

Letters to the Editor

A Response to Quinn's speculations about the *Kali Yuga*

In the Afterword to William W. Quinn Jr.'s article "Slouching Towards Bethlehem" in *Sacred Web 3*, he takes to task those critics of his book *The Only Tradition* who "made claims that the author affirmatively promulgated and professed the inevitability of a new planetary culture based on a new application of first (metaphysical) principles to that culture without reference to any presently existing world religion based on revelation," demonstrating with quotes from the book that he never claimed that the advent of a Traditional planetary culture was inevitable. I am one of those critics. In a review which appeared in *Gnosis* magazine (which is included in my manuscript *The System of Antichrist: Truth and Falsehood in Postmodernism and the New Age*) I characterized Quinn as

foreseeing a post-cataclysmic 'Golden Age' repopulated by government 'breeding groups,' where 'planetization' has destroyed all revealed religions in the name of a 'one world culture,' a strictly hierarchical society ruled by 'scientist/meta-physicists'. But that he should envision the ideology of this hellish world (acceptable, because inevitable) as including doctrines of the Traditionalists, who admit no access to spiritual truth apart from revelation, is a travesty, especially since Traditionalists view the Golden Age of any cycle as egalitarian because 'above caste'. (cf. Martin Lings, *Ancient Beliefs and Modern Superstitions*, p. 49; see also Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity*, p. 326, on 'counter-hierarchy'.)

I now concede that Quinn never said overtly that the development of a planetary Traditional culture is inevitable, though in places he suggests it. What he called inevitable—assuming that we survive—was the

process of planetization itself, resulting in the destruction of all local and traditional cultural forms, what Benjamin Barber has termed “McWorld,” in an allusion to the well-known global hamburger chain. On pp. 301-302 of the book, Quinn says, “the combination of .. several forces move us *inexorably* toward reintegration, wholeness and planetization, but it is today no less a race between the force of integration ... and the force of disintegration, in which we are currently enmeshed and travelling downward at an alarming speed.” And on p. 303: “If planetization is an inevitable fact, then eventually—possibly within the next few centuries—there will be only one culture remaining on earth. *How we value this occurrence is not at issue here.*” (*italics mine*).

So Quinn sees planetization as the only alternative to total disintegration, ignoring the evidence that it may be in fact the cause, or at least one aspect, of that very disintegration. What remains unclear is how Quinn can call planetization “inexorable” and “an inevitable fact,” and still portray it as in a race with dissolution. If he means that planetization is our only hope, a hope that might fail, then he should say so, and not employ phrases apparently designed to operate as suggestions rather than descriptions. The effect of giving the double message that “disintegration might triumph” and that “a planetary culture is inevitable” is to stun the reader’s mind, first invoking fear and then positing only one, inevitable way out of the thing feared—his way. Such use of the threat-and-relief cycle is more psychologically manipulative than enlightening.

So my phrase “acceptable, because inevitable” (given that we survive) should have been applied to Quinn’s vision of planetization alone; yet it is obvious that when planetization does triumph, Quinn would rather that we not question its value.

But we must question it. To the degree that global economic and political unification destroys every other cultural manifestation, it will have destroyed Tradition as well, including the organic forms of every revealed religion, ushering in what Christian and Islamic traditions call the regime of Antichrist. That Quinn possibly understands this, yet still remains eager to embrace it as our only “hope,” is demonstrated in the very title of his article. He quotes the following lines from Yeats’ famous poem *The Second Coming*:

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

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

Earlier in his article, Quinn says that the *avatars* or prophets who found new religions are “rough” and unconventional according to the standards of their time (never mind that the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, introduced such things as humane etiquette and personal hygiene to the rough Arabians of his time, with the full force of sacred law)—but to identify the “beast” in Yeats’ poem with the avatar of the next world age is absurd on the face of it. As anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of either Christian tradition, or Platonism, or Yeats’ personal mythology will know, the “beast” is Antichrist. He is not the prophet of the new aristocratic or “antithetical” era Yeats looked forward to (cf. his book *A Vision*), but the present era of democracy and socialism which, following Plato, Yeats saw as descending into the sort of anarchy which ultimately results in dictatorship. Aristocrats don’t “slouch,” that being reserved, in the poets’ view, for the mob. And that the beast should be born in Bethlehem is obviously poetic irony. Yeats saw the ultimate consequences of the Christian revelation as democratic vulgarization and “levelling.” In line with this rejection of Christianity, based on a romanticized paganism, he portrayed the second coming of “Christ”—the ultimate consequences of Christianity—as the advent of Antichrist. I certainly do not agree with Yeats there, true though his vision may be to Christianity’s shadow. But that Quinn should use Yeats’ poem about the destruction of all human and sacred values as the rallying cry for the establishment of his planetary “Traditional” culture all-to-clearly reveals the man’s real intent.

Quinn’s central error is to believe that we can “engineer” the next world age through an application of metaphysical principles on the sociological level. This is so far from the Traditional view that it makes one’s head spin. It is God who inaugurates world ages and sends avatars, not steering committees of esoteric social planners. When a world age ends—according to the Vedanta, and in line with both Christian and Muslim apocalyptic—manifestation is reabsorbed into its Principle, and that includes esoterists, social planners, poets, lawyers and everyone else. No organized agenda, no conscious intent, no horizontal, temporal causality of any kind can survive from one age to the next, because apocalypse—the definitive intervention of vertical, eternal causality—puts an

end to them. Given that Quinn obviously does not believe this, since he nowhere to my knowledge even grants to God the power of conscious action, he is simply not a Traditionalist. He can believe whatever he wants to believe, but he can't honestly call it Tradition, because it isn't.

Quinn's idea of planetization, derived from Eliade but also entirely in line with Teilhard de Chardin, Mikhail Gorbachov, Bill Clinton, Star Trek and every New Age religion, is spurious, since it ignores the casual relationship between planetization and militant separatism, so clearly illustrated in the Kosovo crisis. In *The System of Antichrist*, I say:

Trying to put the contemporary flow of social forces into one sentence, I came up with: "The globalization of the elite leads to the balkanization of the masses." In Christopher Lasch's words (*The Revolt of the Elites*, pp. 47-48), "The world of the late twentieth century presents a curious spectacle. On the one hand, it is now united, through the agency of the market, as it never was before. Capital and labour flow freely across political boundaries that seem increasingly artificial and unenforceable. Popular culture follows in their wake. On the other hand, tribal loyalties have seldom been so aggressively promoted. Religious and ethnic warfare breaks out in one country after another: In India and Sri Lanka; in large parts of Africa; in the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia." And, I would add, in Oklahoma City, where the secessionist militias of the plains and mountain states, largely Christian and white supremacist, flexed their muscles. What Quinn characterizes as "pandemic ethnocentrism and xenophobia, parochialism, tribalism and group solipsism," which can so easily be portrayed as a purely negative and reactionary resistance to the wonders of planetization, is actually inseparable from it. Given the metaphysical truth that manifestation, considered in its form rather than its essence, is not Principle, it must reveal the Divine Unity in multiple mode; a multiplicity of cultures and religious revelations, like a multiplicity of human individuals, is metaphysically necessary. Therefore any attempt to artificially homogenize world culture and religion must be compensated for by fragmentation and conflict; when an organic multiplicity is suppressed, the principle on which it is based must re-assert itself, but in a negative form. In other words, it is impossible for planetization to triumph on its own terms. At the moment it seems to have triumphed, its instability will have reached critical mass, and it will simply dissolve. So when Quinn, on p. 305, says "a future planetary Traditional culture... must be *unanimous*—accepted and participated in by all—for without this unanimity it could not be considered Traditional," he is not only completely inverting the meaning of the word "Traditional," and giving the lie to his expansive lament on p. 284, over "cultural" pollution (and/or culturocide)... by military conquest, economic domination, ("neocolonialism"), or any other form of im-

posed hegemony or imperialism”—this being a perfect description of the process of planetization itself—but is placing his faith in something which, fortunately, will not come to pass.

In the Book of Revelations, the next world age, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ, descends via vertical causality, from above. Planetization is symbolized by the Whore of Babylon, who consorts with her little pimps—the kings of the earth, the globalist élites—until the big pimp, the Antichrist, arrives to take over. His kingdom, though global, is unstable and short. In Revelations 19, he is conquered by the eschatological Christ, a prophecy confirmed by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings upon him), who said:

A body of my people will not cease to fight for the truth until the coming forth of the Antichrist... but God will slay him at the hand of Jesus, who will show them his blood upon the lance.

Charles Upton
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Note regarding response by Quinn:

William Quinn has indicated to the Editor that he intends to respond in *Sacred Web* 5 to the above letter by Charles Upton and to the article by Alvin Moore, Jr. which appears at page 33 of this issue of *Sacred Web*.