



“Rassembler ce qui est épars”

Mircea A Tamas

Sixty years ago, in 1946, René Guénon wrote an article called “*Rassembler ce qui est épars*” (Et. Trad. Oct-Nov. 1946). If we double the sixty, we have 120 years since Guénon entered this world, this very day – November 15.

Should we remember this day? Of course. It is a fact that René Guénon was born on November 15, 1886. It is a fact that his work had and has a peremptory importance. In addition, what many people do not understand is the fact that miracles are not produced from nowhere. The spiritual and subtle influences need a corporeal support. An old orthodox monk explained to us how miracles need a human being to become active and Guénon said, “The spiritual influences, in any traditional organization, always act having human beings as intermediary.” René Guénon was such an intermediary, even if of a different sort, and we cannot disregard his human appearance, which does not mean that we have to be concerned with his individuality.

We think that Guénon’s article “*Rassembler ce qui est épars*” is one of the ways to remember René Guénon. Today, after 120 years, can we unite what is scattered?

Genesis gives an illustration of the production of multiplicity:

*Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, «Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.» They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, «Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.» But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said, «If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.» So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel – because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth. (**Genesis** 11:1-9)*

“Rassembler ce qui est éparé”

Here multiplicity appears as a divine punishment. To explain this episode, the law of inverted analogy, specific to traditional symbolism, has to be applied. The divine Will imposes the multiplicity just because it is possible. Without developing doctrinal questions, we may say that the supreme Principle as universal Possibility comprises both, non-manifestation and manifestation,¹ hence the Lord’s incentive: “Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, «Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth»” (**Genesis** 9:1); this multiplication is one blessed by God, that is, a multiplication from Unity, not a deviated one, detached from the Principle. In the Tower of Babel episode, we find also a “unity,” but an inverted one, a “human” (if we may say so), not a “divine” one; this “human unity” is, in fact, extreme sectarianism, the total severance from Divinity. Human beings started to be more and more conceited and to believe that they were similar to gods and the Tower of Babel was the token of this vanity.² God’s punishment was not so much the multiplicity, but the “dispersal,” and of course, considering the inverted analogy, human beings, dreaming about a “union” outside God, generated this scattering.³ The construction of the Tower of Babel symbolizes, in an extended perspective, the moment when the present humanity started to fall, but represents more precisely the moment when the world stepped into *Kali-yuga*. The Tower of Babel indicates a false unity, an outer union, completely different from the one preached by Saint Paul; that is why the sixteenth card of the Tarot shows a tower destroyed by the divine thunderbolt, illustrating the Wrath of the Gods. In this context, Saint Paul’s words appear in their full brightness. His encouragement regarding the union in the name of God and the use of a common tongue is just the opposite of division and the confusion of languages from the Tower of Babel episode; it means the straightening of the mountains and valleys.⁴

In Masonry, there is an initiatory formula regarding the “reuniting of what was scattered”; Saint Paul speaks about this “reuniting” too, his fight against division being, in fact, the remedy against the great disarray that gained ground at the same time as sectarianism and extreme multiplicity. “I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people”

¹ Universal manifestation as a whole comprises the Three Worlds, which from human perspective can be named: corporeal, subtle or psychical (understood at its full extension, not only as the part connected to the human body), and angelic or spiritual; the first two compose the individual domain; the last is the super-individual domain. The non-manifestation “is” beyond manifestation and alludes to the super-luminous Darkness. The manifestation (word that we are constantly using in our work) is equivalent to the universal Existence and has as direct principle the Supreme Being.

² In the Judaic Kabbalah, the invitation, “Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, with its top in heaven,” underlines a revolt against the Holy One, blessed be He, connected to Nimrod, about whom it is said, “and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel” (**Zohar**, I, 74 b, see **The Zohar**, Rebecca Bennet Publ., 1956, vol. I, pp. 253-4). In Masonry, in the Scottish Rite, the 21st degree, called *Patriarch Noachite*, contains Nimrod and the construction of the Tower of Babel as central elements; also, the sacred words of this degree are the names of Noah’s sons.

³ “It is the dispersion in multiplicity, and in such a multiplicity that is not anymore united by the admittance of a superior principle” (Guénon, **Crise**, p. 62).

⁴ In the Islamic tradition, Noah’s family was considered a blessed tree (*Kalima tayyib*) and flourished like the goodly tree, whereas the Tower of Babel was a cursed tree (*Kalima khabees*) and was torn up by the root like the evil tree. We owe this interpretation to Mansoor Ahmad.

“Rassembler ce qui est éparé”

(**Romans** 16:17-18). The “appetites” mentioned by Saint Paul refer to the devils within us; in various traditions the intestines were compared to the snakes of the inferior desires, they are Medusa’s snakes that broke with the Principle and at the end of times multiplied by themselves.

Saint Paul asked: “Is Christ divided?” And here is suggested the essence of the Eucharist. The Holy Communion is a formidable and sublime mystery of the Church, through which is repeated Christ’s sacrifice made at the Last Supper. Jesus announced to the nations: “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (**John** 6:53-54).

There is, with regard to the multiplicity, a problem, somehow subtle, which we have already mentioned in connection to the Tower of Babel symbolism: that is, the difference between multiplication and scattering. From a traditional perspective, the multiplicity derived from One is perfectly normal; the anomaly appears when this multiplicity attempts to become independent, detached from the One, and this represents separation, sectarianism, and scattering. Satan or the Non-Brother reigns not upon the multiplicity contained and manifested by One, but upon the scattering and dispersion; therefore the Tower of Babel episode has a satanic aspect related to the revolt of those who built it, and actually any revolt, angelic or human, against the normal hierarchy contains this aspect.⁵ Of course, in reality, there is nothing independent from the One and separation and scattering represent an erroneous point of view, a heretical perspective, in the same way the profane does not exist as a domain, rather what exists is a profane point of view.

In the Romanian tradition, Satan, taking advantage of the fact that Noah was away from home, came to his wife and asked her a lot of questions about her husband; yet only after the Devil gave her a jar of boiled wine and she became drunk, did the wife betray Noah’s secret and confessed that he was building a boat in the woods.⁶ Satan ran to the forest, where he found a pile of timber ready for the construction of the Ark, and the Devil scattered the whole pile in such a way that each piece of wood was completely separated from the others. When Noah found out the devilish thing, he made a plank of maple wood and started to knock it with a gavel or a small mallet gathering back the scattered wood.⁷ The symbolism is transparent: Satan is responsible for the scattering and Noah, through a sacred gesture, “reunites what was scattered,”⁸ restoring the Unity, or better yet, restoring the multiplicity in Unity.⁹

⁵ In **Zohar**, as we have already mentioned, there is a connection between Nimrod and Babel. “Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; that is why it is said, «Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord.» The first centers of his kingdom were Babel...” (**Genesis** 10:8-12). Related to this, René Guénon affirmed that the origin of the counter-initiation was such a revolt that occurred long ago, in the past (in a previous secondary cycle).

⁶ The biblical episode about Samson contains the same theme of the traitorous wife (with respect to an essential secret); regarding the jar of wine, we note that in the **Bible** Noah is the one who is drunk.

⁷ This plank is a sacred object in the Christian Orthodox Church, and is called in Greek *semanthro*, “seal,” and in English “a special monastery bell” (since like a bell, it emits a sound having as its purpose the gathering of the community).

⁸ It is well-known that this formula is an important Masonic initiatory expression. Also, we should add the Islamic saying: “Those who break the covenant of Allah after ratifying it, and sever that which Allah

“Rassembler ce qui est éparé”

In the Far-Eastern tradition, there is an initiatory motto: “Destroy the darkness (*jing*) and restore the light (*ming*),” comparable to the Masonic initiatory task of spreading the light and gathering what was scattered. *Gua Huan* (no. 59) is built of Xun (wind) up and Kan (water) down, illustrating the dispersion: the wind blowing over water disperses it.



Similarly, the man disperses his thoughts and heart, his attention and energy, tempted by details, and the world disperses its substance in multiplicity, forgetting the One. It is the emperor's duty as Pivot to gather what was scattered and the symbol of this gathering is the temple.

We come back to our question: “Today, after 120 years, can we unite what is scattered?” It is obvious that the counter-initiatory forces have no other goal but to accomplish the scattering, the division and the sectarianism. Nevertheless, what about the traditional forces?

We limit ourselves to the visible ones and mainly to the forces linked to Guénon's heritage. There is no doubt that the majority of these forces for 55 years did nothing else but contributing to the division. “Rassembler ce qui est éparé” remained for them a dead motto. We can assume that some of them followed, more or less consciously, a diabolic judgment: “Since the Kali-yuga is so dark, we should help the scattering and the exhaustion of the last possibilities of manifestation, to bring faster the new Golden Age.” And we witness very active individuals, defenders of Guénon's work, spending a lot of effort to create confusion and division.

Such a waste! There is a profound truth related to the production of our human cycle (or of any other cycle): When the cycle was born, at the same time the Avatâra and the Asura were born; or, in a Christian language, with the world, from the beginning, Christ and Antichrist were born. The people who try to take their places are poor simpletons. The people who think they know better what to do to end the cycle or when the cycle will end are poor egocentrics. The people who, ready to claim their traditional status, are pseudo-artisans of the scattering, will see their own scattering.

To unite what is scattered we must start to unite our own being.

ordered to be joined, and (who) make mischief in the earth: Those are they who are the losers” (**Qu'rân** 2:27).

⁹ Such a gesture, with an initiatory meaning, can be found in different traditions, a well-known episode being the gathering of Osiris' scattered body. As we will see in a next chapter, Noah is the prophet of the transcendent Unity, but not of an immanent multiplicity (as Ibn 'Arabî stated). Regarding Noah's wife, in **Qu'rân** (66:10), she is an example of an unbeliever (her name was Wâila, which should be compared to Wâhela, Lot's wife, who was in confederacy with the men of Sodom). The Gnostics developed the theme of Noah's wife; she appears under the name of Norea, the daughter of Adam and Eve. Norea set fire to the Ark, because God (Ialdabaoth for the Sethians, an inferior and arrogant God, that is, the Non-Brother) did not want to let her survive the flood and because Noah's God is considered the evil God. In other Gnostic texts, this God, who sent the flood, is opposed by Sophia, the Wisdom that saved Noah in the Ark.