ISRAEL REGARDIE (1907-1985)
AND THE “GOLDEN DAWN”


Like a meteor, the phenomenon called “The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn” shone in humanity’s pre-millenial sky for a brief thirteen years before it burnt out and vanished, leaving behind a new mythology as an indelible trace of its passage.

Much truth, an even more fantasy, has been written about this all but legendary Magical Order, but no other man has done more to make available and accessible to all the spirit, as well as the letter, of the Order’s Teachings than Francis Israël Regardie, till his lamented death last March the uncontested “doyen” of all English-speaking Magicians, as well as a gifted writer in his own right.

Israël Regardie was born in England on the 17th November 1907, emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1920, and at his legal majority became an American citizen. Fascinated by Aleister Crowley’s writings in The Equinox, he went back to the U.K. in 1928, to serve for three years as an unpaid secretary-companion to Crowley, who nicknamed him “The Serpent”. During that time, Regardie studied Crowley’s system of “Magick”, and also had his first access to the original Golden Dawn documents still in Crowley’s possession.

Although his first published book, A Garden of Pomegranates, came out in 1932, Regardie himself considered his The Tree of Life (Riders, 1932) as
The qabalistic tree of life and the magical grades
Une des pages du manuscrit chiffre trouvé par le Rév. Woodford

La clef de l'alphabet secret, dit "Alchymique"

A  O  G  Q  N  E  T
B  Θ  H  P  M  V  X
C  Θ  I  O  Z
D  H  K  Q
E  Θ  L  R  Z
F  Θ  M  S

(page 184, Livre V, "Polygraphie" de Trithème, Paris 1561)
“the first book that emerged from my burgeoning spirit” (see his Introduction to its 2nd edition by Samuel Weiser, New York, 1972). At any rate, it is by far the best available exposition of the essential teachings of Crowley, by whom Regardie was then very strongly influenced, as well as “the best introduction to practical occultism that has ever been written” (Francis King in Ritual Magic in England, Neville Spearman, London, 1970).

Shortly after leaving Crowley’s tutelage, Regardie joined the now defunct order of the “Stella Matutina”, which considered itself to be the authentic direct successor of the Golden Dawn in the Outer. Whether this claim was valid or not, it is now useless to discuss, but his membership gave Regardie the opportunity to acquire further “Knowledge Lectures”, rituals and other material originating in the Golden Dawn of Mathers’ days. Also, he became convinced that the Stella Matutina, as it was then, was in a state of irreversible decay, and that the Golden Dawn teachings were being slowly denatured and perverted, so that they could not survive much longer unless published in full and thus made available to all genuine seekers after such knowledge and truths as the Order had been able to convey in its hey-days. For this reason, Regardie consciously and deliberately broke the oath of secrecy he had taken at his initiation, and published most of the G.D. rituals and other manuscripts in four large volumes (Aries Press, Chicago, 1937-1940), later reprinted (with an additional introduction) first in a two-volumes and finally in a one-volume editions. This publication was the last straw, and the two orders (the Stella Matutina and the Alpha and Omega) which both claimed direct descent from the original G.D., became dormant and vanished from the occult scene. This publication of the G.D. “secret” material was preceded by a short book titled What you should know about the Golden Dawn (latest - 3rd - edition by the Falcon Press, Phoenix, 1983) and by an “autobiographical” volume called My Rosicrucian Adventure (Aries Press, 1936) in which Regardie gave an honest and factual account of his years with Crowley and as member of a magical order.

During his long life (he died in March 1985), and while engaged in a busy practice as a lay psychoanalyst, Regardie published many valuable works on magical and generally esoteric subjects, the principal ones being: The Art of True Healing, The Art and Meaning of Magic, Be Yourself - the Art of Relaxation, the Middle Pillar, The Philosopher’s Stone, The Eye in the Triangle, A Practical Guide to Geomantic Divination, Ceremonial Magic, the One Year Manual (with six companion cassettes of instructions, spoken by Regardie himself), and 23 other titles. This considerable output culminated last year (1984) by the fabulous publication of the monumental The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic (Falcon Press) - a massive 21 × 28 cms. volume of 1104 pages.
with 15 full-colour illustrations (on 8 plates) and over 300 tables and diagrams in the text.

Ten years before his death, in collaboration with Robert Wang (author of *The Qabalistic Tarot*, Samuel Weiser, Yorth Beach, 1983) as the painter, Regardie had begun the reconstitution of the authentic Golden Dawn Tarot deck, in the form in which it had been originally designed by MacGregor Mathers. This was published in 1978 and is substantially different from the Rider-Waite and the Paul Foster Case cards, as well as from the “Hermetic Tarot” of Godfrey Dowson (U.S. Games Systems Inc., New York, U.S.A.), claimed to be “based upon the Esoteric Workings of the Secret Order of the Golden Dawn”.

In his last letter to the writer of this article, he wrote (on the 10th February 1985): “I too am getting on in years, now in my 78th year, and I feel a kind of empathy with your complaint about the aging process, which I like no better than you. I don’t know that we can blame it on some Entity as you say, or on God of any Kind or description. The fault is no doubt ours, and the kind of lives we have led.”

Francis Israël Regardie died peacefully at his home in Sedona (Arizona, U.S.A.).

In a brief obituary (*The Hermetic Journal* No 28, Summer 1985), Adam McLean writes. “Regardie’s contribution to western occultism was considerable and indeed he influenced two or three generations of occultists. [...] The major event in his creative life was the compilation and publication of the Golden Dawn material he had access to [...] (when) he realised that this current of occultism was in great danger of dying out, for it was then pursued by its aged members in an atmosphere of great secrecy. [...] Those who work with this current recognise they owe him a great debt for making this material available. [...] He continued to work well into his seventies. [...] Apart from his magical work, Regardie was well known as a therapist practicing various techniques evolved from psychotherapy and esoteric lore for healing the psyche of his patients. He thus also contributed towards the rapprochement between depth psychology and esotericism that we have witnessed over the past decades. [...] Through his long life Regardie achieved a great deal indeed. He avoided the trap of setting himself up as a guru, though many American occultists would readily have made themselves his acolytes. He was too wise, too canny, to go in that direction, and all his life he preferred rather to be seen as a channel for the transmission of esoteric ideas and traditions, than to project himself as their source. [...] Francis Israël Regardie certainly lived a life of great value, inspiring and encouraging through his books and the personal help he gave to individual acquaintances, the continuing growth of interest in the esoteric teachings.”.
Before examining the essence of the Golden Dawn Teaching, it seems best to first summarise its real history and then to review briefly some of the books and articles written about it.

In 1884, the Freemason Rev. A.F.A. Woodford found and purchased a “cipher” manuscript in a second-hand book-shop. He showed it to a brother mason, Dr. William Wynn-Westcott, who was also the Supreme Magus of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia. With the help of two other masons and Rosicrucians, Dr. William Robert Woodman and Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, the manuscript was rapidly decoded and transcribed. It proved to contain the basic elements of five rituals and the address of a Rosicrucian adept of a high grade - the famous “Anna Sprengel”. After an exchange of letters (six in all), she authorised the three masons to found an Order of which they were to be three joint Grand Masters. The Order was to be called “The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn” (“L'Ordre Hermétique de l'Aube Dorée” in French and “Die Goldene Dämmerung” in German).

MacGregor Mathers (who also called himself Count of Glenstrae) took upon himself the task of producing complete rituals from the scanty data in the manuscript and from the additional indications supplied by Anna Sprengel, who died shortly after her last letter to the triumvirate. This painstaking and demanding work on the rituals and the “knowledge lectures” which were to accompany them, to duly instruct the members in the art and practice of “traditionnal magic” (in the widest possible meaning of this expression), was completed in 1887. The first Temple (named Isis-Uranta) of the new Order was consecrated in London on the 1st March 1888. The very first person to be initiated in it was a pupil at Slade's, Moïna Bergson (sister of the well-known philosopher, Henri Bergson), who was shortly to become Mrs. MacGregor Mathers. Within a few years several other Temples were consecrated in various cities in Great Britain, and later in the United States. In 1891 Dr. Woodman died and in 1897 Dr. Wynn-Westcott resigned from the Order, thus leaving Mathers as the sole Grand-Master.

In 1891 the Mathers household had moved to Paris (on the instructions of the “Invisible Superiors” or “Secret Chiefs” who were supposed to rule the Order through its Grand-Masters), where the Temple AHATŌOR was opened and consecrated by Annie Horniman on Saturday, the 6th January 1894. But soon, in 1901 to be precise, the Order began to break up, and only the Paris Temple remained faithful to Mathers till his death. The first revolt was led by the Irish “poet”, William Butler Yeats (whose only work worthy of survival is the inspired book A Vision - first published privately in 1925 and re-issued, augmented and revised, in 1937), but it was Aleister Crowley who harmed the Order most. Mathers died, at the age of 64 years, at his home in Auteuil, from
Spanish influenza, on the 20 November 1918. His wife died in England on the 25 July 1928.

We must note that Aleister Crowley was very proud of his role in the dismantling and destruction of the G.D., and he moreover alleged that this was carried out on the instruction of the "Secret Chiefs" who had chosen him to take over from Mathers the duties of the Grand-Master and to reconstruct the Order. None of the then existing Temples acknowledged, or even believed, his claim. Crowley's "magick" is notoriously "black" in inspiration and largely sexual in practice, quite different from the ceremonial and spiritual theurgic science taught originally by the G.D. But it is nevertheless quite possible that his claim was not imaginary or a lie, as his description of the "secret chief" he met in the Bois de Boulogne is remarkably similar to Adolf Hitler's description of the "Superman" ("with the face of a hawk") who used to come to give him his orders and of whom Hitler was so scared that his awe gave him fits. It is certain that Hitler's and Crowley's "masters" did not wish an Order such as the Golden Dawn to survive.

Several members started orders of their own, some of them pretending to be legitimate heirs and successors of the true G.D. But all of them so tampered with the authentic rituals that often their versions could not be easily recognised as deriving from those of the G.D. Only Paul Foster Case remained reasonably faithful to the spirit, if not the letter, of the original rites in those of his own initiating and teaching order, established in Los Angeles under the name of "The School of Ageless Wisdom", later renamed "The Builders of the Advtum" and still fully functioning. Colloquially known by the abbreviation "B.O.T.A." it now has active branches in many countries, including France and England. Another teaching order, "The Servants of the Light", founded by the late W.E. Butler and since his death ably directed by Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki, also follows closely the G.D. tradition. But no contemporary order actually uses the G.D. rituals in extenso, as published by Israël Regardie and others.

The first revelation of the Order's secret signs and rituals was Crowley's publication in his The Equinox (Vol. 1, No 2, September 1909) of a full-page black & white plate illustrating the recognition signs of the first five grades of the G.D., and of the rituals (rather abridged) of these five degrees. In the next issue of The Equinox (Vol. 1, No 3, March 1910) a shortened version of the Adeptus Minor ritual was published, this being the highest grade which had been conferred on Crowley by Mathers (in the Paris Temple AHATOOR).

As already mentioned, Israël Regardie published in 1937 the full texts of most of the rituals, and also published many of the knowledge lectures as well as other instructional material given to members to study. This has been further amplified and completed in his latest work, The Complete
Golden Dawn System of Magic, already described, and containing much very valuable additional material from Regardie's own experience.

Arthur Edward Waite (who became a member in 1891 and introduced Crowley to the Order in 1898) dealt briefly with the G.D. in his The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross (1924) and more at length in his autobiographical Shadows of Life and Thought (1938). As he was one of the first to secede and form his own order, his account is far from being strictly impartial.


In French there are few publications on the G.D. One can list as "serious" only the article "L'Ordre Hermétique de la Golden Dawn" by Pierre Victor in La Tour St.-Jacques (NN°s 2 & 3) and rather brief tantalising accounts in Les Grands Initiés de Notre Temps by André Chaleil; in Aleister Crowley by Serge Hutin; and in Crowley by Arnold Waldstein. In his article "Isis à Montmartre" (in L'Echo du Merveilleux, NN°s 94 & 95, December 1900), André Gaucher describes Mathers' "Mysteries of Isis" show (with portraits of Mathers and Mrs Mathers), but says nothing about the G.D. itself.

There are also a number of rather fantastic hints and innuendos in a number of "popular" articles, based on sensationalism and not on strict fact, written for the mass circulation press. One need only mention Daniel Reju's (in his article "L'Insondable Aleister Crowley" in L'Autre Monde, Nº 90, January 1985) description of the G.D. as "la société initiatique et magique toute puissante en Angleterre" (1) and the two articles by Jean Parvulesco ("John Buchan, prophète du retour des anciens dieux" in L'Autre Monde, Nº 93, April 1985 and "Le talisman de Set et les portes de l'abîme" in L'Autre Monde, Nº 94, May 1985) based on novels such as The 39 Steps and Prester John of John Buchan and The Devil
Rides Out by Dennis Wheatley, both of whom he alleges to have been members of the G.D. - most improbable in the case of Wheatley, as the original G.D. no longer admitted new members after the 1909 Crowley's publication of its rituals, when Wheatley was only 12 years old. At least the G.D. members are "good guys" by implication, being described as on the side of the "Puissances de la Lumière" and on the "Sentier de Droite" under the "l'Etendard du Christ". All the same, MacGregor Mathers must be spinning like a maddened top in his grave, if he is aware that his name is mentioned in the following way in the latter of these two articles: "Cependant, ce que je comptais faire dans cette brève analyse des Vierges de Satan, c'était surtout de montrer quelle était la véritable atmosphère, et le véritable niveau des préoccupations tout à fait spéciales dans la vie intérieure des groupes les plus avancés de la Hermetic Brotherhood of the Golden Dawn in the Outer, dont ce roman témoigne avec une justesse de laquelle je me porterai personnellement garant. Car cette justesse est celle de l'authenticité la plus dramatiquement certaine, telle qu'en avait connu et dont avait témoigné, aussi, dans ses écrits intérieurs, Samuel Liddel Mathers, quand il devait rendre compte de ses rencontres avec les Supérieurs Inconnus." (2) Perhaps magical orders such as D. Reju and Jean Parvulesco speak of did or/and do exist, but Mathers' Golden Dawn certainly was not one of them. As J.H. Brennan describes in his Occult Reich (Futura Publications, 1974), even if the satanic order of the Teutonic Knights (allegedly extinct for centuries) did not inspire Hitler's nazism da capo, they certainly sponsored and supported it through their front organisations such as Adolf Lanz' New Templars, the Germanen Order, the Vril Society, the Thule Group, the Luminous Lodge and perhaps others less known, culminating in their most characteristically prussian manifestation: The Order of the Death's Head (better known as the infamous Himmler's S.S.). If this is true, then one or more antagonistic "White" Order(s) may also exist, possibly under the general designation of Fraternité Polaire of which Jean Parvulesco writes in a further popularising article "G.I. Gurdjieff et la Fraternité des Polaires" (in L'Autre Monde, N° 95, June 1985). But it is very unlikely that the Golden Dawn which existed between 1888 and 1901 was such a "secret society" - and no other order can be truly named "The Golden Dawn".

Wishing to rectify such misconceptions, I have submitted to the Editor-in-Chief of L'Autre Monde an article entitled: "Le Rôle du Rituel dans l'Enseignement des Sociétés Secrètes" which I hope will be published in a forthcoming issue. Nevertheless, it seems both meet and necessary to conclude this essay by a summary of the real basis, purpose and inner teaching of the Golden Dawn, as the representative and model of what an authentic initiating Order should be.

An Objective or Sacred Science has existed since times immemorial. Its basic axiom is that our Universe exists because its Creator is in a
perpetual state of “Self-Remembering” in which He is eternally and constantly conscious of His Being, His Presence and His Power. All that IS persists only while the Divine Thought is held and sees the whole Universe in its “Reality”, that is, Knows Itself. Man, if he succeeds in achieving this same state of Self-Remembering of Self-Presence, can also see directly Reality as it is.

In addition, Tradition tells us that Man is an exile on this Earth and really comes from elsewhere (sometimes described as “from the stars”). As Wordsworth tells us:

“The Soul that rises with us, our life’s star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar...
From God, Who is our home...
Earth...
...the homely nurse does all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.”

Those who desperately wish to go back to their home, must find the answers to questions such as: “How does one become able to consciously Self-Remember”? and “Where and how does one find the Way of Return to the Source?”. There are many obstacles on this road. One of these, Tradition asserts, is that two Great Powers are engaged in a war over who is the Lord of this World and Man’s Master. On Earth, whatever one calls them - be it AHURA-MAZDA or “The Good” and AHRIMAN or “The Evil” or any other names - these Powers manifest themselves through human tools: the Adepts of the Right-Hand Path of Light and the Adepts of the Left-Hand Path of Darkness, also known as the Brothers of the White Lodge or of the Black Lodge, respectively.

Before engaging on the Quest, a man must ask himself: “Who am I?” and “What are the Laws of Creation and of the Maintenance of the World?”. It is to answer this double question, and on the basis of traditional doctrines, that all religions, all esoteric schools and all initiating orders come into being. By trial and error, it was found that the necessary knowledge can be usefully transmitted only through myths, veiled in allegories and illustrated by symbols. And the Way of Return leads necessarily to “the One Temple in the Highest, not made with hands, Eternal in the Heavens”.

Leaving aside religious systems, the first genuine Western school was that of Pythagoras, whose teachings were later exposed and codified in what is now known as the “Corpus Hermeticum”, thought for a long time to have been written by a contemporary of Moses, the legendary Hermes Trisme-Gistus, reputed author of the “Emerald Tablet”. This three-times great man, Hermes, must not be confused with the God Mercury-Hermes-
Thoth-Quet-Zalcoatl, who also was the Master of all the sciences and revealed them to the priests-scientists of Egypt and other lands.

Directly or indirectly, the teachings and the work of all the hermetic orders established since then, are based on these texts. What is called "the Work" of these societies can be described thus: "To leave the Darkness (of ignorance) and unite with the Light (of Divine Knowledge)"). The process leading to the Light uses special rites to transmit what must be known and to produce, in those who actively participate in the rituals, the inner spiritual state needed to be able not just to understand, but also to apply properly the highest knowledge.

Those who search and find a real Order, and become worthy to be its "all rights possessing" members, contribute by their constant practice of the proper rites to the Power and the Will of Him Who created the World around us, this world in which we live, and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Thus every genuine aspirant to the dignity of an Initiated Adept, can become a "Superman" able to help and participate in the continuous creative work of the ONE SUPREME SELF.

As Mircea Eliade expresses so well in his book Birth and Rebirth (Harper, New York, 1958; available in French with the title Initiations, rites, sociétés secrètes, Gallimard, 1959): "...One becomes a true man when one ceases to be a 'natural' man, and then one becomes a Superhuman Being. The interest of initiation for the intelligence of the archaic mentality resides in this: it shows us that the true man - the spiritual man - is not given, is not the result of a natural process. He is 'made' by the Old Masters, in accordance with the pattern revealed by Divine Beings..."

The difference between a "natural" and a "true" man (that is, the man who actively tries to remember himself and searches for the Way of Return) is therefore the habitual level of consciousness in which he lives. As compared to "natural" man, the "true" one is awake, i.e. he is always remembering to be as fully conscious of his own Self as possible, and at the same time is aware of the Universe and of his relationship to it, but also knows that in Reality ALL IS ONE, and that the apparent diversity is but an "illusion" - the "Maya" of Eastern esotericism.

It is essentially what Mr. George Ivanovich Gurdjieff also taught. In addition he said: "[...] Man contains within himself the possibility of evolution [...] (which) may be developed in separate individuals with the help of appropriate knowledge and methods. [...] The man must understand this: his evolution is necessary only to himself. [...] There is no compulsory, mechanical, evolution. [...] The evolution of man is the evolution of his consciousness. And 'consciousness' cannot evolve unconsciously. [...] The evolution of humanity can proceed only through the evolution of a certain group [...] Are we able to say that such a group exists? Perhaps we can on the basis of certain signs, but in any event we
have to acknowledge that it is a very small group, quite insufficient, at any rate, to subjugate the rest of humanity. Or, looking at it from another point of view, we can say that humanity is in such a state that it is unable to accept the guidance of a conscious group” (this “compound” quotation is taken from *In Search of the Miraculous* by Peter Demianovich Ouspensky, 1949; available in French under the title *Fragments d’un enseignement inconnu*, Stock).

To make a true man from a natural man, that is to wake him up, a special organisation is needed, such as what one may call an Esoteric School, an Occult Fraternity, an Initiating or Hermetic Order, or even a Secret Society. Those who genuinely are engaged in furthering the evolution of man, have no interest to engage in political struggles for world domination nor any time to devote to such an ephemeral undertaking.

In modern times, the renowned *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* was the most genuine of such organisations. Except for Freemasonry, all the contemporary initiating, hermetic, magic or secret orders/fraternities derive more or less directly from this great Order, inspite of its so brief, but memorable, existence.

The rites of the G.D. were constructed and had to be practiced within the framework of Zoroastre’s “Four Words of the Magus”, taken over and made famous by Eliphas Levi Zahed (in his *Transcendental Magic* - original French title: *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* - first published in 1855): TO KNOW - TO DARE - TO WILL - TO BE SILENT. Clearly, one must know the why and the how of what to do to obtain what one aims for, then dare to face its consequences; and for this one must really will to achieve one’s aim, inspite of all obstacles and dangers, and finally, one must neither boast about one’s successes nor complain about one’s failures, but remain silent. The reason for this silence is very well explained by K. Graf von Durckheim in his book *Hara*, and I quote (in an abridged form): “The pre-requisite to practical work is the capacity to keep silence. It is very natural that the beginner should want to speak of his practice and the new experiences gained through it. But in doing so he destroys everything and prevents the growth of the new man. Through practice, a new inner body grows secretly and it does not thrive on talk. The NEW which is developing can grow only in silence”.

The primary purpose of the Order was to teach to its members everything needed to obtain what traditionnal magic calls “the presence and conversation with one’s own Holy Guardian Angel”. The means for this were:

1) The study of Qabalah, Alchemy, Astrology, the Tarot and the system of Magic called “Enochian”;

82
2) Exercises in visualization, meditation, concentration, and other procedures such as divination;
3) The practice of rituals, either as a group in a properly furnished and consecrated Temple, or alone, in the privacy of one’s own Temple or Oratory (which could be almost wholly imaginary, i.e. visualized, with the irreducible minimum of magical paraphernalia, such as a wand and a sword).

For the purposes of graduated but adequate transmission of its teachings, the G.D. was subdivided into three distinct but interdependent parts and twelve degrees or grades arranged in a hierarchy, as follows:
1) The Outer or First order, called *Stella Matutina* (S.M.), which contained the five lowest grades:
   - NEOPHYTE 0 = 0
   - ZELATOR 1 = 10
   - THEORICUS 2 = 9
   - PRACTICUS 3 = 8
   - PHILOSOPHUS 4 = 7
2) The Inner or Second order, called *Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis* (R.R. & A.C.), made up of an (unnumbered) intermediate grade called “The Portal of the Vault of the Adepti” and of the three degrees of Adepts:
   - ADEPTUS MINOR 5 = 6
   - ADEPTUS MAJOR 6 = 5
   - ADEPTUS EXEMPTUS 7 = 4
   and finally.
3) The Innermost or Third order, called *Aurora Aurea* (A.A.) which comprised the three grades:
   - MAGISTER TEMPLI 8 = 3
   - MAGUS 9 = 2
   - IPSISSIMUS 10 = 1

It is necessary to note that the abbreviation *A.A.* stands for *Aurora Aurea* and NOT for Atlantean Adepts, as imagined by some badly informed or credulous British and American journalists. Also one must be aware that Crowley gave the same initials to his own order, the *Argenteum Astrum*, thus confusing many people, probably quite deliberately, as was his whimsical vaunt.

The rituals of the successive degrees were ably and cleverly constructed on a progressive scale, going from the simplest to the complex, grade by grade. Leaving aside the biannual ceremony of the Celebration of the Equinox, participation in which was compulsory to members of all grades, all the Temple rituals were rites of “initiation”, that is of a passage from one state to a higher one. The rituals which had to be performed in one’s private Temple or Oratory were designed in such a way that they produced a special inner state of the physical, emotional, mental and
spiritual bodies of the performer, which state gradually changed the
“natural” man into the “true” man, that is, which “Woke up” the total
man.
That man should be in a constant state of wakefulness had already been
revealed in the most ancient esoteric texts, so often misunderstood
through inadequate and/or incorrect translations by linguists ignorant of
magical ideas. This command has been repeated more than once in the
better known New Testament by the evangelists Matthew (24:42 &
25:13), Mark (13:35-37) and Luke (21:36), whose important advice was
given in much clearer words by Saint Paul when he wrote without
evasion equivocation or mental reservation of any kind: “Ye are all
children of the Light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night,
nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us
watch” (1 Thessalonians 5:5-6) - the underlining is mine.
It is quite astonishing that almost everyone thinks that the gospel’s
reference to the need to watch and to sleep not are only a literary device,
while it is a most important admonition. It seems that only some of the
magical orders were the first to have clearly understood that this is not
merely a symbolical and mostly meaningless expression, but represents an
absolute necessity, applicable to man’s consciousness. Let us here note
that Mr. Gurdjieff also taught that “natural” man is asleep, that he lives
most of his life in a dream-state in which he does not even know who he
is, forgets himself constantly and habitually identifies with what has
captured and holds his attention at the time. To be a “true man”, worthy
of that name, one must awake, for it is only then that one can “die like a
man” instead of “perishing like a dog”.
Another aspect of a genuine initiation and of the quest for Truth and the
Way of Return, is the absolute requirement to die to the old in order to be
reborn as a new man. In her book Ave Lucifer (Collection “J’ai Lu”,
Calmann-Lévy, 1970), Elisabeth Antébi so rightly writes: “Dans Rituels
des sociétés secrètes, Pierre Mariel souligne l’importance de l’initiation.
Pour faire les premiers pas sur le chemin (initium, commencement), le
néophyte a besoin d’un maître. Il faut l’éprouver, puis l’aguerrir. D’où les
épreuves de tout rituel : pour trouver son chemin spirituel, l’homme doit
d’abord mourir à lui-même pour renaître. Symboliquement, le tombeau
est au centre de la cellule initiatique. Mais en même temps l’initié, par le
rite, se distingue du mystique, cet “irrégulier” dont parle René Guénon.
L’initiation engage sur la phase de dissolution, avant la réintégration
ultime : on la retrouve dans tous les mythes traditionnels, depuis la notion
de souffrances bouddhiques, jusqu’aux démembrements orphique de
Dionysos Zagreus ou égyptien d’Osiris” (3).
Almost two thousand years ago, our Lord Jesus Christ told us (John
12:24): “Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the
ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much
fruit”. Another, less known occult teaching states more precisely: “Man can be reborn, but to be born again, he must first die, and in order to die like a man he must first wake up”. This esoteric aphorism can be more pithily put thus: “When a man awakes, he can die; when he dies, he can be born”. It is precisely of this new birth, “of water and of the Spirit”, that the Christ spoke of to Nicodemus (John 3:3-7). But before earning the right to be thus born again, one must work much and hard on oneself. And it is this that all the rites, public and private, and all the prescribed exercises aim at.

As Carl Gustav Jung tells us in his commentary on The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1931) - a very esoteric work translated and explained by Richard Wilhelm: “The magical practices are nothing but the projections of psychic events, which are here applied in reverse to the psyche, like a kind of spell on one’s own personality. That is to say, by means of these concrete performances, the attention, or better said, the interest, is brought back to an inner, sacred domain, which is the source and goal of the soul and which contains the unity of life and consciousness. The unity once possessed has been lost, and must now be found again.”.

The initiation rituals, when they are effective, show to the candidate in a logically progressive manner, the different parts and aspects of his inner world, as well as the corresponding parts of the outer world in which he lives. As his knowledge grows, it gives man the keys to the doors leading into that innermost sanctuary, the sacred domain where he can find again the unity of life and consciousness, as well as his Soul. And it is only then and from there that man can find the Way of Return. In other words, using a “magical” concept, ritual practice allows one to attain - perhaps as a reward for the constant superefforts needed for the proper and frequent performance of the rites - what can be called “the presence of and the conversation with one’s own Holy Guardian Angel”, whose voice is the “voice of the silence” of the Theosophists (see The Voice of the Silence, being chosen fragments from the ‘Book of the Golden Precepts’, translated and annotated by “H.P.B.”, The Theosophical Publishing Company, London, 1889), and is the same “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12) which spoke to Eliphaz the Temanite (Job 4:16).

All the rituals of evocation and invocation are in fact alchemical processes by means of which the Adept transmutes all his material, psychic mental and spiritual parts, until they are purified and he becomes able and worthy of establishing a permanent communication channel with his own Guardian Angel. The most important rituals of invocation are also the quite essential training towards the supreme moment of eventual Union with the One Creator. For this to become possible, and before daring to attempt it, everything must change in the aspirant. More precisely and specifically, the vibratory rate of all his bodies
must become considerably higher than man's usual rate, approaching the high frequency of vibrations of the Absolute Being. Through the prescribed rituals, exercises and prayers ("enflame yourself with prayer" counselled even Aleister Crowley to his pupils), little by little the vibratory rate of the practicing magician rises through the frequent and intimate contact with the invoked "god-forms" of Egyptian and other Divinities, who, after all, are but the outer expressions of the multitudinous functions of the Supreme Deity. And the increase in the frequency of vibration will allow in due course the At-One-Ment or blending with the Sovereign Power of the Eternal and Endless One, without this union resulting in the utter destruction of the one who seeks and attains it. It is this elevation in vibratory rate which is meant by the concept of the "violence" which allows the "violent" to take the "Kingdom of Heaven by force" (Matthew 11:12). It is also what made the "burning bush" look like a "flame of fire" (Exodus 3:2) and the origin of the haloes around the heads of the saints.

But let us not forget that, after all, every real "initiation" must and can be only a "self-initiation". No external ceremony is capable of producing an unmerited inner change. Redemption by proxy, through another, just does not exist and can be attained exclusively only through one's own proper efforts.

When one becomes a "true man", who has found the unity of his life and consciousness and has regained (or grown) his Soul, this happens not in a man-made Temple, but in a quite another place. After all, we do know that "In my Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:2), and thus there is a place, the right place, for all and everything. And it is only in one of these spiritual and divine "mansions" that one's hitherto partial knowledge can become whole, and then one can at last see the One Eternal Absolute Creator not as we see Him now, "through a glass, darkly" but truly "face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

And what more can one need or want?

Nicolas Tereshchenko

(1) "The all-powerful in England initiating and magical society".
(2) "Nevertheless, what I wished to show in this brief analysis of 'The Devil Rides Out' is what was the true atmosphere and the real very specialised level of preoccupation in the inner life of the more advanced groups of the Hermetic Brotherhood of the Golden Dawn in the Outer to which this novel testifies so well and whose truth I personally guarantee. For this truth is that of the most certainly dramatic authenticity, such as was known to S.L. Mathers, and to which he too testified in his inner writings, when he had to report on his meetings with the Secret Chiefs".
(3) “In his ‘Rituals of Secret Societies’, Pierre Mariel emphasises the importance of initiation. To take the first step on the way (initium, the beginning), the neophyte needs a teacher. He must first be tested then hardened. Hence the test in all the rituals: to find his spiritual way, man must first die to himself in order to be reborn. Symbolically the tomb is the centre of the chamber of initiation. But at the same time the initiate, through the rite, is distinguished from the mystic, this “irregular” of whom speaks René Guenon. Initiation puts one into the phase of dissolution before the ultimate reintegration: this is found in all the traditionnal myths, from the buddhist notion of suffering to the orphic dismemberement of Dionysos Zagreus, or of the Egyptian Osiris”.

RÉSUMÉ


(Ce travail est basé sur le projet d’une thèse de doctorat du troisième cycle, en cours de préparation sous la direction du Professeur Antoine Faivre).