

Who Or What Is “Slouching Towards Bethlehem”?

by Alvin Moore, Jr.

These remarks are occasioned by an article entitled “Slouching Towards Bethlehem: Notes on the First Days After the End of the *Kaliyuga*,” by William W. Quinn, Jr., which appeared in *Sacred Web 3* (Summer 1999). The lead phrase in the title of the essay, “slouching towards Bethlehem”—which can be thought of as a kind of signature—comes from William Butler Yeats’ poem, “The Second Coming,” in which Yeats himself is allusive rather than explicit. But taking the poem in its entirety, its allusions, its metaphors, and its complete lack of anything of a traditional eschatological nature while at the same time strongly suggesting eschatology, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the “rough beast, its hour come round at last” is not other than the Antichrist. Yeats, for example, speaks of “a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*,” the Latin words being, in Yeats’ private mythology, a synonym for the “collective unconscious.” One should not forget that the “collective unconscious” is a modern psychological invention and is a real parody of the supra-conscious reality which transcends the individual consciousness and to which each human soul has access by virtue of being human. Although in itself a false concept, the fact that the “collective unconscious” is an inversion as well as a subversion of the reality of the supra-conscious makes its acceptance within the human soul a conduit for communication with the infra-human and the most inferior elements of the subtle or psychic realm. Yeats’ metaphor, especially as used by Quinn, is a mockery of the *return* of Jesus Christ, a return which both Christians and Muslims, in their respective ways, believe will be an essential element in the final drama of the present cycle, i.e., the end of *this* world.

Commenting on Quinn’s writing is not our occupation of choice; we re-

viewed his recent book, *The Only Tradition* (*Sophia*, Summer 1997), and we did then and still do consider it meretricious and sinister. Unfortunately, we must make the same criticisms of the present essay in which Quinn offers more of an anti-traditional, even a counter-traditional scenario for the end times though he does so in a rather crude and tentative manner. He is in effect trying to ease open a door of acceptance through which might enter the Antichrist, that most sinister figure whose very denomination sums up his terrible meaning for Christians—and also for Muslims, who aptly refer to him as *al-Masih ad-Dajjal*, the “lying messiah” or the “imposter messiah.” Neither in the present instance nor as regards his book do we have any personal animosity for Quinn, *quod absit*. But we do have an obligation to affirm Truth whenever the opportunity occurs, and this is our sole intention in these present remarks.

At the outset we can do no better than cite a few lines from Whitall N. Perry’s magisterial *Treasury of Traditional Wisdom* (1997 edition, p 439):

Various traditions point to a time bordering upon the juncture of two cosmic cycles, when the powers of darkness emerge into the open and momentarily gain the ascendancy. This is the Great Profanation, the ‘Flaming Night’, or the Reign of the Antichrist, during which normal values are reversed and falsified, and vast portions of mankind seduced into a grotesque carnival that parodies, in a way both sinister and ludicrous, a spiritual kingdom on earth.

Let it be noted that the ‘sinister and ludicrous’ aspect of this scenario pertains to the ending cycle, whereas the cycle looming immediately in the future is precisely a new Golden Age, a new *Krtayuga*. All this falls within the scope of *eschatology*, the study of the end times and of immediately post-mortem events. The word derives from the Greek *εσχάτος*, meaning “last, furthest, remotest.” It is that branch of theological science (and by extension, traditional studies) which treats of the “four last things: death, judgement, Heaven and Hell,” to which must be added those circumstances and conditions which it is believed will prevail in the end times. Broadly, eschatology is threefold: personal or individual, collective, and cosmic. In the Semitic monotheisms, Judaism, with its belief in a future Messiah, and in Christianity and Islam especially, eschatology is well developed. Zoroastrianism, the fourth monotheism, might also be included but for its residual and minimal character. We shall briefly survey the eschatological beliefs of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and to a lesser extent Hinduism, because Quinn borrows from it the notion of the *Kaliyuga*, though he thoroughly

misrepresents it. And we shall draw upon René Guénon's *The Reign of Quantity* which is the finest work currently available in this field. Finally, we shall devote considerable attention to Christian and Islamic views on eschatology, for several reasons: the relevant teachings of the two traditions, both of them situated near the end of the cycle, are as complementary as possible given that they do pertain to two different revelations. This cursory review of eschatological doctrine will help the reader see Quinn's misuse of the discipline for what it is.

Probably no one area of the teachings of these several traditions is more seemingly incoherent than that of eschatology, open as it is not only to individual interpretation, but also to many ambiguities of expression. Recall, nevertheless, Dante's lines from the *Inferno* (ix, 61-63):

O ye who have sane intellects for guide
Consider well the doctrine that for cloak
Beneath the strangeness of the verses hides.

And Frithjof Schuon's remark to the effect that doctrinal statement is not meant to exhaust all possibilities on the level of mental logic; it is intended rather to offer points of reference for reflection, exploration and contemplation. Eschatology is an area of legitimate speculation when it remains within the parameters of the tradition in question.

We shall not utterly neglect but shall give less attention to Jewish eschatology because in contemporary Judaism it seems to us to be a less central concern than is the case in Christianity or in Islam. In both of these latter the historical process is seen as having a divine consummation in which the Messiah will play an essential rôle, individual and microcosmic, collective, and macrocosmic, in a drama which will be accompanied by great disturbances not only in human society but in the natural order as well. *The Old Testament* is very clear about the frightening "Day of the Lord":

For the Lord of hosts has a day of doom waiting for all that is proud and lofty... man's pride shall be brought low, and the loftiness of man shall be humbled... Get you into caves in the rocks and crevices in the ground from the dread of the Lord and the splendour of his majesty... on that day a man shall fling away his idols of silver and... gold... he shall fling them to the dung-beetles and the bats... Have no more to do with man, for what is he worth? He is no more than the breath of his nostrils.

Isaiah ii, 12ff

The days are now coming, says the Lord, when I will make a righteous

Branch spring from David's line, a king who shall rule wisely, maintaining law and justice in the land. In his days Judah shall be kept safe, and Israel shall live undisturbed. This is the name to be given to him: The Lord is our Righteousness.

Jeremiah xxxiii, 5ff

These Messianic prophecies, as understood in Judaism, pertain more to a moral, a national hero; an outstanding figure to be sure, but of the natural order. "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?," the disciples asked Jesus. In the Middle Ages much extra-Biblical eschatological literature was generated within Judaism, much of it polemical, much of it contradictory (the same could be said of other traditions), much of it in response to Christian eschatological claims. Jews do, of course, anticipate a Messiah; but a common attitude has been that the Messiah will come when he is no longer needed. Speculation on the "end of the world" or attempting to predict, hasten or otherwise influence this advent have been frowned upon. Many Rabbis have taught that "'the end' is a mystery revealed to neither man nor angel" —on which point they were in full agreement with Christian and Muslim authorities. Beside their own often delicate socio-political situation, there was the Jewish experience and memory (kept alive by frictions with Christians) of the origin of Christianity born from their own side, so to speak. And there was the memory of certain infamous false messiahs of the Renaissance and late Renaissance—who had impressed both Christian and Muslim leaders as well—and who had won large followings from all ranks of Jewish people. With the 18th century and Reform Judaism, belief in an individual Messiah shifted towards the notion of a collective messianic rôle for the Jewish people, and eventually to a messianic rôle for a revived state of Israel. Belief in an individual messianic figure has never disappeared entirely, however, and certain Hasidic groups "...understand the rôle of the Jewish people as being that of repairing the rupture in the relationship between the human and the Divine, [and they] maintain that the Messiah will come when all Jews keep the Sabbath together on two consecutive weeks. This is a... rearticulation of the idea that the Messiah's arrival will come when Jews have brought peace into the world through the observance of the commandments, i.e., when he is no longer needed" (from a private letter). The attitudes of the Kabbalists on eschatological questions are quite different from those of popular Judaism, as one might expect. Their interest in doctrine concerning creation, sacred anthropology,

theodicy; on judgment, resurrection, the ascent of the soul, and return to an original state of plenitude and bliss, made them eschatologists willy-nilly.

Among episodes found in common in the Scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is that of Noah and the Flood. We refer briefly to an esoteric exegesis of this familiar account, as provided—almost incidentally—by Coomaraswamy in his “The Flood in Hindu Tradition” (p 398ff, *Coomaraswamy 2: Selected Papers, Metaphysics*):

‘Floods’ are a normal and recurrent feature of the cosmic cycle... [they] are essentially resolutions of manifested existences into their undetermined potentiality, the Waters; and each renewed cycle of manifestation is a bringing forth on the next ‘day’ of forms latent as potentiality in the floods or reservoir of being. In each case the seeds, ideas or images of the future manifestation persist during the interval or inter-Time of resolution on a higher plane of existence, unaffected by the destruction of manifested forms.

In the *Genesis* account of Noah’s flood (vi, 5ff), it is noted that

...the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually... So the Lord said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have made from the face of the earth, both man and beast... for I am sorry that I have made them’.

At the end of a cycle the humanity involved is marked by moral and intellectual degeneration, false orientation and a perverted entelechy. This is the “realization of the impossible,” an oxymoron to be sure, but one that is very expressive. Creation or manifestation implies movement away from its Principle, a movement necessary for the development of the possibilities of manifestation contained in the cycle. The movement must have its term, however, and the term can only be chaotic for creation or manifestation as the substantial pole of existence is approached. But as Coomaraswamy observes, “there can be no destruction of things as they are in the Self, but only of things as they are in themselves...” (*ibid*, p399). This destruction of things as they are in themselves is metaphysically necessary, though the implacable character of this necessity translates into great fear and apprehension for creatures *qua* creatures, particularly when they are in the midst of a generalized forgetfulness of the nature of things, especially of their own nature.

The extent of the Noachian flood is not clear, but it would seem to be a limited *pralaya* (cyclical dissolution, cosmic rest) that is in question, namely a withdrawal of manifestation at least into the subtle order, rather

than a *mahapralaya* (universal destruction). Note that Coomaraswamy relates the “floods” punctuating the cosmogonic process with the “patriarchal” and “angelic” voyages, the *pitriyanas* and the *devayanas*. The former involves a return to manifestation, while the latter is a journey beyond the cosmos admitting of no return.

Let us look briefly at the *mahapralaya* or *apocatastasis* (reestablishment, return to the same position), a concept found in Judaism, Christianity and Islam as well as in Hinduism and Buddhism. Some Christians may be disturbed by the fact that the Second Council of Constantinople condemned this doctrine, which was associated with Origenism (there are said to be grounds for believing the condemnation was a later interpolation). In any event, the *apocatastasis* is a metaphysical necessity, for ultimately image, whether particular or universal, must return to Archetype. But it can readily be seen how the Fathers in Council would think such a condemnation imperative, deliberating as they did within an exoteric perspective; and, of course, their condemnation is commonly accepted as a rule. But *apocatastasis* is not only metaphysically necessary, it is also important as a doctrinal statement: first, because it emphasizes that “all things perish save the Face of God,” even the Heavens and the Hells. It further serves to emphasize that from the usual monotheistic perspective God is utterly independent vis-a-vis the created or manifested order while they are eminently contingent and entirely dependent upon Him—truths which it behooves man to assimilate.

Christianity, in its orthodox expressions, is quite clear about the end times; in particular it leaves no room for doubt about the distressing character of the last days, or about the Antichrist who, besides this designation (which sums it all up), is also called “man of sin,” “son of perdition,” “lawless one,” “beast,” etc. Guénon, though not himself Christian, sums up the Christian position as regards the Antichrist (in *The Reign of Quantity*, pp 326 & 327, 1953 English version):

This being, even if he appears in the form of a particular single human being, will really be less an individual than a symbol... as it were the synthesis of all the symbolism that has been inverted for the purposes of the ‘counter-initiation’, and he will manifest it all the more completely in himself because he will have neither predecessor nor successor... by reason of his extreme opposition to the true in all its aspects, the Antichrist can adopt the very symbols of the Messiah, using them of course in an inverted

sense... The Antichrist must evidently be as near as it is possible to be to 'disintegration', so that one could say that his individuality, while it is developed in a monstrous fashion, is nevertheless at the same time almost annihilated, thus realizing the inverse of the effacement of the 'ego' before the 'Self', or in other words, realizing confusion in chaos as against fusion in principial Unity; and this state as represented by the very deformity and disproportion of his bodily shape, is actually at the lower limit of the possibilities of the individual state, so that the summit of the 'counter-hierarchy' is indeed the place that really befits him in the 'world upside down' that will be his.¹

Guénon mentions an inverse hierarchy: though an individual, the Antichrist is not so much a discrete individual as the culmination and perverted "personification" of a systematic effort to overturn and reverse the natural order of things, to actively deny God, and to establish an antipodal religion. It is precisely in this sense that the Antichrist is the most deluded of creatures; for no one, no creature—man, *jinn*, or angel—can effectively oppose God; He is beyond contradiction. Nor can His will be really opposed, for all things are ultimately governed by it. In the very acts by which some believe they oppose God they are, unbeknownst to themselves, serving the Divine purpose. "They plotted and Allah plotted; and lo, Allah is the best of plotters," we read in the *Qur'an*.

A number of critical Christian eschatological ideas are to be found in *II Thessalonians* ii, 1-12, which we cite below, followed by several other *New Testament* passages of especial eschatological significance:

And now, brothers, about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and his gathering of us to himself: I beg you, do not suddenly lose your heads or alarm yourselves, whether at some oracular utterance or pronouncement, or some letter purporting to come from us, alleging the Day of the Lord is already here. Let no one deceive you in any way whatever. That day cannot come before the final rebellion against God, when wickedness will be revealed in human form, the man doomed to perdition. He is the Enemy. He rises in his pride against every god, so called, every object of men's worship, and even takes his seat in the temple of God claiming to be a god himself...

-
1. On the matter of physical deformity it is sufficient to recall the observation of Frithjof Schuon that there are individuals who have beautiful bodies but deformed souls, as there may be individuals with deformed bodies but beautiful souls. Obviously this applies to ordinary humanity, but the case of the Antichrist is exceptional in the sense that his deformity is necessary both as a function of his interior monstrosity and for the symbolism of his rôle as "personifying" all that is against God. One can, with Heaven's aid, change one's soul for the better even if one cannot change one's body.

already the secret power of wickedness is at work, secret only for the present until the Restraint disappears from the scene. And then will he be revealed, that wicked man whom the Lord Jesus Christ will destroy with the breath of his mouth, and annihilate by the radiance of his coming. But the coming of that wicked man is the work of Satan. It will be attended by all the powerful signs and miracles of the Lie, and all the deception that sinfulness can impose on those doomed to destruction. Destroyed they shall be, because they did not open their minds to the love of the truth, so as to find salvation. Therefore, God puts them under a delusion, which works upon them to believe the lie, so that they all may be brought to judgement, all who do not believe the truth but make sinfulness their deliberate choice.

When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him... before him shall be gathered all the nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from his goats...

Matthew xxv, 31ff

... by water that first world was destroyed, the water of the deluge. And the present heavens and earth... have been kept in store for burning; they are being reserved until the day of judgement when the godless will be destroyed.

II Peter iii, 7

Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in Heaven.

Matthew vii, 21

In Islam as in the other two Semitic monotheisms, human life has critical and definitive worth: it is either a splendid opportunity meriting Resurrection and a point of departure for an ascending spiritual journey; or it is a unique tragedy of missed opportunity. Man is responsible for the use or misuse he makes of this life and its opportunities, responsibility that is not dissolved with the dissolution of the body. This is stressed in *de fide* doctrine concerning the Last Day, variously designated as "Day of Judgement," "Day of Standing up," "Day of Separation," "Day of Reckoning," "Day of Religion," "Day of Awakening," etc. We read in *Surah* 1xxv (The Resurrection):

No! I swear by the Day of Resurrection. No! I swear by the reproachful soul. What, does man reckon We shall not gather his bones? Yes, indeed; We are able to shape again his fingers. Nay, but man desires to continue on as a libertine, asking 'When shall be the Day of Resurrection?' But when the sight is dazed and the moon is eclipsed, and the sun and moon are

brought together, upon that day men shall say, 'Whither to flee?' No indeed; not a refuge! Upon that day the recourse shall be to thy Lord. Upon that day man shall be told of his former deeds and his latter; nay, man shall be a clear proof against himself, even though he offer his excuses.

Whomsoever God guides, he is rightly guided; and whom He leads astray—they are the losers... And those who cry lies to Our signs, We shall draw them on little by little whence they know not... have they not considered the dominion of the heaven and of the earth, and what things God has created, and that it might be their term is drawing nigh?... They will question thee concerning the Hour... Say: 'The knowledge of it is only with my Lord. No one can reveal it except He. Oppressive will it be for the heavens and the earth. When it comes, it will come unawares'.

Qur'an vii, 175ff

Say: 'Shall We tell you who will be the greatest losers in their works? Those whose striving goes astray in the present life, while they think that they are working good deeds. Those are they that disbelieve in the signs of their Lord and the encounter with Him; their works have failed, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall not assign to them any weight. This is their recompense—Gehenna for that they were unbelievers and took My signs and My messengers in mockery. But those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness—The Gardens of Paradise shall be their hospitality, therein to dwell forever, desiring no removal out of them'.

xviii, 104ff

Surely the Day of Decision is an appointed time, the day the Trumpet is blown, and you shall come in troops, and heaven is opened, and become gates, and the mountains are set in motion, and become a vapour. Behold Gehenna has become an ambush, for the insolent a resort, therein to tarry for ages...

1xxviii 17ff

God is demanding of His creatures, and especially so of man whose original station is at the center of this world and who, at least potentially, is endowed with great gifts and correspondingly great responsibilities. The human vocation, as Frithjof Schuon has eloquently taught, is to disclose the divine qualities in ways appropriate to the human state. Further, God desires to know Himself in and through man; thus man is God's interlocutor. Man has the responsibility of cooperation with God in a synergy of divine grace and human effort, to perfect his own nature and achieve this *gnosis*. Consequently he does not have the option of using his faculties and energies without reference to his last ends, ends God has ordained. Mere neutrality is not an option. An *hadiith qudsi* states that "My mercy precedeth My

wrath (or Rigor)”; but it does not imply that Wrath or Rigor is no longer a divine quality. Mercy is doubtless the last word with God; but man must pass through Rigor to reach it. Justice is real, judgement is real; and they are inescapable for those endowed with understanding.

Before ending this brief sketch of Islamic eschatology, we must mention two personages who figure prominently in accounts of the End, *al-Mahdi* (the “rightly guided one”), and *‘Isa ibn Maryam* or Jesus son of Mary. The Mahdi, it is said, will be in the line of direct descent from the Prophet. In the beliefs of most Muslims, both *Sunni and Shi‘ah*, *al-Mahdi* will usher in a period of unity, justice and order. Some say this will be interior rather than public; but a thorough interior reorientation could not fail to have its sociological repercussions. In any event, this renewal will endure only a short time before the brief appearance and reign of the Antichrist, who will seduce away the Mahdi’s followers and institute an antipodal religion—already in the making for some time now—with himself as the false and lying messiah, *al-Masih ad-Dajjal*.

But at the very end of the cycle, the end of *this* world, Jesus son of Mary, *‘Isa ibn Maryam*, will come and “by the breath of his mouth and the glory of his advent,” destroy the Antichrist, thus marking the fulfilment and term of Adamic humanity. Each of the three Semitic monotheisms, as also Hinduism and Buddhism, look forward to a definitive messianic figure, this on the basis of inspired utterances. It seems to us, therefore, that in his advent this figure must in some manner synthesize all the legitimate hopes and expectations of the several seemingly disparate bodies of belief. Then man shall know true unity and God “shall be all in all.” *Sed Deus sapienter*.

It is obvious from what has been said that eschatology is very important, many-faceted, and complex. There are dominant motifs, especially but not exclusively in the Abrahamic traditions, and some cross traditional boundaries extending even beyond the Semitic monotheisms. Among these are general beliefs that apocalyptic times will be of great turmoil and distress, replete with disorder and cataclysm both in the natural and social orders: growing apostasy, degeneration of mankind intellectually, morally and even physically.

Then He said unto them, nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven...
And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.

Luke xxi, 10, 11, 25

The one point on which it might be possible to agree with Quinn is that there are “signs... from heaven,” but this and any other eschatological statements would have to be tested against orthodox traditional data. Quinn seems to know nothing of traditional eschatology; he mentions nothing of the wealth of relevant orthodox teaching of Judaism, Christianity or Islam regarding the End. Instead he chooses a Hindu paradigm but takes no more than the bare term by which Hinduism designates this final cycle of the present world age. And he misrepresents this completely by providing no context whatever from germane Hindu doctrine, and by using the term in a manner that would be unacceptable from the perspective of any orthodox tradition—as has been demonstrated above. No orthodox Hindu authority, for example, has ever taught that the Age of *Kali* (dark age, age of conflict) will end peacefully, or with minimal disturbance, or that the peoples of the *Kaliyuga* will quietly transit to the next *Krtayuga* or Golden Age—far from it as we shall see below. All the *Puranas* (which treat of the cosmic cycles) describe the latter part of the Age of *Kali*, the age in which we presently live, as being thoroughly chaotic and rushing towards ruin and dissolution. They speak of

... kings of churlish spirit, violent temper... ever addicted to falsehood and wickedness... They will inflict death on women and cows... seize upon the property of their subjects... will rise and fall rapidly... The people of the various countries will follow their example... property alone will confer rank... passion will be the sole bond of union between the sexes; falsehood will be the only means of success in litigation... Women will be objects merely of sensual gratification. Earth will be venerated only for its mineral resources... Thus in the Kali age shall decay constantly proceed until the human race approaches its annihilation.

Visṇu Purana IV, 24, 128ff²

The *Bhagavata Purana* (1.3.26[312]) states that: “In the twilight of this age, when all kings will be thieves, the Lord of the Universe will be born as *Kalki*”:³

he will appear riding a white horse and holding a sword blazing like a comet. He will reestablish a golden age, punish the evil doers, comfort the virtuous, and then destroy the world. Later, from the ruins of the earth a

2. Cited in *A Survey of Hinduism*, Klaus K. Klostermaier, 1988, SUNY, Albany, NY, p. 121, 122.
3. Cited in *Hindu Polytheism*, Alain Danielou, 1963, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, p. 181.

new mankind will arise.⁴

Quinn says nothing of human nature. It is a widely held view, however, that man has quite literally become engrossed in the material order. The Fathers of the Orthodox Church teach that God gave Adam and Eve “cloaks of skin” when they were cast out of the Garden. The implication is that with the Fall the existential nature of the human being changed for the worse with an ensuing degeneration of the cosmic ambience, with this in turn abetting further decay in humanity. Man in the Golden Age or *Krtayuga* was more subtle, less material, more aware of and oriented towards That which is above, less the captive of what is beneath; he was open to the superior spiritual elements of his nature and to the transpersonal Spirit/Intellect. These basic distinctions are commonplaces of esoteric exegesis, and no one can meaningfully compare *Kaliyuga* and *Krtayuga* without this recognition.

But even considering man of the *Kaliyuga*, there is still great scope for analogous distinctions. In the Middle Ages the dictum *duo sunt in homine* (there are two in man) was a truism in the minds of the earlier Scholastics. In each of us there is an outer, empirical man; and an Inner Man. This was part and parcel of sacred anthropology until the word soul and its associated ideas marked the beginning of the process that eventually crowded out the essential distinction between the psychic and the properly spiritual (the obvious presence of the body in this human ternary did not require mentioning when it was said “there are two in Man”). The veiling of this vital distinction was given impetus by Descartes, and today the obliteration of the distinction between soul and spirit, *anima* and *spiritus* (*spiritus vel intellectus*), between *psyche* and *pneuma* is almost complete and characteristic of all “new Age” and “neo-spiritist” movements, of which there are so many in our times. The gravity of this ignorance is that it is fatal to any genuine spiritual quest. For the microcosm is tripartite, body, soul and spirit just as the macrocosm, too, is tripartite and commonly considered as being constituted by the “three worlds”: gross, subtle, and informal (i.e., beyond form), these being the three major categories into which manifestation or creation can be conceptually divided (when prejudices are laid aside, the words creation and manifestation are equivalent). Man is not only body and soul, he is also Spirit

4. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

which is beyond the formal order and which is the essential element in man's intrinsic desire for an inward and upward spiritual/intellectual ascent.

If he is aware of any of this, Quinn does not reveal it in his writing, for one gets the impression that he conceives of man chiefly as a physical being. True, there is much talk of "first principles," but nothing to suggest that man's true entelechy is anywhere or any other than within *this* world. And this is the chief lacuna that alerts one to the suspicion that true wisdom lies elsewhere than with Quinn's conceptions. This is all the more notable in that Quinn ridicules fundamentalist Christians for applying the apocalyptic or millennial principle to the material order. Further, Quinn faults traditionalist writers because they give no attention to questions he poses regarding the state of things during the first days after the ending of the *Kaliyuga*. He does not realize that the question is meaningless because it is something men of the *Kaliyuga* could not possibly know and which they have no need to know. Another instance of the absence of a sense of proportion in Quinn's writing is the contention that a new Golden Age is to be heralded by the counter-culture discovery of vegetarianism, and by bizarre sociopolitical movements. Quinn is apparently unaware that the folk are passive and uncreative; they give back only what they have been given, and often what they do receive is given back distorted and hardly recognizable; in these times this is more true than ever before.

We turn now to the crux of our criticism of the notions Quinn puts forward; they are speculations, he says, endeavouring thereby to have it both ways: to have them seriously accepted, or should that not happen, then to escape responsibility for them. If they are merely speculations, one has a right to ask the motive for all the sophistry. Even sophists have something in mind which they wish to achieve or see effected. We cannot ascertain motives but we must endeavour to discriminate and discern; and doing so, we believe that a possible motive is to implant suggestions, to form sensibilities that might make an acceptance of the Antichrist more probable. Is this Quinn's motive? We cannot say; men may be duped by many things, not only their own prejudices and preconceptions. In any event, the several venerable Revelations and the Traditions flowing from them—for which Quinn seems to harbour a certain animosity—these Traditions have yet to run their course. Heaven has put down the ancient landmarks and man does not have the intelligence, authority, or means to

overturn them.

Who, then, is “slouching towards Bethlehem to be born?” It cannot be the Boddhisattva *Maitreya* (the fifth and last Buddha for the present humanity), not the *Kalkiavatara*, nor *al-Mahdi*; for the conditions of their advents are not compatible with birth at Bethlehem. What of Jesus Christ? But His *return* will be quite unlike His first advent. His second coming will be like “lightning that leaps across the sky from east to west. So shall be the Presence of the Son of Man” (*Matthew xxiv,27*).

Putting all these things in perspective, we close with a lengthy but very instructive passage from one of Frithjof Schuon’s major works, *Logic and Transcendence* (p. 70, Harper edition, 1975):

The great misconception, then, is to believe that the basis of our existence is space and that the factors which make up our individual destinies are contained in it, whereas in reality this basis—at one and the same time immutable and in movement according to the relationship envisaged—is situated in a “supra-space” which we can perceive only through the heart-intellect and about which those explosions of total Consciousness, the Revelations, speak to us symbolically. The error is to believe that the causes which determine human history or which carry it to its conclusion belong to the same order as our matter or as “natural laws,” whereas in fact the whole visible cosmos is resting upon an invisible volcano—but also at a deeper ontological level, upon a formless ocean of bliss. Men imagine that this earth, these mountains or bodies can only be destroyed by forces on their own level, by masses or energies belonging to our physical universe. What they do not see, however, is that this world, in appearance so compact, can collapse *ab intra*, that matter can flow back “inward” by a process of transmutation, and that the whole of space can shrink like a balloon emptied of air; in short that fragility and impermanence not only affect things within a space naively supposed to be stable, they also affect existence itself with all its categories. Our nature consists precisely in the ability to escape, in our inmost core and in the “unchanging Center,” from the breakup of a macrocosm that has become oversolidified, and to become reintegrated in the Immutable whence we came forth. What proves this possibility is our capacity to conceive this Immutability; it is also proved, in a concordant manner, by the fact (at once unique and multiple) of Revelation.