

The Wisdom of the Virgin

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IN speaking of the "wisdom of the Virgin" we are considering the Virgin Mary not solely in her quality as Mother of Jesus, but above all as Prophetess¹ for all the descendants of Abraham; this enables us to compare the *Magnificat* with several as it were parallel passages from the Koran.

The *Magnificat* (Luke, I, 46-55) contains the following teachings: holy joy in God; humility—"poverty" or "childlikeness"—as a condition of Grace; the holiness of the Divine Name; inexhaustible Mercy and its connection with fear; immanent and universal justice; the merciful assistance accorded to Israel, this name having to be extended to the Church² since according to St. Paul the Church is the supraracial prolongation and renewal of the Chosen People.³ Further, the *Magnificat* speaks of the favour granted to "Abraham and his seed," and not exclusively to Isaac and his seed; Abraham includes all monotheistic Semites, racially or spiritually, thus irrespective of physical race in certain cases.

The connection between fear and Mercy—enunciated in the *Magnificat*—is of cardinal importance: contrarily to prejudices current in the world of lukewarmness and psychologism, the traditional doctrines which insist most on Mercy have as their point of departure the conviction that we run the risk of hell, or even deserve it, and that we are only saved by the Goodness of Heaven⁴; the way then consists, not in wishing to save oneself by one's own merits, since this is considered quite impossible, but in conforming to the requirements of a Mercy which seeks to save us while demanding of us *a priori* the fear of being lost. Mary's hymn is impregnated with elements of Mercy and Rigour, and it thus reflects an aspect of the nature of the Virgin herself: the mildness of the Virgin is accompanied by an adamantine purity and also by a strength of soul which evokes such Biblical figures as Miriam and Deborah, and which represents a dimension inseparable from the greatness of her who was called *o clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria*.⁵

The severities of Mary's canticle towards the proud, the mighty and the rich, and the consolations directed to the humble, the oppressed and the poor refer—apart from their literal meaning—to the equilibrium-restoring power of the Beyond; and this insistence on cosmic alternations is easily explained if we remember that the Virgin herself personifies Equilibrium, since she is identifiable with cosmic Substance, which is both maternal and virginal—a Substance of Harmony and Beauty, and thereby opposed to all disequilibrium. In the doctrine of Mary the roots of disequilibrium are essentially expressed by pride, injustice and attachment to riches⁶; or more precisely, love of self, contempt for one's neighbour and the desire to possess, which includes insatiability and avarice.

As for the joy referred to in the Virgin's canticle, this goes hand in hand with humility—the awareness of our contingency and of our ontological nothingness—or more precisely with the divine Answer to this humility; whatever is empty for God will by the same token be filled, as Meister Eckhart explains by the example of the hand lowered and opened upwards. To the humility—or poverty—of man corresponds the Generosity of God; now the message of the

Virgin according to the Koran is, as we shall see, a message of Divine Generosity.

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The doctrine of Mary as it appears in the Koran insists on Mercy on the one hand and on immanent and cosmic Justice on the other, or on the alternations due to universal Equilibrium. We find the idea of Mercy—teaching of the Virgin—in the following passage: "And her Lord ("her" refers to St. Anne, the "wife of `Imran") accepted her (Mary) with full acceptance and caused her to grow with a goodly growth,⁷ and made Zachariah⁸ her guardian; whenever Zachariah went in to her in the prayer-niche (*mihràb*),⁹ he found beside her the necessary food¹⁰; he asked: O Mary, whence cometh unto thee this (food)? She replied: it cometh from God: truly God giveth beyond measure to whom He will." (*Surah of the Family of `Imran*, 37).

This reply is the very symbol of the Marian message as it appears in the Koran; and even in other passages, in which the name of Mary is not mentioned, this phrase in fact indicates an aspect of the message. "The life of this world has been made attractive (by Satan) to those who do not believe,¹¹ and they mock those who believe; and those who fear God will be above them on the Day of the Resurrection; for God giveth beyond measure to whom He will." (*Surah of the Family of `Imrân*, 212). In this passage we encounter, along with the key-phrase regarding divine Generosity, the ideas enunciated in the *Magnicat*: the necessity of fear, then the play of cosmic alternations, i.e. the compensatory and equilibrium-restoring relationship between the here-below and the beyond.

An analogous passage from the same *Surah* is the following: "Say (O Prophet): O my God (*Allahumma*), Sovereign of Royalty, Thou givest royalty to whom Thou wilt and Thou takest away royalty from whom Thou wilt; Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt and Thou abasest whom Thou wilt; in Thy Hand is welfare; truly Thou art powerful over all things. Thou causest the night to pass into the day and Thou causest the day to pass into the night. And Thou bringest forth the living from the dead, and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living. And Thou givest sustenance beyond measure to whom Thou wilt." (26-27). Here again, along with the key-phrase, we have the idea of cosmic alternations.

Another passage: "O my people! The life of this world is but a passing enjoyment and in truth the future life is the abode of stability. Whoever doeth an ill-deed is requited only with the like thereof, and whoever doeth good, whether male or female, provided he is a believer¹²—all such will enter Paradise where they will receive sustenance beyond measure." (*Surah of the Believer*, 39-40).

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One of the most important passages, from the generally Islamic as well as from the specifically Marian point of view, is the Light Verse and the three verses which follow it: "God is the light of the heavens and the earth; His light is comparable to a niche wherein is a wick¹³;

the wick is in a crystal; the crystal is like a brilliant star; it (the wick) is kindled from a blessed tree (from which comes the oil), an olive tree which is neither of the East nor of the West, and whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon light; God guideth unto His light whom He will; and God speaketh to mankind in parables; and God knoweth all things." Coming immediately after this famous passage are the following verses: "In houses which God hath suffered to be built, and in which His Name is remembered (invoked), men whom neither trade nor barter distract from remembrance (invocation) of God, nor from Prayer and Alms-giving, glorify Him at dawn and at dusk; they fear the day when hearts and eyes will be overturned. So that God may reward them for the good works they accomplished and give them more out of His grace; and God giveth His sustenance, beyond measure, to whom He will." (*Surah of Light*, 35-38).

This group of verses evokes first of all the symbolism of the prayer-niche, symbol of the mysteries of the Divine Light and of its modes of presence or immanence, and ends with the key-phrase of the Marial message, the words on Generosity. We likewise encounter an allusion to the Name of God and another to fear; finally, the Light Verse contains the virginal symbols of crystal, star,¹⁴ blessed tree¹⁵ and oil, the Marian interpretations of which can easily be discerned.¹⁶

In its intrinsic meaning the Light Verse refers to the doctrine of the Self and of the refractions of the Self in cosmic manifestation; the connection with the Virgin is convincing because she personifies the receptive or passive perfections of universal Substance; but she likewise incarnates—by virtue of the formless and occult nature of Divine *Prakriti*—the ineffable essence of wisdom or spirituality, the both virginal and maternal *materia prima* of all formal coagulations of the Spirit.¹⁷

But Moslems think of the Virgin in connection not only with the prayer-niche (*mihrab*), but also with the palm-tree (*nakhlah*): Mary is beside a withered palm-tree in the wilderness, and a voice commands her: "Shake the trunk of the palm-tree toward thee, thou wilt cause ripe and fresh dates to fall upon thee." (*Surah of Maryam*, 25). This miracle of the palm-tree is the companion of the miracle of the niche: in both cases, Mary is nourished by God, but whereas in the first case the fruits arrive without her doing anything other than invoking God in the prayer-niche, in the second case she must participate in the miracle; it is a miracle of pure grace in the first case, and a miracle of active faith in the second. That is to say, the niche evokes the graces of prayer of a static and contemplative kind, while the palm-tree suggests active and dynamic prayer; to the perfection of quietude must be added the perfection of fervour; the latter demands an awareness of our earthly distress or of our exile, while the former implies our sense of Unity and of Beatitude.

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The Koran contains a particularly synthetic passage concerning not so much the "wisdom" of the Virgin as her "mystery": "And Mary, the daughter of *Imran*,¹⁸ who kept her virginity intact: We breathed into her of Our Spirit; and she believed in the Words of her Lord and in His Books and was of those who, are subject (to God)." (*Surah of the Prohibition*, 12).

"Who kept her virginity intact": the Arabic term, which is concrete, implies a symbolism of the heart: God introduces into the heart of the Virgin an element of His nature, that is to say that in reality He "opens" this heart to the transcendently omnipresent Divine Spirit. Hearts are

unaware of this Spirit from the fact of their hardening, a hardening which at the same time is dissipation; the virgin heart, on the other hand, is both fluid and concentrated, metaphorically speaking.

"We breathed into her of Our Spirit": the image of breath evokes both the intimacy and subtlety of the gift, its depth or infinitude, if one will; "of Our Spirit": no divine manifestation can involve the Divine Spirit in itself and in its intrinsic totality, otherwise the Spirit would henceforth be in the manifestation in question, and no longer in God.

"And she believed in the Words of her Lord and in His Books": the Words are inward certainties, the contents of the Intellect; the Books are the Revelations, which come from outside.¹⁹ "To believe" or "to accept as true" (*saddaqa*) means here, not to admit with difficulty or retain in the mental faculty alone, but to recognize immediately and believe "sincerely; " that is to say, drawing the consequences which the truth implies and demands; this virtue explains the qualificative *Siddiqah* which Islam attributes to the Blessed Virgin: "She who believes sincerely, totally." There is in this quality a part of intuitive discernment relating to "purity of heart" and a part of "realization-bringing" sincerity, of total gift of the soul.

"And she was of those who are subject" (*qànitin*): the Arabic term implies the meaning not only of constant submission to God, but also of absorption in prayer and invocation (*quniit*), meanings which coincide with the image of Mary spending her childhood in front of the prayer-niche and thus personifying contemplative prayer.

Muhyi 'd-Din ibn `Arabi,' after having shown that his heart "has opened itself to all forms," that it is "a cloister for monks, a temple of idols, the Kaaba,"²⁰ adds: "I practise the religion of Love"²¹; now it is over this informal religion that—Semantically speaking—Sayyidatnâ Maryam ("Our Lady Mary") presides. She is thus to be identified with the supreme *Shakti* or with the heavenly *Prajnâpârarnitâ* of the Asiatic traditions.²²

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The fact that the Islamic tradition records the supereminent dignity of the Blessed Virgin creates a problem: if on the one hand the Logos in Islam is necessarily and obviously identified with the Founder of this religion,²³ and if on the other the feminine aspect of the Logos—to the extent that it is taken into consideration—can only be personified by Maryam in view of her incomparable quality as attested by the Koran and the Sunna, why did this personification have to appear outside the Arab world and in connection with the Founder of the Christian religion?²⁴ The reason for this is the following: precisely because, in the world of the Semitic monotheists, Maryam is the only "feminization of the Divine," if one may so put it (or the only avatic *Shakti* of Vishnu, in Hindu terms²⁵) she had to appear in all three monotheistic religions at once, and consequently on the threshold of Christianity. If she had been an Arab, she would have remained a stranger to the other two religions; if she had lived in Israel before the time of Jesus, she would have remained a stranger to the Christian religion, or she would have anticipated it in a certain manner²⁶; being unique and incomparable both in Judaism—by her concrete personality as Prophetess, whether understood or not—and in Christianity—by her function as Co-Redemptrix—she was *ipso facto* unique and incomparable for Islam and was "at home" in it, like all the Semitic prophets up to and including Christ. From the point of view of Islam there was thus no necessity, nor even any possibility (this question not existing for the other two religions) that Maryam should have a function in the genesis of the Moslem world; in her quality

as the sole major *Shakti* in the monotheistic world, she occupied the only historical place that she could occupy and assumed the only religious role that she could assume.

Or again: if Maryam could neither appear in the Arab world nor in the Jewish world before Christ, it was because, in view of her very incomparability, she had to be linked with a masculine manifestation of "human divinity"²⁷; now this manifestation, in the Semitic world, is precisely Christ or, in other words, the possibility of such a manifestation in the Semitic world is in itself quite enough to explain the existence of Christianity, from the point of view at issue here.

Maryam belongs to Judaism by her personality in fact, to Christianity by her special function, and to Islam by her supereminence in the whole Abrahamic cosmos. The Jewish message of the Virgin is to be found precisely in the *Magnificat* in so far as it refers to Israel; this hymn is at the same time her Christian message in so far as "Israel" is the Church, and it is also her Islamic message in view of the reference to the "seed of Abraham"; a message which, as we have seen, was re-formulated by the Koran in terms appropriate to Islam. In a word: Maryam comes into the Abrahamic-Mohammedan cycle by virtue of the fact that she belongs to the Sinaitic-Christian cycle which, from the Moslem point of view, constitutes an internal dimension of the first-mentioned cycle.²⁸

We must remember also that the Marian wisdom is necessarily an expression of the Christ-given wisdom, to which she adds—or from which she extracts—an aspect which is proper to herself, and this is precisely the aspect enunciated in the verse of the prayer-niche²⁹; whereas the doctrine of cosmic or human alternations is of Mary because it is of Christ, the doctrine of sustenance obtained from God—or "from the Inward"—is of Mary herself, along with the virginal and maternal graces which emanate from the very person of the Virgin. The following saying of Jesus is, in spirit, Marian in nature: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (*Matthew*, IV, 4) and likewise the saying: "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (*Matthew*, XI, 30). As for the *Magnificat* and its Biblical anticipations, it is in no wise contradictory to describe as "Christ-given" a teaching formulated before the birth of Christ himself, given on the one hand the cosmic and spiritual inseparability of Jesus and Mary, and on the other the unity or timelessness of the Logos, considered here in its Semitic and monotheistic interpretations.³⁰

Specifically Marian spirituality may be summarized in these terms: to become pure prayer, or pure receptivity before *God—Gratia plena*—so as to be nourished only by Him; for Maryam, the Divine Quintessence of this bread—or of this "sustenance" (rizq)³¹—was 'Isa, the "Word of God" (*Kalimatu 'Llâh*) and "Spirit of God" (*Rûhu 'Llâh*), this Bread on which she lives in eternity and on which she was already living, inwardly, during her childhood in the Temple.

* * *

That the Blessed Virgin, speaking spontaneously should express herself in Biblical terms, is a matter of course for anyone with an inkling of what must be the relationship between infused knowledge and formal Revelation in the soul of such a being as Mary. We should like now to quote the main Biblical passages which in some fashion prefigure the words of the *Magnificat*—if it be permitted to express oneself thus³²—and we shall do so in the same order as the ideas in this hymn appear.

"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (*Habakkuk*, III, 18).

"Who is like unto the Lord, our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill." (*Psalms*, CXIII, 5-7).

"The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad...They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." (*Psalms*, CXXVI, 3 and 5).

"He sent redemption unto His people: He hath commanded His covenant for ever: holy and reverend is His Name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom..." (*Psalms*, CXI, 9 and 10).

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord hath mercy on them that fear Him...But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep His covenant,³³ and to those that remember His commandments to do them." (*Psalms*, CIII, 13, 17 and 18).

"Thou hast broken Rahab³⁴ in pieces, as one that is slain; Thou hast scattered Thine enemies with Thy strong arm." (*Psalms*, LXXXIX, 10).

"And the afflicted people Thou wilt save: but Thine eyes are upon the haughty, that Thou mayest bring them down." (*II Samuel*, XXII, 28).

"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art Thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" (*Isaiah*, LI, 9).

"The Lord lifteth up the meek: He casteth the wicked down to the ground." (*Psalms*, CXLVII, 6).

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (*Isaiah*, XL, 3-5).³⁵

"To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise." (*Job*, V, 11 and 12).

"For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." (*Psalms*, CVII, 9).

"But thou Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (*Isaiah*, XLI, 8-10).

"He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." (*Psalms*, XCVIII, 3).

"And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." (*Genesis*, XVII, 7).

Finally the canticle of Anne, mother of Samuel, summarizes the whole doctrine of the *Magnificat*: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord ³⁶...The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased...The Lord killeth and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up.³⁷ The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill...He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness...He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed." (*Samuel*, II, 1-10).

¹ Obviously not a law-giving Prophèss nor the foundress of a religion, but one who sheds light and sanctifies. Amongst Moslems there is a divergence of view on the question as to whether Maryam was a "Prophetess" (*nabiyyah*) or simply a "saint" (*waliyyah*); the first opinion is based on the Virgin's super-eminence, that is to say on her unequalled rank in the spiritual hierarchy, while the second opinion stems from a carping and timid theology that only takes account of the fact that Mary could not have a law-giving function, a "juridical" point of view which bypasses the essential with an astonishing lack of sense of proportion.

² Or to the Churches, if outward schisms are taken into account.

³ "His servant Israel" says the *Magnificat*, thus specifying that sacred servitude enters into the very definition of Israel, to the extent that an Israel without this servitude is no longer the Chosen People, whereas inversely a non-Israelite monotheistic community is identifiable with Israel—"in spirit and in truth"—by the very fact that it realizes servitude towards God.

⁴ The Buddhist "Pure Land" schools are particularly characteristic in this respect.

⁵ Words added spontaneously by St. Bernard to the *Salve Regina* on the occasion of a solemn gathering at Speyer cathedral.

⁶ And not the mere fact of being rich, for an outward situation is nothing in itself; a monarch is necessarily rich, and there have been holy monarchs. To condemn the "rich" is nevertheless justified by the fact that owners, on the average, are attached to what they own: inversely, only he is "poor" who is content with little.

⁷ An allusion to the avataric beauty of the Virgin, and also, according to the commentators, to the growth of grace in her.

⁸ It is to be noted that the name Zachariah, which in Hebrew means "God remembers" (*Zekaryah*), comprises in Arabic (*Zakariya*) the root *zakara*, and thus the meaning of "fullness" and "abundance." The Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew *zekar* is *dhakara*, whence the word *dhikr*, "remembrance" (of God).

⁹ The reference here is to a certain place in the Temple of Jerusalem, reserved for the Blessed Virgin. The association of ideas between Mary and the prayer-niche in mosques is common amongst Moslems: in many mosques the verse of Zachariah and Mary is inscribed above the *mihrab*; this is notably so in the case of *Hagia Sophia*, which thus remains dedicated to the Virgin even after the Byzantine era and under the Turks.

¹⁰ Winter fruits in summer and summer fruits in winter according to tradition; tradition likewise relates that Mary's apartment was closed by seven doors, which evokes the symbolism of the "book seven times sealed."

¹¹ Literally: "who cover (*kafara*)", that is to say: who cover the Truth; this contains an allusion to innate knowledge which has been "covered" by passion and pride.

¹² This reserve is crucial. It is faith that saves, not action as such; both faith and action, however, are susceptible of complex, subtle, and sometimes paradoxical nuances.

¹³ It is indeed a question of a burning wick, and not of a "lamp," as most translators seem to think.

¹⁴ The names *Stella Matutina* and *Stella Maris* will be recalled here.

¹⁵ Within the framework of this particular symbolism the words "neither of the East nor of the West" seem to indicate that the Virgin, personifying both the universal *Shakti* and the *Sophia Perennis*, does not belong exclusively either to Christianity or Islam, but that she belongs to both religions at once, and that she constitutes the link

between them.

¹⁶ In Brahmanical terminology, Mary incarnates the luminous and ascending element (*Sattva*) of uncreated Substance (*Prakriti*), which already radiates by its purity alone, and thus even apart from the illuminating and "vertical" intervention of the creative Intellect (*Purusha*).

¹⁷ According to *Al-Baqli*, commentator on the Koran and patron saint of the town of Shiraz, "the substance of Mary is the substance of original sanctity." A Maghribi *shaikh*, who had no knowledge of Christianity except through the Koran, told us that Maryam personifies Clemency-Mercy (*Rahmah*) and that our age is especially dedicated to her for that very reason; the essence of Mary—her "crown"—are the Names *Rahmān* and *Rahim*, and she is the human manifestation of the *Basmalah* ("in the Name of God the Clement, the Merciful"). In prayers for the dead intended for general use, the name Muhammad, representing in Islam the human ideal, stands for the departed person, on the understanding that whoever uses the formula will substitute for "Muhammad" the actual name of the dead man or woman. But since before God a person is held to be primarily the child of his or her mother, the ideal name figures in the prayer as "Muhammad the son of Maryam," these two names representing the summits of the two hierarchies of men and women in Islam.

¹⁸ The trilateral root of this name comprises amongst other things the meanings of "prosperity" and "flowering," which are most appropriate for her whom God "caused to grow with a goodly growth" and to whom He gave "His sustenance beyond measure" (*Surah of the Family of Imran*, 37). It should be noted that the words "daughter of Imran" link Mary not only to her direct father but also to her ancestor, the father of Moses and Aaron, whence the description "sister of Aaron" which the Koran likewise employs, wishing thus to stress that the priestly and esoteric supereminence of the brother of Moses is remanifested in Mary: in other words, it is a question of showing, on the one hand that the Blessed Virgin is of the race of the two brother prophets, and on the other hand that she is a prophetess—not law-giving and exoteric like Moses, but contemplative and esoteric like Aaron.

¹⁹ These precisions are given so that it cannot be asserted that Mary accepted only the Books and not the Words, or *vice versa*, or that she remained passive without accepting positively; precautions which are far from being unnecessary in Semitic climate, and in view of a meticulous, not to say pedantic, theology.

²⁰ In "The Interpreter of Desires" (*Tarjuman al-ashwaq*); cf. *Etudes Traditionnelles*, August-September 1934.

²¹ It is true that the author specifies in his commentary that this religion is "Islam," but he was doubtless obliged to do this in order to escape a charge of heresy, and he could moreover do this in good conscience by understanding the term *islam* in its immediate and universal meaning.

²² At the time of the persecution of Christianity in Japan, the Christians did not hesitate to make their devotions in front of statues of Kwannon, the Buddhist goddess of Mercy. Another example of Marian universality, if one may so call it, is the following: the basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, near Mexico City—a famous place of pilgrimage—is built on a hill which in ancient times was consecrated to the mother-goddess Tonantzin, a divinity of the Earth and the Moon; this divinity appeared herself, in the form of an Aztec princess of great beauty, to a poor Indian, telling him that she was the "Mother of God" and that she wished to have a church on this spot. Another example: above the principal gate of Cordoba, now no longer extant, there was a statue of the Virgin; archaeologists think that it was the image of a Roman goddess identified by the Christians as Mary; the Moslems, when they came, respected the statue and in their turn venerated the statue of the Virgin-Mother as the patroness of Cordoba. But above all the following coincidence must be mentioned: it is not by chance that the town of Ephesus, where Mary was assumed into Heaven, was dedicated to Artemis, goddess of light, in that she was the sister of Apollo, and goddess of the moon, in view of her femininity, and identified by the Ionians with a foster-mother-goddess of perhaps Oriental origin; let us likewise recall that Artemis is the protectress of virginity and the beneficent guardian of the sea, and that she is thus both *virgo* and *stella maris*, and that her favourite animal is the hart, which in Christian symbolism represents the soul thirsting for the heavenly fatherland: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." (*Psalms*, XLII, 1).

²³ But for all that without excluding, in the esoteric order, interferences by other manifestations of the Logos, especially that of Jesus, the "Seal of Sanctity."

²⁴ This is a question which has no sense from the specifically Christian point of view, but we are considering here the Semitic, monotheistic world as a whole,—with its three great traditional dimensions.

²⁵ One *hadith* places Mary alongside Adam and above Eve, because of the privilege of having been breathed into by the Divine Spirit.

²⁶ An idea contradictory in itself, but not devoid of meaning or function—in a provisional manner—in the present context.

²⁷ Brahmanically speaking, a woman *Avatara* is necessarily the *Shakti* of an *Avatara* and thus necessarily appears along

with him; she could thus appear neither in isolation nor, needless to say, in a spiritual climate whose perspective providentially excludes the notion of "Divine Descents."

²⁸ Moses and Aaron open the Sinaitic cycle; Jesus and Mary complete it. From another point of view, however, this cycle is perpetuated by orthodox Judaism, which moreover would lose none of its specific orthodoxy—founded on the perpetuity of the Law—if in general it accepted Jesus as a prophet of esotericism and a spiritual renewer, or if at least it left the question open; for Jesus does not "abolish" the Law, he "transposes" it. Be that as it may, the Koranic epithet "sister of Aaron" conferred on *Mary* shows in its way the complementary relationship between these two cosmic miracles which were Sinai and Christ.

²⁹ The most direct Koranic expression of this aspect, or of this Marian mystery, is without doubt the following verse: "And God is the best of Providers." *Surah of Friday*, 11). The Divine Name corresponding to this idea is "The Provider," *Ar-Razzâq*, whence the somewhat Marian Moslem name: "Servant of the Provider," *'Abd ar-Razzâq*.

³⁰ cf. *Le Message coranique de Seyidnâ Aissâ* in *Etudes Traditionnelles*, May-June 1966.

³¹ The same verbal root as *Razzâq*, the Divine Name mentioned above.

³² This is permissible in the sense that this prayer is an inspiration in its turn, and not an improvisation based on prior readings as some have imagined.

³³ This reservation is crucial; it indicates both the relativity and the universality of the notion of "Israel."

³⁴ This name is synonymous with Leviathan: this is a monster which personifies primordial chaos under its "aqueous" aspect, if one may put it thus, and which is killed by God, by the *Fiat Lux* in fact. The name of Rahab is likewise applied to idolatrous, magic-working and tyrannical Egypt, the only one known to the Hebrews. The Flight into Egypt by the Holy Family is like an act of homage to the other Egypt, that of the sages; and it is not without significance that the Flight retraced the steps of Joseph, the Patriarch, who found there blessing and glory.

³⁵ This passage, taken up again by St. Luke (III, 4-6), evokes the equilibrium-restoring function of the Principle, that is to say, there is a reference here both to Divine Justice, immanent in a certain sense, and to Universal Harmony, benefic as well as implacable; it is this Harmony that is incarnated by her who has been called "Divine Mary."

³⁶ The horn symbolizes strength; the exalting of the horn is success, prosperity or victory given by God.

³⁷ "I kill, and I make alive; I wound and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand." (*Deuteronomy*, XXXII, 39).