and direct it, and which it receives from the higher intellect. There is a misunderstanding in this regard that needs to be dispelled: modern philosophers¹⁷ are strangely mistaken when they speak, as they do, of "principles

¹² This could be generalised: "receptivity" always and everywhere characterises the passive principle, so that there is no true equivalence between it and the active principle, although, in another sense, they are mutually necessary, neither being active and the other passive except in their mutual relationship.

¹³ Hence also the name "month" (Latin *mensis*, English *month*, German *Monat*), which is properly the "lunation". The idea of "measure" (Latin *mensura*) and that of division or distribution also belong to the same root, but this would take us too far afield.

¹⁴ Memory is also designated by similar words (Greek *mnêsis*, *mnêmosynê*); in fact, it too is nothing more than a "reflective" faculty, and the moon, in a certain aspect of its symbolism, is considered to represent "cosmic memory".

¹⁵ This is also the origin of the name Minerva (or Menerva) used by the Etruscans and Latins. It should be noted that the Greek goddess Athena, who is assimilated to Minerva, is considered to have been born from the brain of Zeus and is associated with the owl, which, as a nocturnal bird, also refers to lunar symbolism. In this respect, the owl is opposed to the eagle, which, being able to look directly at the sun, often represents intuitive intelligence or the direct contemplation of intelligible light.

¹⁶ See "Le Coeur rayonnant et le Coeur enflammé", April 1926; "La Terre Sainte et le Coeur du Monde", September-October 1926.

¹⁷ To be precise, we should point out that by this expression we do not mean those who represent the modern mentality, as we have often had occasion to define it (see especially

rational", as if such principles belonged properly to reason, as if they were in some way its work, when, on the contrary, in order to govern it, it is necessary that they necessarily impose themselves on it, and therefore proceed from a higher order; this is an example of the rationalist error, and with it one can realise the essential difference between rationalism and true intellectualism. It suffices to reflect for a moment to understand that a principle, in the true sense of the term, by the very fact that it cannot be derived or deduced from anything else, can only be grasped immediately, that is, intuitively, and cannot be the object of discursive knowledge, such as that which characterises reason; to use scholastic terminology here, pure intellect is *habitus principiorum* ('habit' or 'possession' of principles), while reason is only *habitus conclusionum*.

Another consequence also arises from the respective fundamental characteristics of the intellect and reason: intuitive knowledge, because it is immediate, is necessarily infallible in itself; on the contrary, error can always be introduced into any knowledge that is indirect or mediate, such as rational knowledge; and we can see from this how wrong Descartes was in wanting to attribute infallibility to reason. This is what Aristotle expresses in these terms¹⁹:

"Among the assets of intelligence by virtue of which we attain truth, there are some that are always true and others that can lead to error. Reasoning belongs to the latter category, but the intellect is always in accordance with the truth, and there is nothing more true than the intellect. Now, since principles are more obvious than demonstration, and since all science is accompanied by reasoning, the knowledge of principles is not a science (but rather a mode of knowledge, superior to scientific or rational knowledge, which properly constitutes metaphysical knowledge). On the other hand, only the intellect is truer than science (or than the reason that builds science); therefore, principles belong to the intellect." And, to better affirm the intuitive nature of the intellect, Aristotle adds: "Principles are not demonstrated, but their truth is directly perceived."²¹

our communication published in the June 1926 issue; the very point of view of modern philosophy and its special way of raising questions are incompatible with true metaphysics.

¹⁸ St. Thomas warns, however (*Summa Theologica*, I, q. 58, a. 5 and q. 85, a. 6), that the intellect can err in the simple perception of its own object; but that this error occurs only *per accidens*, because of an intervention of discursive reasoning; it is not, therefore, truly a matter of the pure intellect. On the other hand, it must be clear that infallibility applies only to the apprehension of intuitive truths and not to their formulation or translation into discursive mode.

¹⁹ *Latest Analytics* [II, 19, 100 b).

²⁰ The Greek word *héxis*, which is almost untranslatable into our language, is usually translated as 'having', but corresponds more accurately to the Latin *habitus*, with the meaning of 'nature', 'disposition, state', 'way of being' at the same time. [The Aristotelian text has been translated here from the French version given by R. Guénon (to whom the parentheses in the first quotation belong).

²¹ Let us also recall these definitions by St. Thomas Aquinas: "*Ratio discursum quemdam designat, quo ex uno in aliud cognoscendum anima humana pervenit; intellectus vero simplicem et absolutam cognitionem (sine aliquo motu vel discursu, statim in prima et subita acceptione) designare videtur*" [*Reason designates a process by which the human soul comes to know one thing from another; but intellect seems to designate simple and absolute knowledge (in an immediate way, in a first and sudden grasp, without any movement or discourse)*] (*De Veritate*, q. XV, a. 1.)

This direct perception of truth, this intellectual and supra-rational intuition, of which moderns seem to have lost even the simple notion, is truly the "knowledge of the heart," according to an expression frequently used in Eastern doctrines. Such knowledge, moreover, is in itself incommunicable; it is necessary to have 'realised' it, at least to some extent, in order to know what it truly is; and anything that can be said about it gives only a more or less approximate idea, which is always inadequate. Above all, it would be a mistake to believe that one can effectively understand this kind of knowledge by merely approaching it "philosophically", that is, from the outside, for it must never be forgotten that philosophy is nothing more than purely human or rational knowledge, like all "profane knowledge". On the contrary, "sacred science" is essentially based on supra-rational knowledge, in the sense in which we use this expression at the end of our last article; and everything we have said about the use of symbolism and the teaching contained therein refers to the means that traditional doctrines make available to man to enable him to attain that knowledge par excellence, of which all other knowledge, insofar as it also has some reality, is but a more or less distant participation, a more or less indirect reflection, just as the light of the moon is but a pale reflection of that of the sun. The "knowledge of the heart" is the direct perception of intelligible light, that Light of the Word of which St John speaks at the beginning of his Gospel, the radiant Light of the "spiritual Sun" which is the true "Heart of the World".

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Chapter XVI: ON THE SUBJECT OF FISH

Reading the important study that Mr. Charbonneau-Lassay has devoted to the symbolism of fish (December 1926), various reflections have come to mind that we believe are worth mentioning here, as a complement to the first part of this study. Firstly, with regard to the prehistoric origins of this symbol, we are inclined to recognise its Nordic, perhaps even Hyperborean, origin. Charbonneau points to its presence in northern Germany and Scandinavia, and we believe that the point of origin is more likely to be found in those regions than in Central Asia, where it was undoubtedly brought by the great current that, arising directly from the primordial Tradition, was soon to give birth to the doctrines of India and Persia. There are, in fact, various texts in the *Veda* and the *Avesta* that very explicitly affirm the Hyperborean origin of the Tradition and even indicate the main stages of its descent towards the South. It seems that similar memories, on the western side, have been preserved in the Celtic traditions, which are undoubtedly difficult to reconstruct with the fragmentary data that have come down to us. It should also be noted that, in general, certain aquatic animals play a role above all in the symbolism of the peoples of the North: we will cite as an example the octopus, particularly widespread among the Scandinavians and the Celts, and which is also present in archaic Greece as one of the main motifs of Mycenaean ornamentation¹.

Another fact that, for us, also supports these considerations is that, in India, the manifestation in the form of a fish (*Matsya-avatâra*) is considered to be the first of all the manifestations of *Vishnu*², which is situated at the very beginning of the current cycle, and therefore in immediate relation to the starting point of the primordial Tradition. It should not be forgotten in this regard that *Vishnu* represents the divine Principle considered especially in its aspect as conservator of the world; this role is very close to that of "Savior," or rather, the latter is like a particular case of the former; and indeed, *Vishnu* appears as "Savior" in some of his manifestations, corresponding to critical phases in the history of our world, so that this can be seen as "prefigurations" of Christ, not to mention that the last manifestation, the *Kalkin-Avatâra*, "He who rides the white horse", which is to occur at the end of this cycle, is described in the *Purânas* in terms strictly identical to those found in the *Apocalypse*. This is not the place to dwell on the rather extraordinary similarity in its precision; but, to return to the fish, we will point out that the idea of "Savior" is also explicitly linked to its Christian symbolism, since the last letter of the Greek *ikhthys* is interpreted as the initial of *Sôtêr*; which is hardly surprising, of course, when it comes to Christ, but there are, nevertheless, emblems that allude more directly to some of his other attributes and do not formally express this role of 'Savior'.

¹ It should be noted that the tentacles of the octopus are generally straight in Scandinavian figurations, while they are coiled in a spiral in Mycenaean ornaments; in the latter, the swastika or figures clearly derived from it also appear very frequently. The symbol of the octopus refers to the zodiac sign of Cancer, which corresponds to the summer solstice and the 'bottom of the Waters'; it is easy to understand why it has often (but not always) been taken in a negative sense, since that solstice is the *Ianua Inferni*.

²We do not use the term "incarnations," as is commonly done, because this word is excessively inaccurate; the true meaning of the word *avatâra* is "descent" of the divine Principle into the manifested world.

In the form of a fish, *Vishnu*, at the end of the *Manvantara* preceding ours, appears to *Satyavrata*, who, under the name of *Vaivaswata*, will be the *Manu* or Lawgiver of the current cycle. He announces to him that the world is going to be destroyed by water, and orders him to build the Ark in which the seeds of the future world must be enclosed; then, still in the same form, he himself guides the Ark over the waters during the cataclysm. This representation of the Ark led by the divine fish is one of the most remarkable: Charbonneau-Lassay cites in his study "the pontifical ornament decorated with embroidered figures that enveloped the remains of a Lombard bishop from the 8th or 9th century, and on which we see a boat carried by the fish, an image of Christ supporting his Church"; now, it is known that the ark has often been considered a figure of the Church; thus, it is the same idea that we find expressed in both Hindu and Christian symbolism.

There is another aspect of the *Matsya-avatâra* that deserves our particular attention: after the cataclysm, that is, at the very beginning of the present *Manvantara*, he brings men the *Vêda*, which is to be understood, according to the etymological meaning of the word (derived from the root *vid-*, 'to know'), as Science par excellence or sacred Knowledge in its entirety, according to the etymological meaning of this word (derived from the root *vid*, 'to know': it is therefore Science par excellence); and here we find one of the clearest allusions to primitive Revelation. It is said that the *Vêda* subsists perpetually, being in itself prior to all worlds; but it is in a certain way hidden or enclosed during the cosmic cataclysms that separate the different cycles, and must then be manifested anew. The assertion of the perpetuity of the *Vêda* is, moreover, directly related to the cosmological theory of the primordially of sound among the sensible qualities (as a quality proper to Ether, *Ākāṣa*, which is the first of the elements); and this theory itself is basically nothing other than that of creation by the Word: the primordial sound is that divine Word by which, according to the first chapter of the Hebrew *Genesis*, all things were made. That is why it is said that the Sages of the early ages "heard" the *Vêda*: Revelation, being the work of the Word, like creation itself⁵, is properly an "hearing" for the one who receives it; and the term that designates it is *Shruti*, which literally means "the heard"⁶.

During the cataclysm that separates this *Manvantara* from the previous one, the *Vêda* was enclosed, in a state of retreat, in the conch shell (*shankha*), which is one of the main attributes of *Vishnu*. For the conch is considered to contain the primordial and imperishable sound (*ākshara*), that is, the monosyllable *Om*, which is par excellence the name of the Word, while at the same time being, through its three elements (AUM), the essence of the triple *Veda*⁷. On the other hand, these three elements (*mâtras*), arranged graphically in a

³ This name literally means "consecrated to truth".

⁴ Emerged from *Vivaswat*, one of the twelve *Adityas*, who are considered to be as many forms of the Sun, corresponding to the twelve signs of the Zodiac.

⁵ We have already indicated this relationship in our article on *The Word and the Symbol*, January 1926.

⁶ *Shruti* is opposed to *Smṛti*, 'that which is remembered', which designates everything in tradition that is the fruit, not of revelation or direct inspiration, but of reflection exercised upon it and taking it as its principle in order to derive applications adapted to the contingent circumstances of time and place. The relationship between *Shruti* and *Smṛiti* is compared to that between the sun and the moon, that is, between direct light and reflected light.

⁷ We have already pointed out the presence of this same ideogram *Aum* in ancient Christian symbolism, at the end of our article on *The Idea of the Centre in Ancient Traditions*, May 1926, p.

In a certain way, they form the very outline of the shell; and, by a rather singular coincidence, this outline is also that of the human ear, the organ of hearing, which must, in order to be capable of perceiving sound, have a shape in accordance with the nature of sound. All this visibly touches on some of the deepest mysteries of cosmology; but who, in the state of mind that constitutes the modern mentality, can still comprehend the truths belonging to this traditional science?

Like *Vishnu* in India, and also in the form of a fish, the Chaldean *Oannes*, whom some have expressly considered to be a figure of Christ⁸, also teaches men the primordial doctrine: a remarkable example of the unity that exists between traditions that appear to be very different, and which would remain inexplicable if their belonging to a common source were not admitted. It seems, moreover, that the symbolism of *Oannes* or *Dagon* is not only that of the fish in general, but must be related more specifically to that of the dolphin: among the Greeks, the dolphin was linked to the cult of *Apollo*⁹ and had given its name to *Delphi*; and, significantly, this cult was said to have originated with the Hyperboreans. What suggests that it is worth considering such a link (which is not clearly indicated, however, in the case of the manifestation of *Vishnu*) is above all the close connection between the symbol of the dolphin and that of the 'Woman of the Sea' (the *Aphrodite Anadiomène* of the Greeks)¹⁰; precisely, she is presented, under various names, as the female counterpart of *Oannes* or his equivalents, that is, as a representation of a complementary aspect of the same principle¹¹. She is the "Lady of the Lotus" (*Ishtar*, like *Esther* in Hebrew, means "lotus" and also sometimes "lily", two flowers that, in symbolism, often replace each other)¹², like the Far Eastern *Kwan-yin*, who is also, in one of her forms, the "Goddess of the Deep Sea"; there is much to be said about

486; see also Charbonneau-Lassay's study on *The Symbolism of the Rose*, March 1926, p. 303. In Sanskrit, the vowel *o* is formed by the combination of *a* and *u*; this is why the sacred monosyllable must be transcribed as *Om*, which also corresponds to its actual pronunciation, although it is the form *Aum* that exactly represents its decomposition into its three constituent elements.

⁸ See the works of Hieron of Paray-le-Monial on this subject. It is interesting to note in this regard that the fish head, worn by the priests of *Oannes*, is also the mitre worn by bishops in the Christian Church.

⁹ This explains the link between the symbolism of the dolphin and the idea of light (cf. L. Charbonneau-Lassay, noted by Charbonneau-Lassay in his last article (January 1927, p. 149).

¹⁰ This "Woman of the Sea" should not be confused with the mermaid, even though she is sometimes depicted in a similar form.

¹¹ The goddess *Syra* is properly the "sun goddess"; the name *Syria*, which has not always referred exclusively to the country that still bears it today, is identical to *Sûrya*, the Sanskrit name for the sun, and in the same sense we must understand the tradition according to which Adam, in the Garden of Eden, spoke the "Syriac" language.

¹² The lily and the lotus, having six and eight petals respectively, correspond to the two forms of the six- and eight-spoked wheel, as we have already indicated (*L'idée du Centre dans les traditions antiques*, May 1926, p. 480). In Hebrew, the two names '*Esther* and *Shushanah*' have the same meaning and are also numerically equivalent: their common number is 661, and by placing the letter *he*, the sign of the article, whose value is 5, in front of each of them, we obtain 666, from which some have drawn more or less fantastic conclusions; For our part, we do not intend to give this indication other than as a matter of simple curiosity.

All that, but it is not what we have set out to do this time⁽¹³⁾. What we wanted to show is that the symbol of the fish was particularly predestined to represent Christ, as it represents two functions that belong essentially to him (without prejudice to its relationship with the idea of fertility and the 'principle of life', which provides further reason for this representation), since, under this symbol, the Word appears in ancient traditions both as Revealer and Saviour.

P.S. Some may be surprised, either because of the considerations we have just set forth, or because of those we have given in other articles or will give later, at the preponderant place (though, of course, by no means exclusive) that we assign to the Indian tradition among the different ancient traditions; and such astonishment would be quite understandable, given the complete ignorance that generally prevails in the Western world about the true meaning of the doctrines in question. We could limit ourselves to pointing out that, having had the opportunity to study Hindu doctrines more closely, we can legitimately take them as a basis for comparison; but we believe it is preferable to state clearly that there are other, deeper and entirely general reasons for doing so. To those who might be tempted to doubt this, we strongly recommend reading the most interesting book by R. P. William Wallace, S. J., entitled *De l'Évangélisme au Catholicisme par la route des Indes* ⁽¹⁴⁾, which is a valuable testimony in this regard. It is an autobiography of the author, who, having gone to India as an Anglican missionary, converted to Catholicism through his direct study of Hindu doctrines; and in the outlines he offers of them, he demonstrates an understanding which, while not absolutely complete in all points, goes incomparably further than anything we have found in other Western works, including those of "specialists". Now, R. P. Wallace formally declares, among other things, that "the *Sanâtana Dharma* of the Hindu sages (which could be translated quite accurately as *Lex perennis*: it is the immutable foundation of doctrine) proceeds from exactly the same principle as the Christian religion," that "both face the same goal and offer the same essential means of achieving it" (p. 218 of the French translation), that "Jesus Christ appears as the Consumator of the *Sanâtana Dharma* of the Hindus, that sacrifice at the feet of the Supreme, as clearly as the Consumator of the typical and prophetic religion of the Jews and of the Law of Moses" (p. 217), and that Hindu doctrine is "the natural

¹³ We will nevertheless emphasise that the figure of the Babylonian *Ea*, half goat and half fish, as represented by Charbonneau-Lassay, is identical to that of the zodiacal Capricorn, of which it may even have been the prototype; now, it is important to remember, in this regard, that the sign of Capricorn corresponds in the annual cycle to the winter solstice and to the *Ianua Coeli*. The *Mâkara*, which in the Hindu zodiac takes the place of Capricorn, bears a certain resemblance to the dolphin; the symbolic opposition between the dolphin and the octopus must therefore be traced back to that between the two solstice signs of Capricorn and Cancer (the latter, in India, is represented by the crab), which also explains why the two animals have been associated in certain cases, for example under the tripod of Delphi and under the feet of the steeds of the solar chariot, as indicating the two extreme points touched by the Sun in its annual course (see January 1927, pages 149-150). Finally, the role of the dolphin as the conductor of blessed souls (*ibid.*, p. 147) also refers, of course, to the *Ianua Coeli*. It is important not to confuse this with another zodiac sign, that of Pisces, whose symbolism is different and should be referred exclusively to the common fish, particularly in relation to the idea of the 'beginning of life' and 'fertility' (understood above all in the spiritual sense). It may also be noted that *Ea* has before him, like the Egyptian scarab, a ball representing the 'Egg of the World'.

¹⁴ French translation by R. P. Humblet S. J., Albert Dewit Bookshop, Brussels, 1921.

pedagogue who leads to Christ" (p. 142). Does this not amply justify the importance we attach here to this tradition, whose profound harmony with Christianity cannot escape anyone who studies it, as R. P. Wallace has done, without preconceived ideas? We will consider ourselves fortunate if we manage to convey a little of this harmony in the points we have the opportunity to discuss, and at the same time make it understood that the reason for this is to be found in the direct link that unites Hindu doctrine to the great primordial Tradition.

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Chapter XVII: THE EMBLEM OF THE SACRED HEART IN AN AMERICAN SECRET SOCIETY

It is well known that North America is the land of choice for secret and semi-secret societies, which abound as much as religious or pseudo-religious sects of all kinds, which, moreover, often take pleasure in adopting that form. Should this need for mystery, whose manifestations are often quite strange, be seen as a kind of counterbalance to the excessive development of the practical spirit, which, on the other hand, is generally and rightly considered one of the main characteristics of the American mentality? We believe so, and we see, in fact, in these two singularly associated extremes, two products of a single imbalance, which has reached its highest degree in that country but which, it must be said, currently threatens to spread throughout the Western world.

Having made these general observations, it must be recognised that many distinctions should be made among the numerous American secret societies; it would be a serious mistake to imagine that they all have the same character and tend towards the same goal. There are some that declare themselves specifically Catholic, such as the Knights of Columbus; there are also Jewish ones, but above all Protestant ones; and even in those that are neutral from a religious point of view, the influence of Protestantism is often predominant. This is a reason for mistrust: Protestant propaganda is extremely insinuating and takes all forms to adapt to the various media it wants to penetrate; it is not surprising, then, if it is exercised in a more or less disguised manner, under the cover of associations such as those mentioned above.

It should also be noted that some of these organisations are frivolous, even childish; their supposed secrets are entirely non-existent, and their sole purpose is to arouse curiosity and attract followers. In short, the only danger posed by organisations of this type is that they exploit and develop the mental imbalance we referred to at the beginning. Thus, we see simple mutual aid societies making use of a supposedly symbolic ritual, more or less imitated from Masonic forms but eminently fanciful, which reveals the complete ignorance of its authors about the most basic facts of true symbolism.

Alongside these simply "fraternal" associations, as the Americans say, which seem to be the most widespread, there are others that have initiatory or esoteric pretensions but which, for the most part, do not deserve to be taken any more seriously than the former, even though they may be more dangerous because of those very pretensions, which are likely to deceive and mislead the naive or misinformed. The title "Rosicrucian", for example, seems to exert a particular seduction and has been adopted by a number of organisations whose leaders have not the slightest notion of what the true Rosicrucians were; And what can be said about groups with Eastern labels, or those that claim to be linked to ancient traditions, but in reality only expound the most Western and modern ideas?

Among old notes concerning some of these organisations, we have rediscovered one that caught our attention and which, because of one of the phrases it contains, we felt deserved to be reproduced here, even though the terms are very unclear and leave doubt as to the precise meaning that should be attributed to them. Here is the note in question, reproduced exactly, referring to a society called *the Order of Chylena*, about which we have no further information¹:

¹ This is a translation of a piece of news from a pamphlet entitled *Arcane Associations*, published by the "Societas Rosicruciana" of North America (Manchester, N.H., 1905).

This order was founded by Albert Staley in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) in 1879. Its manual is entitled *The Standard United States Guide*. The order has five points of fellowship, derived from the true point *E Pluribus Unum* (the motto of the United States). Its banner bears the words *Evangel* and *Evangeline*, inscribed in six-pointed stars. The *Philosophy of Universal Life* seems to be its fundamental study, and the lost word of the Temple is an element of it. *Ethiopia*, She, is the Bride; *Chylena*, He, is the Redeemer. The "I Am" seems to be (here a sign formed by two concentric circles). "You see this Sacred Heart; the outline shows you that I² called Chylena".

At first glance, it seems difficult to find anything clear or even intelligible in this: there are, of course, some expressions taken from Masonic language, such as the "five points of fellowship" and the "lost word of the Temple"; there is also a well-known and widely used symbol, the six-pointed star or "seal of Solomon", which we have had occasion to discuss here; the intention to give the organisation a distinctly North American character is also recognisable; but what can all the rest mean? Above all, what does the last sentence mean? And should it be seen as an indication of some counterfeit of the Sacred Heart, such as those about which L. Charbonneau-Lassay has previously informed the readers of *Regnabit*?

We must confess that we have not yet been able to discover what the name *Chylena* means, nor how it can be used to designate the 'Redeemer', nor even in what sense, religious or otherwise, that word should be understood. It seems, however, that in the phrase referring to the 'Bride' and the 'Redeemer' there is a biblical allusion, probably inspired by the *Song of Songs*; and it is very strange that this same 'Redeemer' shows us his Sacred Heart (is it really his heart?) as if he were truly Christ himself; but, once again, why the name *Chylena*? On the other hand, one wonders what the name *Evangeline*, the heroine of Longfellow's famous poem, has to do with all this; but it seems to be taken as a feminine form of *Evangel*, alongside which it is placed; is it the affirmation of an "evangelical" spirit in the somewhat special sense in which it is understood by Protestant sects, which so often adorn themselves with that title? Finally, if the name *Ethiopia* is applied to the black race, as is the most natural interpretation, perhaps it should be concluded that the more or less 'evangelical' (i.e. Protestant) 'redemption' of the latter is one of the objectives proposed by the members of the association. If so, the motto *E Pluribus Unum* could logically be interpreted as an attempt at rapprochement, if not fusion, between the diverse races that make up the population of the United States, whose natural antagonism has always separated them so deeply. This is only a hypothesis, but at least it is not implausible.

If it is a Protestant-inspired organisation, this is not sufficient reason to assume that the emblem of the Sacred Heart is taken out of context.

² The English text reads: "You see this Sacred Hearth; the outline shows you that I"

³ "The Chi-Rho and the Heart in Ancient Corporate Marks".

⁴ "Les Représentations blasphématoires du Coeur de Jésus" (Blasphemous representations of the Heart of Jesus), August-September 1924.

⁵ The "*Nigra sum, sed formosa*" from the *Song of Songs* might justify the fact that this appellation is applied to the 'Bride'.

true meaning; some Protestants, in fact, have a sincere and genuine devotion to the Sacred Heart⁶. However, in the present case, the mixture of heterogeneous ideas attested to by the lines we have reproduced incites us to mistrust; we wonder what this *Philosophy of Universal Life*, which seems to centre on the principle of "*I Am*", might be. All this could undoubtedly be understood in a very legitimate sense, and even linked in a certain way to the conception of the heart as the centre of being; but, given the tendencies of the modern spirit, of which the American mentality is the most complete expression, it is much to be feared that it will be taken only in the completely individual (or 'individualistic', if you prefer) and purely human sense. We wish to draw attention to this in order to conclude our examination of this kind of enigma.

The modern tendency, as we see it asserting itself in Protestantism, is first and foremost the tendency towards individualism, which is clearly manifested in 'free inquiry', the denial of all legitimate and traditional spiritual authority. This individualism, from a philosophical point of view, is equally affirmed in rationalism, which is the denial of any faculty of knowledge superior to reason, that is, to the individual and purely human mode of intelligence; and this rationalism, in all its forms, has emanated more or less directly from Cartesianism, which, quite naturally, reminds us of that "*I Am*" and which takes the

The thinking subject and nothing else as the sole starting point of all reality. Individualism, understood in this way in the intellectual order, has as an almost inevitable consequence what could be called a 'humanisation' of religion, which ends up degenerating into 'religiousness', that is, into nothing more than a simple matter of feeling, a set of vague aspirations without any definite object; sentimentalism, moreover, is, so to speak, complementary to rationalism⁷. Even without mentioning concepts such as William James' "religious experience", it would be easy to find examples of this more or less pronounced deviation in most of the many varieties of Protestantism, and especially in Anglo-Saxon Protestantism, whose dogma dissolves in a certain way and fades away, leaving only that "humanitarian moralism" whose more or less noisy manifestations are one of the characteristic features of our time. From this "moralism," which is the logical culmination of Protestantism, to purely secular and "irreligious" (not to say anti-religious) "moralism," there is but one step, and some take it with great ease; in short, it is only a matter of different degrees in the development of the same tendency.

Under such conditions, it is not surprising that terminology and symbolism of a religious origin are sometimes used, but stripped of their religious character and diverted from their original meaning, and can easily deceive those who are not aware of this distortion; whether this deception is intentional or not, the result is the same. Thus, the figure of the Sacred Heart has been distorted to represent the "Heart of Humanity" (understood, moreover, in an exclusively collective and social sense), as pointed out by L. Charbonneau-Lassay in the article mentioned above, in which he quoted a text that speaks of "the Heart of Mary symbolising the maternal heart of humanity". and social), as pointed out by L. Charbonneau-Lassay in the aforementioned article, in which he quoted a text that speaks of "the Heart of Mary, which symbolises the maternal heart of the human homeland, the feminine heart, and the Heart of Jesus, which symbolises the paternal heart of humanity, the masculine heart; the heart of man, the heart of

⁶ We have already cited the example of Cromwell's chaplain, Thomas Goodwin, who devoted a book to devotion to the Heart of Jesus ("*Le Chrisme et le Coeur dans les anciennes marques corporatives*", November 1925, p. 402, n. 1).

⁷See "*Le Coeur rayonnant et le Coeur enflammé*".

woman, both divine in their spiritual and natural principle”⁸. We do not know exactly why this text has come irresistibly to mind in the presence of the document relating to the American society we have just mentioned; without being able to say anything definitive on the matter, we have the impression that we are dealing with something of the same kind. Be that as it may, this way of disguising the Sacred Heart as the "Heart of Humanity" constitutes, strictly speaking, a form of "naturalism" and risks degenerating very quickly into crude idolatry; the "religion of Humanity" is not, in the contemporary era, the exclusive monopoly of Auguste Comte and some of his positivist disciples, who must at least be credited with having frankly expressed what others wrap up in perfidiously ambiguous formulas. We have already pointed out the deviations that some people commonly impose on the very term "religion" in our day, applying it to purely human things; this abuse, often unconscious, is it not the result of a perfectly conscious and deliberate action, an action exercised by those, whoever they may be, who have taken on the task of systematically deforming the Western mentality since the beginning of modern times? One is sometimes tempted to believe so, especially when one sees, as has been the case since the last war, a kind of secular and "civic" cult being established everywhere, a pseudo-religion from which all idea of the Divine is absent; we do not wish to dwell on this for the moment, but we know that we are not the only ones who see this as a disturbing symptom. What we will say to conclude this time is that all this depends on the same central idea, which is the deification of the human, not in the sense that Christianity allows us to approach it in a certain way, but in the sense of a replacement of God by humanity; this being the case, it is easy to understand why the propagators of such an idea seek to appropriate the emblem of the Sacred Heart in order to make this deification of humanity a parody of the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of Christ.

P.S. – Since writing our article in November 1926, we have learned of an interesting study by Mr. Etienne Gilson on *La Mystique de la Grâce* in the "*Queste del Saint Graal*", published in the magazine *Romania* (July 1925), in which we found a remarkable point that should be compared with what we said at the end of this article, about the primitive meaning of the word "mysticism" as a synonym for the inexpressible. In the text of the *Queste del Saint Graal*, there is a formula that appears many times, which has a somewhat ritualistic character, and which is this: "ce que cuers mortx ne porroi penser ne langue d'ome terrien deviser" (that is, "what mortal heart could not think nor earthly tongue express")¹⁰. Regarding one of the passages containing this formula, E. Gilson

⁸ Quoted from *L'Écho de l'Invisible* (1917), in "Les Représentations blasphématoires du Cœur de Jésus", *Regnabit*, August-September 1924, pp. 192-93.

⁹ See our communication "Sur la réforme de la mentalité moderne".

(¹⁰)It should be noted that thought is here related to the heart, and also that the heart and the tongue represent thought and speech respectively, and are placed in parallel exactly as in the Egyptian and Hebrew traditions (see *The Holy Land and the Heart of the World*, September-October 1926, pages 218-219). In the passages where the formula in question is found, the expression ("li Hauz Mestres" (it

note that recalls two texts of St. Paul so constantly quoted, and so frequently used in the Middle Ages, that the meaning of the entire passage is immediately clarified. The first (I Corinthians, II, 9-10) is taken by St. Paul from Isaiah (LXIV, 4) but accompanied by him with an important gloss: the eye has not seen, the ear has not heard, the heart has not known what God prepares for those who love him¹¹ ; but God has revealed it to us through his Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God... The second text (Corinthians, XII, 1-4) is so closely related to the first that it combined with it spontaneously by a process of concordance frequently used in the Middle Ages"; and this second text is none other than the one we ourselves have quoted in connection with mystical states. All this shows, once again, how aware the people of the Middle Ages were of what essentially characterises the knowledge of spiritual things and of the truths of the spiritual and divine order.

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that is, "the Great Master"), generally applied to Our Lord, and which also has an undeniable ritual character.

¹¹There is a similar text in the Hindu tradition: "HE (the Supreme *Brahma*) cannot be grasped by the eye, nor by the word, nor by the mind" (*Kêna Upanishad*, Khanda 1, shruti 3). According to Taoist doctrine as well, "the Principle is not reached by sight or hearing" (*Chuang-Tseú*, chap. XXII; translation by R. P Wiegner, p. 397). Similarly, the Koran says of Allah: "The eyes cannot reach him."

Chapter XVIII: A FALSIFICATION OF CATHOLICISM

In our last article, we referred to the pseudo-religious sects that are multiplying in a strange way in our day, most of which have originated in the Anglo-Saxon world. A few years ago, we devoted a work to the historical study of one of the most widespread of these, Theosophy¹. We believe it useful to return to the subject today, for the singular machinations we pointed out at that time have continued to develop in the direction we foresaw, and the latest theosophical enterprise has the particular character of being a veritable caricature of Catholicism, skilfully combined to mislead sincere but ill-informed minds.

We do not intend to recount here the very complicated history of the "Theosophical Society"; we will only say that, in its early stages, it presented, under an Eastern label, a confused mixture of very modern and very Western ideas with fragments taken from doctrines of the most diverse origins; and this heterogeneous ensemble was, it is said, the original doctrine from which all religions had emerged. Theosophy was at that time quite violently anti-Christian; but at a certain point, a change of orientation, at least apparent, took place, and the result was the elaboration of an "esoteric Christianity" of the most extraordinary fantasy. It did not stop there: before long, the imminent coming of a new Messiah was announced, another incarnation of Christ or, as theosophists say, the 'World Teacher'; but in order to understand how this coming is being prepared, it is necessary to give some explanations about the very particular conception of Christ in the milieu in question.

We must therefore summarise the singular account that Mme. Besant, president of the Theosophical Society, has given in her work entitled *Esoteric Christianity*, based on information said to have been obtained through "clairvoyance", since the leaders of theosophy claim to possess a faculty that allows them to conduct direct research into what they call "the hidden archives of the earth". Here is the essence of that account: the Jewish child whose name was translated as Jesus was born in Palestine in 105 BCE; his parents taught him Hebrew; at the age of twelve, he visited Jerusalem, then was entrusted to an Essene community in southern Judea. At the age of nineteen, Jesus entered the monastery on Mount Serbal, where there was a considerable occult library, most of whose books "came from trans-Himalayan India"; he then travelled to Egypt, where he became "an initiate of the esoteric Lodge from which all the great religions receive their founder". At the age of twenty-nine, he became fit to serve as a tabernacle and organ for a powerful Son of God, Lord of compassion and wisdom; this Son, whom Easterners call the Bodhisattva Maitreya and Westerners call the Christ, descended into Jesus, and during the three years of his public life, "it was he who lived and moved in the form of the man Jesus, preaching, healing the sick, and gathering around him some more advanced souls: After three years, "the human body of Jesus suffered from having harboured the glorious presence of a more than human Master"; but the disciples he had trained remained under his influence, and for more than fifty years he continued to visit them through his "spiritual body" and initiate them into the mysteries.

¹*Le Théosophisme, histoire d'une pseudo-religion* (Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, Paris, 1921).

esoteric. Subsequently, around the accounts of the historical life of Jesus, the "myths" that characterise a "sun god" crystallised and, once their symbolic meaning was no longer understood, gave rise to the dogmas of Christianity.

What must be retained above all from all this is the way in which, according to theosophists, the manifestation of a 'Great Instructor', or even sometimes that of a 'Master' of lesser importance, occurs: in order to spare such an "evolved" being the effort of preparing a vehicle for himself by going through all the stages of ordinary physical development, it is necessary for an "initiate" or a "disciple" to lend him his body when, after having been specially prepared by certain trials, he has become worthy of that honour. From that moment on, it will be the "Master" who, using that body as if it were his own, will speak through his mouth to teach the religion of wisdom. This results in a complete separation between the person of Christ, who is the "World Instructor," and that of Jesus, who was only the "disciple" who lent him his body and who, it is claimed, has himself attained the rank of "Master" in more recent times. It is not necessary to dwell on all that is manifestly heretical in such a conception.

Under these conditions, with the imminent return of the "Great Teacher" being announced, the role to be attributed to the Theosophical Society was to find and prepare, as the Essenes had done in the past, the chosen "disciple" in whom "He who is to come" would incarnate when the time had come. The fulfilment of this mission was not without hesitation; after several failed attempts, the Theosophical leaders set their sights on a young Hindu, Krishnamurti, whom they educated especially for the role they had in mind for him. We will not go into detail about everything that followed: scandalous trials, high-profile resignations, schisms within the Theosophical Society; such unfortunate incidents only served to delay the realisation of Mme. Besant and her collaborators' plans. Finally, in December 1925, the solemn proclamation of the new Messiah took place; but, although several of his "Apostles" had already been appointed, such ambiguity was left to subsist that it is still impossible to know whether Krishnamurti, now called Krishnaji, is himself to be the "vehicle" of Christ, or whether he will be merely a "precursor". Past misfortunes encourage caution, and the decision is made to take refuge in vagueness, to such an extent that, according to certain recent publications, it could be that Christ "would choose, in each country, an individual whom he would guide and inspire in a special way", so that he could, "without having to physically travel the world, speak whenever he wanted, in the country of his choice that best suited his action"². We must therefore expect to see would-be Messiahs or prophets appearing everywhere, all the more so as it seems, and this is perhaps the most disturbing thing, that the Theosophical Society is not the only organisation currently working to stir up movements of this kind. Let it be clearly understood that in saying this, we are not referring to organisations which, under the guise of being more or less independent, are in reality nothing more than subsidiaries or auxiliaries of the Theosophical Society, some of which, such as the "Order of the Star in the East", have been founded specifically to prepare for the coming of the future Messiah; but among these there is one to which we must draw attention, for it is there that we find the caricature of Catholicism to which we alluded at the beginning.

²*Le Christianisme primitif dans l'Evangile des Douze Saints*, by E. F. Udny, priest of the Liberal Catholic Church; French translation, p. 59.

For some years, there had been an Old Catholic Church in England founded by an excommunicated priest, A. H. Mathew, who had been consecrated bishop by Dr Gérard Gul, head of the Old Catholic Church of Holland, formed from the remnants of Jansenism, plus some dissidents who in 1870 had refused to accept the dogma of papal infallibility. In 1913, the clergy of this Church increased with several members, all former Anglican ministers and more or less obvious theosophists; but two years later, Bishop Mathew, who knew nothing about theosophy, was horrified to realise that his new adherents were expecting the coming of a future Messiah, and he simply withdrew, abandoning his Church. The theosophists had indeed intended to take over the Church entirely, but this result had been achieved too quickly, and this was not to their liking, for in order to be able to present themselves as "Catholics", they first wanted to secure the benefit of "apostolic succession" by obtaining episcopal consecration for some of their own members. The secretary general of the English section of the Theosophical Society, J. I. Wedgwood, having failed with Mathew, managed, after various vicissitudes, to be consecrated by F.-S. Willoughby, a bishop previously expelled from the Old Catholic Church; He placed himself at the head of this church, whose title was changed in 1918 to the "Liberal Catholic Church"; he in turn consecrated other bishops and founded "regional" branches in various countries; one currently exists in Paris.

Naturally, it is not at all necessary to join the Theosophical Society to be part of the Liberal Catholic Church; in it, theosophical doctrines are not openly taught, but minds are prepared to accept them. The liturgy itself has been quite skilfully modified in this sense: a mass of allusions have been slipped into it that are not easily understood by the general public but are very clear to those familiar with the theories in question. Something that deserves particular mention here is that the cult of the Sacred Heart is used in the same way, as being closely related to the coming of the new Messiah: it is claimed that "the Kingdom of the Sacred Heart will be that of the Spirit of Lord Maitreya, and in announcing this, nothing else is done but to say in a veiled form that his coming among men is near". This information, which has come to us from Spain, shows us a deviation that must be compared with the falsifications of the Sacred Heart already discussed above; the friends of *Regnabit* certainly had no doubt that those involved were working directly, albeit covertly, to prepare for the coming of the Theosophist Messiah!

But there is something even worse: it is not only the liturgy that is being altered, but now the Gospel itself, under the pretext of a return to "primitive Christianity". To this end, a supposed *Gospel of the Twelve Saints* has been put into circulation; this title initially led us to believe that it was an apocryphal Gospel, of which there are many, but we soon realised that it was simply a hoax. This so-called Gospel, written in Aramaic, had been preserved in a Buddhist monastery in Tibet, and its English translation had been transmitted "mentally" to an Anglican priest, M. Ouseley, who then published it. We are also told that the poor man was at that time: "old, deaf, physically weakened; his eyesight was poor and his mental faculties were diminished; he was more or less broken by age"³; is this not an admission that his condition predisposed him to play a deceived role in this affair? We will skip over the story

³*Le Christianisme primitif dans l'Evangile des Douze Saints*, by E. F. Udny, priest of the Liberal Catholic Church; French translation, p. 26.

used to explain the origin of this translation, which is said to be the work of a "Master" who was once the famous philosopher Francis Bacon, later known in the 18th century as the enigmatic Count of Saint-Germain. What is most interesting is to know what special teachings are contained in the Gospel in question, which is said to be: "an essential part of original Christianity, the absence of which has sadly impoverished and weakened this religion"⁴. Now, these teachings refer to two things: the theosophical doctrine of reincarnation and the prescription of a vegetarian and anti-alcoholic diet dear to a certain Anglo-Saxon "moralism"; and now they want to introduce them into Christianity, even claiming that these same teachings were also found in the canonical Gospels in the past, which were suppressed around the 4th century, and that the *Gospel of the Twelve Saints* is the only one that has escaped general corruption. To tell the truth, the deception is quite crude, but unfortunately there are still too many who will fall for it; one would have to be very unfamiliar with the mentality of our time to be convinced that something of this kind will not be successful.

We are also led to anticipate a project of the greatest magnitude: "The author, it is said in the booklet intended to present the supposedly 'rediscovered' Gospel, has reason to believe that a new and better Bible will soon be made available to us, and that the Liberal Catholic Church will probably adopt it; but he alone is responsible for this opinion, as he has not been authorised by the Church to make such a claim. For the question to be raised, it was naturally necessary for the better Bible to have appeared" ⁵. This is still only a suggestion, but it is easy to understand what he means: the falsification will be extended to all the Holy Books. We are therefore warned, and whenever the discovery of a manuscript containing biblical or evangelical texts hitherto unknown is announced, we will know that we should be more suspicious than ever.

It seems that we are entering a period in which it will be particularly difficult to "distinguish the weeds from the wheat." How can this discernment be made, if not by examining all things in the light of the Sacred Heart, "in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"? In the book we have mentioned, we recalled, with regard to the messianic undertakings of theosophists, this word from the Gospel: 'False Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect' ⁽⁶⁾. We are not yet at that point, but what we have seen so far is undoubtedly only the beginning and a step towards more serious events. Without wishing to make any predictions, it is fair to say that, according to all indications, what is currently being prepared is very disturbing, and this is true in all areas. In the current disorder, theosophists are undoubtedly playing their part, like many others, in a more or less unconscious manner; but behind all these movements, which are causing confusion in people's minds, there may be something much more terrible, which even their leaders are unaware of, and of which they are therefore merely instruments. In any case, there is a very real danger there, even for the present, and it would be wrong not to see it. We thought it best to denounce it once again, and it may not be the last time, as it is to be expected that the insinuating propaganda we are dealing with will have other manifestations.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41

⁶ *St Matthew*, XIX, 24.

P.- S. —In an article entitled *Sem and Japheth*, published in the magazine *Europe* (November 1926), M. François Bonjean wrote: "Significantly, it is in the heart and not in the brain that the cosmological doctrine of the most ancient Aryan texts places the seat, or rather the emblem, of pure intelligence, which comprehends transcendental truths as the ear understands, and it is to this immediate intuition... that it gives first rank among the sensible qualities". There seems to be a slip of the pen at the end of this passage, perhaps due to a simple typographical omission, and it should read "It is to this immediate intuition that he gives the highest rank among the faculties, as he gives it to sound among the sensible qualities." We have already discussed this Hindu doctrine of the primacy of sound in our article *On the Fish* (February 1927); and as for the relationship between the heart and intuitive intelligence, we have already discussed it here on several occasions. It seems that certain forgotten truths are beginning to come back to light, and we will always point out the signs of this with pleasure, wherever we find them; there is, very happily, a counterbalance to the invasion of that mental disorder of which we have just pointed out some disturbing symptoms.

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Chapter XIX: THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD IN FAR EASTERN DOCTRINES

In the course of our previous studies, we have already had occasion to refer, in connection with the symbols of the Centre, to the traditional doctrines of the Far East, and more particularly to Taoism, which is its strictly metaphysical aspect, whereas Confucianism, which is much more widely known, concerns itself solely with applications of a social nature¹. This division of the doctrine into two clearly separate branches, one internal, reserved for a fairly restricted elite, and another external, common to all without distinction, is one of the characteristic features of Chinese civilisation, at least since the 6th century BC, when, from a readaptation of the previous tradition to new conditions, these two doctrinal forms, commonly referred to as Taoism and Confucianism, were born. Even in Confucianism, the idea of the Centre plays a role that is far from negligible: indeed, frequent reference is made to the Unchanging Middle (*tchoung-young*), which is the place of perfect balance and, at the same time, the point where the Activity of Heaven is directly reflected. It should also be noted that it is not precisely the universal Centre that is at issue in this case, since the Confucian point of view is limited to a contingent order; this "unchanging Middle" is actually the meeting point of the Axis of the World (according to whose direction the "Activity of Heaven" is exercised) with the realm of human possibilities; in other words, it is only the centre of the human state, which is nothing more than a reflected image of the universal Centre. This centre of the human domain, in short, is nothing other than the earthly Paradise, or the state that corresponds to it, which can be called the "Edenic state"; and Far Eastern tradition attaches considerable importance to the primordial state, another equivalent designation. On the other hand, this same term, in a certain respect, can be considered as virtually or effectively identified, depending on the case, with the Centre of the World, understood in the universal sense; but this requires a transposition that goes beyond the Confucian point of view.

For Taoism, on the contrary, because of its purely metaphysical character, it is the universal Centre that is at issue at all times; it is also to this doctrine that we are now going to refer almost exclusively.

One of the symbols most frequently used by Taoism, as well as by many other traditional doctrines, is that of the cosmic wheel, whose movement is the figure of the continuous change to which all manifested things are subject². The circumference revolves around its single centre, which does not participate in this rotation but remains fixed and immutable, symbolising the absolute immutability of the Principle, the balance of which, as Confucianism considers it, is its reflection in the order of manifestation. This centre is the equivalent of Aristotle's unmoved mover; it directs all things by its non-acting activity (*wei wou-wei*), which, although unmanifested, or rather because it is unmanifested, is in reality the fullness of the

¹ See *L'Omphalos, symbole du Centre*, June 1926.

² See *L'idée du Centre dans les traditions antiques*, May 1926. - The octagonal figure of the eight *kua* or trigrams of Fo-hi, which is one of the fundamental symbols of the Far Eastern tradition, is in certain respects equivalent to the eight-spoked wheel, as well as to the eight-petalled lotus.

activity, since it is the Principle from which all particular activities are derived. This is what Lao-Tzu expresses in these terms: The Principle is always inactive, and yet everything is done by it³.

According to Taoist doctrine, the perfect sage is one who has reached the central point and remains there in indissoluble union with the Principle, participating in its immutability and imitating its non-acting activity. He who has reached the maximum of emptiness, says Lao-Tzu, will be firmly fixed in repose... To return to one's root (that is, to the Principle, both the first and last origin of all beings⁴, is to enter into a state of repose⁵. What is meant here is complete detachment from all manifested, transitory and contingent things, detachment by which the being escapes the vicissitudes of the flow of forms, the alternation of states of life and death, of condensation and dissipation (Aristotle, in a similar sense, says generation and corruption), passing from the circumference of the cosmic wheel to its centre, which is itself designated as the void (the unmanifested) that unites the spokes and with them makes a wheel⁶. Peace in the void, says Lie-Tseu, is an indefinable state, it is neither taken nor given; one comes to settle in it⁷. To those who remain in the unmanifest, all beings manifest themselves... United with the Principle, they are in harmony, through it, with all beings. United with the Principle, they know everything through higher general reasons and therefore no longer use their various senses to know in particular and in detail. The true reason for things is invisible, incomprehensible, indefinable, indeterminable. Only the spirit restored to a state of perfect simplicity can attain it in deep contemplation⁸. Here we see the difference that separates the transcendent knowledge of the sage from ordinary or profane knowledge; and the last sentence should very naturally bring to mind this word from the Gospel: Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will not enter it⁹. Moreover, references to this simplicity, considered characteristic of the primordial state, are not rare in Taoism; and similarly, in Hindu doctrines, the state of childhood (in Sanskrit *bālyā*), understood in the spiritual sense, is considered a prerequisite for the acquisition of knowledge par excellence.

Placed at the centre of the cosmic wheel, the perfect sage moves it invisibly¹⁰ by his mere presence, without having to worry about exercising any

³ *Tao-te-king*, chapter XXXVII.

⁴ The word *Tao*, literally Way, which designates the Principle (and it will be remembered here that Christ said: I am the Way) is represented by an ideographic character that combines the signs for head and feet, which is equivalent to the symbol of the alpha and omega.

⁵ *Tao-te-king*, chapter XVI.

⁶ *Tao-te-king*, chapter XI. - Cf. *L'Omphalos, symbole du Centre*, June 1926,

⁷ *Lie-Tséu*, chap. I. We quote the texts of Lie-Tseu and Chuang Tsé according to the translation by R. P. Léon Wiegner, S. J.

⁸ *Lie-Tséu*, chap. IV.

⁹ *St Luke*, XVIII, 17. - Cf. also *St Matthew*, XI, 25: "Whilst ye have hid these things from the wise and prudent, ye have revealed them unto babes and little children."

¹⁰ The same idea is expressed elsewhere, in Hindu tradition, by the term *Chakravartī*, literally, "he who turns the wheel." See also what we have said in this regard

any action; his absolute detachment makes him master of all things, because he can no longer be affected by anything. He has attained perfect impassivity; life and death are equally indifferent to him, the collapse of the Universe would cause him no emotion. By dint of scrutiny, he has arrived at the immutable truth, the knowledge of the single universal Principle; he allows beings to evolve according to their destinies, and remains at the immovable centre of all destinies¹¹ ... The outward sign of this inner state is imperturbability; not that of the brave man who throws himself alone, for the sake of glory, upon an army prepared for battle; but that of the spirit which, superior to heaven, earth, and all beings¹², inhabits a body to which it does not adhere, pays no attention to the images provided by its senses, and knows everything through global knowledge in its immovable unity. This absolutely independent spirit is the master of men; if it pleased him to summon them en masse, on the appointed day they would all come; but he does not want to be served¹³. The independence of the one who, detached from all contingent things, has come to the knowledge of the immutable truth, is equally affirmed in the Gospel: Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free¹⁴; and one could also, on the other hand, make a comparison between the foregoing and this other evangelical saying: Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you¹⁵.

At the central point, all distinctions inherent in external points of view are overcome; all oppositions have disappeared and are resolved in perfect balance. In the primordial state, these oppositions did not exist. They are all derived from the diversification of beings (inherent in manifestation and contingent upon it) and from their contacts caused by universal rotation. They would cease if diversity and movement ceased. They suddenly cease to affect the being who has reduced his distinct self and his particular movement to almost nothing. This being no longer comes into conflict with any other being, because he is established in the infinite, erased in the indefinite. He has reached and remains at the starting point of transformations, a neutral point where there are no conflicts. Through the concentration of his nature, the nourishment of his vital spirit, and the gathering of all his powers, he has united himself with the principle of all genesis. With his nature whole and his vital spirit intact, no being could

above the swastika as the "sign of the Pole" (*The Idea of the Centre in Ancient Traditions*, May 1926, pages 482-485).

¹¹According to Chuang-Tsé's traditional commentary on the *Yi King*, the word destiny designates the true *raison d'être* of things; the centre of all destinies is therefore the Principle, inasmuch as all beings have their sufficient reason in it.

¹²The Principle or Centre, in fact, precedes all distinctions, including that between heaven and earth, which represents the first duality.

¹³ *Chuang-Tzu*, chap. V.

¹⁴ *St John*, VIII, 32.

¹⁵ *St Matthew*, VI, 33; *St Luke*, XII, 31. It is important to remember here the close relationship between the idea of Justice and those of balance and harmony (*The Idea of the Centre in Ancient Traditions*, May 1926, page 481).

¹⁶ This reduction of the "distinct self" is the same as the void discussed earlier; moreover, it is clear from the symbolism of the wheel that "the movement of a being is reduced the closer that being is to the centre.

¹⁰ wound it¹⁷. The neutral point where all contrasts and all antinomies are resolved in the first unity is the central place that certain schools of Muslim esotericism call the divine station (*maqâmul-ilahi*), and which they represent as the intersection of the branches of the cross, according to a symbolism to which we have already made some allusions¹⁸.

This central and primordial point is also identical to the Holy Palace or Inner Palace of the Hebrew Kabbalah, which is at the centre of the six directions of space, which, on the other hand, also form a three-dimensional cross¹⁹. In itself, this point is not located, for it is absolutely independent of space, which is nothing more than the result of its expansion or its indefinite development in all directions, and which therefore proceeds entirely from it: Let us transport ourselves in spirit outside this world of dimensions and locations, and there will no longer be any place to want to locate the Principle²⁰.

But once space is realised, the primordial point, while remaining essentially unlocated, becomes the centre of this space (that is, transposing this symbolism, the centre of all universal manifestation); from it the six directions emanate (which, opposing each other in pairs, represent all opposites, and also return to it, through the alternating movement of expansion and contraction that constitutes the two complementary phases of all manifestation¹). The second of these phases, the movement of return to the origin, which marks the path followed by the sage to reach union with the Principle: concentration of his nature, the gathering of all his powers, in the text we quoted a moment ago, indicate this as clearly as possible; and the simplicity that has already been discussed corresponds to the dimensionless unity of the primordial point. The absolutely simple man softens all beings by this simplicity... although nothing opposes him in the six directions of space, nothing is hostile to him, fire and water do not harm him²². Indeed, he remains at the centre, from which the six directions have emerged by radiation, and from where they come, in the movement of return, to neutralise each other two by two, so that, at that single point, their triple opposition ceases entirely, and nothing that results from or is located there can reach the being who remains in immutable unity. This being, opposing nothing, nothing could oppose it, for opposition is necessarily a reciprocal relationship, requiring two terms in presence, and is therefore incompatible with *principled* unity; and hostility, which is nothing more than a consequence or an outward manifestation of opposition, cannot exist with respect to a being that is outside and beyond all opposition. Fire and water, which are the types of opposites in the elemental world, cannot harm him, for, in truth, they no longer even exist for him as opposites, having returned,

¹⁷ The last sentence still relates to the conditions of the "primordial state": it is the immortality of man before the fall, regained by the one who, having returned to the "Centre of the World", feeds on the "Tree of Life".

¹⁸ *The Idea of the Centre in Ancient Traditions*, May 1926, page 481; *Heart and Brain*, January 1927, p. 157.

¹⁹ See *The Heart of the World in the Hebrew Kabbalah*, July-August 1926.

²⁰ *Chuang-Tsé*, chapter XXII.

²¹ See *L'idée du Centre dans les traditions antiques*, May 1926, p. 485.

²² *Lie-tseu*, chap. II.

balancing and neutralising each other through the union of their complementary qualities, in the undifferentiated primordial ether.

For those who remain centred, everything is unified, for they see all things in the unity of the Principle; all particular (or, if you will, particularistic) and analytical points of view, which are based only on contingent distinctions and from which all divergences of individual opinions arise, have disappeared for them, reabsorbed into the total synthesis of transcendent knowledge, adequate to the one and immutable truth. His point of view is one where this and that, yes and no, do not yet appear distinguished. This point is the pivot of the norm; it is the immovable centre of a circle on the circumference of which all contingencies, distinctions and individualities revolve; from where one sees only an infinity that is neither this nor that, neither yes nor no. To see everything in the primordial unity not yet differentiated, or at such a distance that everything merges into one, that is true intelligence²³ ; The pivot of the norm is what almost all traditions call the Pole, that is, the fixed point around which the revolutions of the world are accomplished, according to the norm or law that governs all manifestation, and which is itself nothing more than the direct manifestation of the centre, the expression of the "Will of Heaven" in the ^{cosmic} order.

It will be noted that there is here, formulated in a particularly explicit manner in the last text we have just quoted, an image much more accurate than that used by Pascal when he spoke of a sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. At first glance, one might almost believe that the two images are comparable, but in reality they are exactly opposite to each other. Pascal has allowed himself to be carried away by his imagination as a geometer, which has led him to reverse the true relationships, as they must be considered from a metaphysical point of view. It is the centre that is properly nowhere in manifestation, being absolutely transcendent in relation to it, even though it is interior to all things. It is beyond anything that can be reached by the senses and by the faculties that proceed from the sensible order. The Principle cannot be reached either by sight or by hearing. For the Principle cannot be understood; what is understood is not it; ... The Principle, not being able to be imagined, cannot be described²⁶. Everything that can be seen, understood, imagined, stated or described necessarily belongs to manifestation; it is therefore in reality the circumference that is everywhere, since all places in space, or, more generally, all manifested things (space here being nothing more than a symbol of manifestation

²³ *Chuang-Tzu*, chapter 11.

²⁴ The Great Unity (*Tai-ï*) is represented as residing in the North Star, which is called *Tien-ki*, meaning literally 'made of heaven'.

²⁵ Righteousness (*Te*), whose name evokes the idea of the 'Axis of the World', is, in the doctrine of Lao-Tzu's doctrine, what could be called a specification of the Way (*Tao*) in relation to a particular being or state of existence: it is the direction that this being must follow in order for its existence to be in accordance with the Way; or, in other words, in accordance with the Principle (direction taken in the ascending sense, while in the descending sense this same direction is that of the Activity of Heaven. This can be compared to what we have previously indicated with regard to the symbolic meaning of ritual orientation.

²⁶ *Chuang-Tzu*, chap. XXII. See the *postscript* to our article of March 1927, pages 350-351.

universal), all contingencies, distinctions and individualities are nothing more than elements of the stream of forms, points on the circumference of the cosmic wheel.

We have limited ourselves to reproducing and explaining a few texts chosen from among many others of the same genre, taken mainly from the great Taoist commentators of the fourth century BC, Lie-Tséu and Chuang-Tsé. The orientalist G. Pauthier, who, without having penetrated the profound meaning of traditional doctrines, had at least glimpsed more than many who came after him, called Taoism a primitive Christianity; he was not wrong, and the considerations we have set forth will perhaps help to understand this. In particular, one can recognise a striking similarity between the Void of the sage who, remaining at the Centre of the world, united with the Principle, remains there in peace, removed from all the vicissitudes of the outside world, and the idea of the "spiritual habitat" in the Heart of Christ, which has already been discussed here on several occasions²⁷. This is yet another proof of the harmony between ancient traditions and Christianity, a harmony which, for us, finds its source and explanation precisely in the Centre of the World, that is, in the earthly Paradise: just as the four rivers have sprung from the single source at the foot of the Tree of Life, so all the great traditional currents are derived from the primitive Revelation.

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²⁷ On this subject, we have recently noted another interesting reference: in the *Révélation de l'Amour divin à Julienne de Norwich, a 14th-century recluse*, a French translation of which has just been published by Dom G. Meunier, the tenth revelation shows the entire portion of mankind that will be saved, placed in the divine Heart pierced by the lance.