

# Slouching Toward Bethlehem: Notes on the First Days After the End of the *Kali Yuga*

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## Introduction

In describing the chronologic dimensions of modernity to intelligent and even erudite non-Traditionalists, one suspects that for certain disciples of René Guénon it may be a source of discomfiture to disclose the fact that Guénon stated that what Hindus conceive as the *Kali Yuga* actually began six-thousand years ago, or approximately 4000 B.C. A fuller treatment of his views on this subject appears in *Crisis of the Modern World* (Luzac 1975, pp. 1–4). This discomfiture would stem from Guénon's apparent need to provide relatively exact historical dates for what Indologists, including Ananda Coomaraswamy, universally agree is fundamentally a mythological system of calculating duration. Guénon further describes "secondary phases constituting so many subdivisions" of the *yugas*; he describes the latter part of the *Kali Yuga* as beginning with "historical times," or around 500 B.C.; and he describes the latter part of this latter part as being "Amodern times," beginning around 1300 C.E. and constituting the "final phase of the *Kali-Yuga*, the darkest period of this 'dark age.'"

Guénon does not expressly identify a terminus year for the *Kali Yuga*, but based on the calculations just elicited, one can extrapolate using this mathematical template, legitimate prophecy, and, *a fortiori*, the signs of the times, to suggest a date very close indeed to the turn of the millennium. Coincidentally, these identify a time close to the point in time that astrologers calculate the occurrence of a massive solar cyclic shift, to which they refer as the precession of the equinoctial points, or equinoxes. In astrological terms, the star that is our Sun is on the cusp of

shifting in the precessional circle of its nodes—an astronomically calculable process taking approximately 26,000 years—from the constellation Pisces to that of Aquarius. In the vernacular of the late twentieth century, this astrological calculation has come to be known as the dawning of the Age of Aquarius.

All of this is not to suggest that the *yuga* system is either untrue or mathematically inaccurate, or that René Guénon was wrong in his assessment of the modern world. On a certain level, what is generally accepted as “history” may even be made more meaningful by the *yuga* hermeneutic. The problem lies in Guénon’s mixing of metaphors, so to speak; that is, superimposing the qualitative method of mythology over what is essentially the quantitative method of “science” which bases everything on a progressive and rectilinear chronology, and *vice versa*. Notwithstanding the foregoing, and for purposes of this discussion, we posit with Guénon, supported by calculations of the sagacious astrologers and the remarkable prophecies from sources as diverse as the Mayans and St. Malachy O’Morgair, that 1 the end of the *Kali Yuga*, 2 the beginning of the new millennium, and 3 the traverse of the Sun into the constellation Aquarius are all occurring at approximately the same general time, albeit gradually. The ultimate question upon which our discussion is predicated is this: in the event they survive, what will our world and the humanity inhabiting it look like on the other side of this terminus/advent? Alternatively stated, what will culture, religion, and life in general look like in the first days after the end of the *Kali Yuga*, and thereafter? The direct and imminent question upon which our discussion is predicated, is this: what are the recent and present signs, if any, that may serve as indicia or point to answers regarding such a new culture? The remainder of what follows is devoted to asking more questions and to seeking meaningful responses to the related questions. Not, it should be added, by reliance on any prophetic ability, but rather by a partnership of intuition and reason based on close and careful observation of the signs around us, and integrating the published legacy of the great Traditionalist teachers of the twentieth century to use as benchmarks of the process.

### **Esoteric Exegesis of the Apocalypse**

René Guénon was a writer who chose his words carefully, with a nearly mathematical precision. The word he chose to describe the end-time of this present cycle was “cataclysm.” What is unclear is whether he viewed

this cataclysm as an abrupt cessation to the active “state of dissolution” of the modern world, like the exact moment of death after a lingering illness, or as something more gradual, in which case the pandemic degradation of culture we now witness may itself constitute fully a cataclysm by contrast to and in the context of a world effectively attuned to the Intellectual and spiritual order. In reliance on the Book of Revelation in the *New Testament*, fundamentalist Christians apply the millennialist or apocalyptic principle to the material order, anticipating the “Rapture” at the turn of the century, when all followers of Jesus will rise to life eternal in heaven at the Second Coming and the remainder of humanity will perish in catastrophe. This is a material or literalist application of the apocalyptic principle.

Students of the Primordial Tradition, the *philosophia perennis*, will have an alternative, esoteric exegesis of the apocalypse. This esoteric exegesis applies the principle of apocalypse to the inner, spiritual struggle of the initiate. The motif of death-and-rebirth is ancient, and illustrated not only by rituals of the Mediterranean mystery schools of the past, but by the more recent Masonic institutions in the West whose rituals depict the neophyte, in his third phase, rising from death (to the sensible realm) and reborn to new life (in the Intelligible realm). From the standpoint of the sensible realm, such a death is a type of cataclysm. In all regular initiations, at whatever level, the candidate faces and must overcome a type of crucifixion, or death, and typically passes through a fearful “dark night of the soul” prior to the ordeal. At some point the candidate comes face to face with the dweller on the threshold whom he must overcome, or perish, this being none other than his own mortality/personality or Outer Man objectified in the guise of a horrific form. (One is reminded, in this vein, of the analogous and colorful depictions of the wrathful deities of the Tibetan pantheon in the *Vajrayāna* Buddhist post-mortem *bardo* states who confront and test the Sojourner on his way.)

The dynamic of the law of correspondence is at work on multiple levels. On a basic level, there is a direct correspondence between the esoteric cataclysm facing the inner spiritual struggle of the initiate and the aforementioned exoteric cataclysm of humanity that Guénon describes and which is linked to the end of the *Kali Yuga*. It is tempting for esotericists relying solely on their exegesis of revealed scriptural texts to

emphasize exclusively the esoteric and discount the cultural manifestation of the cataclysm. In the Traditionalist discourse on the subject, one detects such an emphasis of the esoteric and, further, that any cultural manifestation is a subject preferably avoided. When treated, the subject is treated not so much to examine the possible post-cataclysm outcomes, but rather to reaffirm Guénon by enumerating the increasingly energetic and ominous signs of the times. Such a treatment is Martin Lings' *The Eleventh Hour* which, though it is a fine work, seeks to corroborate the imminence of the end, but does not seek to provide answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this discussion about the state of things in the first days after the end of the *Kali Yuga*. The Intelligible order, while *a priori*, does not preclude the sensible order for the reason that they coexist simultaneously, and to the extent that one avoids any discussion of future possibilities in the sensible order, by and within its own terms, one may possibly forfeit an opportunity to give shape and texture to any worldview or culture of humanity that may appear on the other side of the end of the *Kali Yuga*, assuming the cataclysm is not fatal for humanity. In this regard, one thing is absolutely certain: provided we emerge intact on the other side of this impending point in time, whatever new may come and on whatever other levels it may manifest, it must necessarily take place on a cultural level as well.

### **Enantiodromia**

In several places *supra* allusions have been made to whether the cataclysm referred to by Guénon means the total annihilation of the world—of humanity—by means, for example, of a “nuclear winter” or some other similar apocalyptic destruction, or whether it means instead a total dissolution followed by a regeneration or renovation of culture based upon a new application of first principles. No one can be absolutely sure of the answer. While it may be pessimism to predict or believe in a total annihilation, it is not, conversely, optimism to predict or believe in a dissolution/regeneration. In this context, to predict or believe in a dissolution/regeneration is consistent both with the operation of first principles of metaphysics in the interplay of periodicity and polarity through the medium of what Hellenic era Greeks referred to as *enantiodromia*, and with the writings of Guénon and others. Pessimism, however, is inconsistent with these metaphysical principles and with the writings of

Guénon who expressed repeatedly his view that a dissolution/renovation would occur, and with those of Coomaraswamy, who implied it.

The principle of *enantiodromia* is essentially a regulatory dynamic of opposites, whereby in *stasis* the seed of one opposite lies dormant in the other opposite. In its active state, to the degree that one side dominates, the other side subordinates. At the height of one side's power, or manifestation, the seed of the other side within it is at its greatest depth. But then that seed stirs, grows, and eventually overcomes its host, while the inverse occurs in the opposite side, and so on, in a perpetual process of universal ebb and flow. The most convenient symbol ever devised to illustrate this principle, if not the process, is that referred to as the *yin-yang* most typically associated with classical Chinese Taoism. This principle applies to trends in human culture and religion, as well as to the forces of nature. Speaking of the gradual expansion or development of the modern worldview, Guénon stated that "...the modern period must necessarily correspond with the development of certain of the possibilities which were included in the potentiality of the present cycle from the beginning," a principle which he refers to elsewhere as "reinstatement." In practical terms, as applied to the subject under discussion, the seed of Tradition is necessarily stirring, and growing, in the anti-Traditional *consensus omnium* of modernity, as it suffers necrosis. It is for these reasons that one may legitimately look to the first days after the end of the *Kali Yuga* in order to ascertain how the seed of Tradition, i.e., the first principles of the *philosophia perennis*, may grow in the post-cataclysmic culture that emerges. Alternatively stated, we shall seek to ascertain how first principles may then, in that milieu, be applied to contingent circumstances by means of ascertaining the possible existence of a present-day prototype of that time and place, in addition to signs of the times in modernity.

### **What "Rough Beast"?**

If we are to be true to metaphysics and the principle of *enantiodromia* there contained, we must admit that the seed of Tradition deep within this "darkest period of the 'dark age'" as described by Guénon is at this time growing and stirring into something greater. If we examine closely the signs of the times, where are to we find the signs of this seedling of Tradition which is the counter-principle to anti-Traditional modernity?

Certainly, it must be a point of substantial agreement by Traditionalists or anyone else familiar with the writings of René Guénon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, and Frithjof Schuon that their written legacy collectively constitutes such a seminal influence in the waning days of the modern world. Yet, the publication of clear and illuminating twentieth-century expression of the first principles of the Primordial Tradition by these teachers is still some distance away from the *application* of those first principles to contingent circumstances, to use Coomaraswamy's phrase. One may next ask what else in the late twentieth-century Western modern world might constitute a sign of the first true application of first principles to contingent (cultural) circumstances on a relatively mass level, one in which everyone involved understood the reality, necessity, and primacy the spiritual order.

At this point it is necessary to digress for a moment to observe a remarkable feature of the major revelations of God's Word to the world at large. That is, seldom did the bearer of the Word, typically an *avatar*, or his harbinger arrive or operate in any conventional way in the contemporaneous culture. They were iconoclasts in contrast to those entrenched in the established and normative ways of the time and place in which they came. They were the least expected, and were often the source of dissension in their society. These great beings were in that society's view rough, not part of the establishment, and so were the various harbingers of the coming. The spiritual greatness of a dispossessed orphan from Mecca was foreseen by a mysterious Christian cenobite in Syria named Bahīrā. Even during the time of his visions and receipt of revelation, Muhammad was assailed with doubts, and later attacked by powerful and established forces in Mecca led by Abū-Jahl and his followers as the revelations began to take root in the Arabian culture of the time. The Jewish prophet John who, wandering about Judea clad in hairshirts eating only locusts and honey and denouncing the established Pharisees and Sadducees as "vipers," foretold the coming of Jesus, who would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And when Jesus came, he befriended with utter humility the outcasts of society and the poor and oppressed, at the same time excoriating the commercial establishment and radically amending the dogmas of Jewish orthodoxy of the day (Matt. 6: 17–48), thereby criticizing the mass of contemporaneous culture. Even the prince who became a beggar, after years of trial-and-

error and doubt, attained enlightenment alone and by sheer determination in north India, and by his example cast doubt on the established Brahminic system of the day and so met with resistance from the social system he had abandoned.

This is the pattern masterfully reflected in “The Second Coming,” a poem by William Butler Yeats familiar to most students of esotericism. In the eyes of those witnessing, but not accepting, the advent of the sacred in their time and place, seldom do the revelation and its bearer or their harbinger appear proper or acceptable. They are strange, different, unacceptable, rough, if not entirely implausible as harbingers or bringers of Light. Yet they are such, even if but a few can see them for what they are. The time and place for another such occurrence, in the words of Yeats, are when

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

and the competent reader of the signs of the times, which signs include the passage of “twenty centuries” and the “rocking” of the cradle of culture which Yeats mentions, is led to ask:

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Assuming the convergence of the end of the *Kali Yuga*, the beginning of the new millennium, and the Sun’s shift to the constellation Aquarius, and assuming further the active effect of *enantiodromia* or the principle of reinstatement, and assuming even further the ultimate survival of humanity beyond this point, it is not unreasonable to be vigilant at this time to the signs of a new bearer of Light, or the harbinger of that bearer. Such a vigilance neither demeans nor otherwise diminishes a purely esoteric exegesis in revealed scripture or prophecy of the meaning of apocalypse or, to use Guénon’s term, cataclysm. If such a vigilance is neither unreasonable nor unprofitable, and if the new typically appears in some form wholly unexpected, then for what should one look? A person or event or movement, perhaps, or some combination of these? Absent any prophetic abilities, one here enters the province of speculation in search of answers, though such speculation is based on capabilities of intuition, reason, and training in the observation of cultural phenomena.

### Illustrious Lustrum

*Lustrum* is a Latin word meaning a period of five years. The five-year period of which we speak is 1965 to 1970, during which a window was opened long enough to complete, *inter alia*, a culture-wide or mass infusion of esoterism and first principles mainly into the West, but to some extent into the modern East as well in the form of reaffirmation of Traditional principles. The effect of this lustrum and its principal currency was most keenly felt in the English-speaking world, and secondarily in the world of Europe and its various cultural derivatives on other continents. In the United States, however, with its social and political upheavals and its schismatic involvement in the hostilities of Southeast Asia, there was a *zeitgeist* of Dickens' "best of times/worst of times." Depending upon whom one asks, this lustrum was—on one extreme—the genesis of the breakdown of all patriotism, morals, and decency in North America, with its insubordinate challenges to political authority and the established social order tantamount to revolution and anarchy and universal chaos. Another view—on the opposite extreme—is that the lustrum engendered in a fashion unprecedented in history a mass movement in a significant portion of the population of the English-speaking world based upon a recognition and acknowledgment of the poverty of the modern world to address the *real* needs of humankind, a spontaneous manifestation of unselfish love, the applied practice of non-discriminatory brotherhood, a complete devotion to peace as a way of life, and the primacy of the spiritual order based on study and pragmatic application of first principles as found in available esoteric treatises and Eastern religions.

Esotericists need to come to terms with the meaning of this profoundly significant event—the second of the two extremes just discussed—that occurred from 1965 to 1970, and which today still has many visible and equally significant cultural progeny. As a general proposition, one must concede that the content and depth of much of the metaphysics of this era was lacking, and usually not to the level of that found in the oeuvre of René Guénon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, and Frithjof Schuon. But it is perhaps somewhat too much to expect that several hundred thousand young people at the time ought to have gravitated immediately to the works of these Traditionalist writers instead of beginning their metaphysical careers in the more popular esoterica of the time. And, lest any

be too quick to dismiss the young seekers of spiritual truths of the lustrum as dilettantes or misguided, we should not forget the historical *facts*—apparently distasteful for some—of precisely where Coomaraswamy and Guénon, and possibly Schuon through his father, either directly or indirectly got their first metaphysical exposures. The significance, accordingly, is not so much the initial level of content or depth of the metaphysical material consumed by the youth of the lustrum which, with time, has shown considerably more sophistication, but rather the enormous breadth of the metaphysical flowering of the time, together with a comparable recognition of the primacy of the spiritual order.

From the standpoint of metaphysics, or the first principles of Tradition, the lustrum of which we speak was unique. It was an especially meaningful five-year period, and few appear to have fully understood its significance. To this point, we have spoken in generalities about the lustrum, and the dramatic events that defined it. However, in order to better understand its significance, one needs to undertake a closer, more critical examination of the time in order to dispel the misunderstandings that have come to be associated with it, and consequently to appreciate the profundity of what actually occurred. Most accounts of what has loosely been described as the “Acounterculture” of the lustrum by the media and social commentators of North America usually contain only ambiguity or simplistic reductions. These accounts are typically concerned either with political issues in the form of protests—segregation or anti-war—and radical revolutionaries, or with social issues in the form of carnival-like lifestyles and behavior of the counterculture youth. Largely because of the hegemony of socio-political treatments of this period in the written and audiovisual record, it would be a substantial understatement to assert that the long-term and deeper significance,—the spiritual significance—of this unprecedented liminal period in the history of the West is poorly understood.

In order to be properly understood, the counterculture movement of the lustrum must first be placed in context of the larger historical setting out of which it grew and, second, it must be trifurcated for a proper analysis. As to the larger historical setting, for those who experienced the tumultuous period, it seemed at the time as if “mere anarchy” was loosed upon the world. In 1965, there were outbreaks of racial violence in Selma, Alabama and in other southern states, while only a year earlier

Nelson Mandela had been sentenced to life imprisonment for treason in his struggle to end apartheid. Also in 1965 the United States began its bombing of North Vietnam prompting the beginning of a series of mass demonstrations in Washington, D.C.; the Black leader Malcolm X was shot to death. Throughout the lustrum, events on this scale occurred uninterrupted, which included serious and threatening disturbances not only in North America, but also in the Middle East, in Northern Ireland, and in China. In 1967, San Francisco was the venue for the “summer of love,” an event of mass proportions that celebrated the principle of universal love as *agapē*. In 1968, both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated, while riots erupted in Chicago, Illinois at the Democratic National Convention. The same year, the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, the war in Southeast Asia escalated exponentially with the news media providing daily body counts. In 1969, consistent with the revolutionary political positions of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Black Panther Party, the “Chicago Eight” were indicted for violating Federal antiriot laws, while in Woodstock, New York, 400,000 young people gathered for a non-violent counterculture music concert. Simultaneously, trials were set for the military perpetrators of the Mylai massacre in Vietnam and for the Sharon Tate murders by members of the Manson family. The list could be expanded, but these incongruous events suffice to provide the setting, the context.

The lustrum was, in short, a time of pronounced polar extremes, set within a time of extreme chaos and confusion with respect to virtually all contingent circumstances of the sensible order. It was a time of highly unusual occurrences and inexplicable energies on a global scale. While the casual observer or even the more serious historian, due to the nature of the historic record, may view the youth of the counterculture of the time as an indivisible whole, a monolith, behaving *reactively* to the established social and political circumstances of their time, such a view misses the true significance of the entire event. In order to have a clearer picture, to understand what happened, the counterculture movement must, to repeat, be trifurcated for purposes of accurate analysis, with each of the three elements examined in greater detail. They are as follows:

**1 Political:** This element was comprised predominantly of young people of the lustrum who primarily participated in and identified with the political activity of the time. This element concerned itself with political activism in the form of demonstrations, protests, sit-ins and revolved around opposi-

tion to the war in Southeast Asia and racial segregation. It was fundamentally liberal and socialist, if not Marxist, in nature and espoused in its extreme open revolution against the capitalist system and power structure. This element received by far the most media attention, owing probably to the fact that its activities were “hard news,” and because the issues involved were relatively clear and easily grasped.

**2 Social:** This element was comprised of young people of the lustrum who primarily participated in what has come to be known as the “alternative” lifestyle of the time. They were neither particularly political nor spiritual, but were rather concerned predominantly with the art, music, fashion, concerts, gatherings, and related activities that were all intentionally and purposefully anti-establishment. To the outside observer, this element appeared to be something like a continuous carnival in which everyone adhered to a consensus mode of behavior and worldview that was colorful, naturally innocent, and socially rebellious by virtue of its indifference to established norms of social behavior. This element received considerable media attention, but somewhat less than the political element.

**3 Spiritual:** This element was comprised of young people of the lustrum who primarily participated in a direct and express search for spiritual truth and in applied methods, principally meditation, for spiritual development. They are the exclusive subject of this discussion, whose purpose is the explication of their significance in relation to the Traditionalist view of the end of the *Kali Yuga*. In their searches, they abandoned the familiar ways of the Judeo-Christian mainstream (and orthodoxies) of their forbears, and sought instead through a wide variety of Eastern religions and movements, comparative sacred texts and mythologies, and Western esoteric traditions. In a way never before seen in recorded history, they brought to a level of mass or culture-wide consciousness an awareness of first principles and of the spiritual order, and the primacy of that order as against all other human endeavor. This element received the least media attention of all, owing probably to the difficulty of meaningful reporting on the subject.

It should be stressed at this juncture that these three elements were not discrete and isolated segments of the counterculture youth during the lustrum, with bright lines separating them. Rather, there was clearly overlap between these elements. Moreover, there were certain aspects of the counterculture that transcended all these elements relating, for example, to music and items of fashion. In addition, the lustrum itself is not absolute in terms of the beginning (1965) or end (1970) of the counterculture, but these dates are rather employed as practical if not pragmatic points in time in order to make discussion of the era compre-

hensible. Finally, consistent with the foregoing qualifiers and mitigation of the trifurcation, it ought to be added that the lustrum was also a time of behavioral excesses among all three elements, which excesses had the dual effect of providing a rational basis for many to dismiss the whole counterculture movement as a pathological cultural anomaly, and of eclipsing the profound significance of the spiritual element within it.

### **The Legacy of the Lustrum**

Perhaps the most important insight to be provided by the analytical trifurcation of the counterculture movement of the lustrum is what each of the three elements has left of itself to posterity. Thirty years later, at the end of our millennium, one can hardly find any legacy of a political nature whatsoever from the political element of the lustrum's counterculture. Indeed, if anything, political tendencies in the English-speaking world, if not the Western world entirely, have grown more conservative and less liberal, and the entire world of communism once emulated during the lustrum has all but collapsed. Similarly, one can hardly find any legacy of a social nature from the social element of the lustrum's counterculture, with the possible exception of a less formal or structured and more diverse social interaction among people generally. These legacies—or non-legacies—contrast sharply with the legacy of the spiritual element.

The enduring effects of the spiritual element of the lustrum's counterculture are both multiple and profoundly significant. These are seen in the ways of living that flow naturally from the active pursuit of a spiritual life beyond the confines of mainstream denominations and churches. As either widespread or mass cultural forms engendered by the same impetus as the spiritual element of the lustrum, these enduring effects are observable as:

- 1 the adherence to a natural diet, natural healing, and rejection of artificial additives in foods and health products;
- 2 the adherence to non-violence, peace, and respect for life such as manifests in vegetarianism, pacifism, and animal rights;
- 3 respect for and stewardship of the environment, reflected in the national and international environmental movements;
- 4 popularization of a variety of techniques for spiritual development, such as yoga, meditation, t'ai chi, chanting, etc.;

5 a waning of established Western churches and rational theologies replaced by a growing acceptance of Eastern traditions and various first principles of metaphysics as found in those Eastern traditions in more or less express terms; and

6 a recognition of the sacrality and oneness of all life, the primacy of the first principles of metaphysics, and a widespread resurgence of both Eastern and Western esoteric traditions based upon this sacred unity and the first principles.

We hasten to add at the conclusion of this listing of enduring effects of the spiritual element of the lustrum that these effects were not all new at the time of nor developed by the spiritual youth of the lustrum. However, what gives this listing meaning is the fact that many of these cultural forms, where they did pre-exist, went from virtual obscurity as seeds in the 1950s to mass, if not global, cultural forms fully implanted in the 1990s because of what happened during the lustrum. In this lies the true significance of the period from 1965 to 1970—the illustrious lustrum. It was as if, within that brief period, the concentrated attention of some great being released a torrent of spiritual energy not unlike that of the similarly tumultuous times and milieus of the world's great *avatars*. It was not only unprecedented in recorded history; it was not only a grand marshaling of primordial esoteric truths; it was also a wholly new expression of those truths as found in the arts of the spiritual element of the lustrum. And, just as in the presence of sacred mystery from all times and places, for those who can see, holographic symbols and archetypes of the spiritual order lay buried in their expression, participating in the essence of their referents, wholly unsuspected and in a form of expression least expected. Prophetic signs nearly always appear in eccentric form.

### **Conclusion**

As noted, Traditionalist writers have devoted considerable time and energy cataloging the cultural signs of the times to support their views that the end of the *Kali Yuga* is at hand. We do not here dispute those views. However, we believe that equally if not *more* useful is an examination of the cultural signs of the times that may provide us with a glimpse, assuming humanity survives, of what condition the planet and its inhabitants will be in during the first days after the end of the *Kali Yuga*. Martin Lings admits to the utility of such speculation in *The Eleventh*

*Hour*, where he writes: “But man has the right to speculate about the future in humble awareness of his limitations in that respect, otherwise prophecies would not be forthcoming at all.” (p. 94) Perhaps the most instructive and most overlooked line ever written by René Guénon on this point is this:

...the end of the old world will also be the beginning of a new one.

Guénon chose not to disclose any views or opinions on the nature of the “new one,” or even whether he believed it would be manifest in the material order, but just because we may not have absolute certainty on the subject does not mean we should not examine the possibilities, particularly when the signs are so salient—signs to which Guénon never had access.

It may be posited that the lustrum is a microcosmic paradigm of the twenty-first century, or some time just beyond, as macrocosm. Assuming momentarily the truth of this, the conclusion must then follow that the spiritual element of the lustrum would necessarily be the harbinger of something not unlike itself—the least expected, a rough beast indeed. As it was then as a prototype, so would it be in its infancy, until in its maturity it is fully incorporated and becomes the way. The final stages of desacralization of the member nations of the planet, leading to ultimate secular materialism, can no longer refer to the loss of first principles of the *philosophia perennis*, but rather to the morbidity of the once-Traditional ecclesiastical institutions that helped hold together the socio-political fabric of the cultures of those respective nations. The fragmentation and complexity and confusion that identifies the *Kali Yuga* still accelerates, and on a global scale. The chaos and anarchy that may result must, according to the law of *enantiodromia*, contain the growing seed of the Tradition in much the same way as that occurred in the lustrum. Moreover, it is no longer possible given the knowledge and communication capabilities now in the possession of mankind that such an occurrence could be confined to a single nation or region or world religion. In this event, the application of first principles to contingent circumstances, whether via a new revelation or by collaboration of what Guénon refers to as the spiritual elect, would be virtually global in proportion. And in that event, should something new like this rise from the ashes of the cataclysm, such application of first principles to culture could

be described by the phrase Guénon essentially took for his motto, *vincit omnia veritas*. And, like that of the spiritual element of the lustrum, it could also be identified by its principal unifying and inter-relational (axial) component, being the cohesive social agent in all cultures worthy of the appellation “Traditional,” whose best rendering in English is *love*.

### Afterword

A discussion along the lines of the above was made in chapter 15 of the author’s book, *The Only Tradition* (SUNY 1997), though without direct reference to the lustrum and its significance *vis à vis* the spiritual condition of modernity. Certain of the book’s critics made claims that the author affirmatively promulgated and professed the inevitability of a new planetary culture based on a new application of first principles to that culture without reference to any presently existing world religion based on revelation. In order to set the matter to rest, we now assert unequivocally that anyone holding such a view has either not read or mis-read the book. One cannot point to any sentence or statement in *The Only Tradition* that will substantiate a claim of the author’s alleged promulgation or profession of the inevitability of a planetary *novus ordo seclorum* based on the first principles of Tradition. Conversely, one can point to several sentences and statements in the book, as follow, which corroborate the author’s assertion that the discussion was both theoretical and speculative and, additionally, was conditional and framed by express caveats of its theoretical and speculative nature.

We will then extrapolate from the Traditional worldview and offer several ideas or theses regarding possibilities of the future based on certain new trends of thought in modern culture. (p. 288)

Elsewhere:

Exactly what the era beyond modernity will bring is unclear. (p. 300)

Again:

It would be something more than redundant to begin listing detailed characteristics of any one scenario in this new era as if it were already manifest; *it is entirely speculative at this point*. (p. 300, emphasis added)

Moreover, the critical and objective reader will admit that in the final part of chapter 15 titled “A New Traditional Planetary Culture,” the text is replete throughout with the conditional terms “if,” “whether,” and

“might” in the descriptions of such a new Traditional planetary culture.

Finally, the purpose of this Afterword is to preclude readers of this article who hold the mistaken view that the author has anywhere promulgated and professed the inevitability of a new Traditional planetary culture, from regarding it as an expansion of the author’s alleged belief and/or a confirmation of their original views about that belief based on the book. Critically read and honestly evaluated, this article is neither. The proper way to view it, consistent with the author’s actual analysis here and in *The Only Tradition*, is that among the *possibilities* of what may occur on our planet after the end of the *Kali Yuga*, the only one by which the world can be given back its meaning is the one that applies first principles to contingent circumstances, whereby a unanimous and wholly new culture would emerge according to Guénon’s declaration that “...it is no longer a mere revival [of aging religious orthodoxies] which is required, but a complete renovation.” (*Crisis of the Modern World*, p. 11).