

## Templar Resonances

by Charles Upton and Dr. John Andrew Morrow

Dr. John Andrew Morrow, in the course of his ongoing researches on the covenants of Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of his time, and other Peoples of the Book, has made a number of intriguing discoveries. The bulk of this research appears in his seminal book *The Covenants of the Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of the World* [Angelico/Sophia Perennis, 2013] as well as the two-volume anthology edited by him and entitled *Islam and the People of the Book: Critical Studies of the Covenants of the Prophet* [upcoming from Cambridge Scholars, 2017]. This much-needed scholarship has gone a long way toward resurrecting the Prophetic Covenants from obscurity, throwing light on the just and equitable norms the Prophet laid down governing how Muslims were to treat Peoples of the Book and other religious minorities within the growing Islamic State, and establishing the covenants, treaties and letters of Muhammad, side-by-side with Qur'an and *ahadith*, as a third foundational source for the Islamic tradition. It has also struck a new chord in interfaith relations, one which is not dependent upon the norms of secular liberalism, but springs directly from the Abrahamic tradition itself. As such, it has begun to define a true exoteric expression and context for the relatively esoteric doctrine that Frithjof Schuon called the Transcendent Unity of Religions. In light of this it is strikingly appropriate that, in the course of his studies, Dr. Morrow seems to have inadvertently come across material which throws a new light on the origins and doctrines of the Knights Templar, whom René Guénon saw as early expositors of the Transcendent Unity of Religions and guardians of the Primordial Tradition. The historical data brought to light by Dr. Morrow also resonates with some of my own more metaphysical, symbolic and mythopoetic speculations on the Templars and other matters; some of these can be found in my books *Findings: in Metaphysic, Path and Lore* [Sophia Perennis, 2010], and *Vectors of the Counter-Initiation*, [Sophia Perennis, 2012]. Excerpts appear below.



[From “The Covenant of the Prophet Muhammad with the Armenian Christians of Jerusalem” by Dr. John Andrew Morrow, included in *Islam and the People of the Book: Critical Studies of the Covenants of the Prophet*]

The text of *Covenant of the Prophet Muhammad with the Armenian Christians of Jerusalem* [as Dr. Morrow reproduces it in *Islam and the People of the Book*.—C.U.] derives from R.P. Paylaguian’s *Histoire ecclésiastique arménienne* (79-80) which was rendered into French by Albert Khazinedjian in *Des serviteurs fidèles, Les enfants de l’Arménie au service de l’État turc* (16), as well as the translation provided by Bernard Falque de Bezaure. According to the latter, this *firmān* was issued in Madīnah; it was written down by Zayd ibn Thābit (d. 660 CE) and was later copied by ‘Umar and ‘Alī. Falque de Bezaure describes the background of this Covenant as follows:

Mahomet reçoit dans la maison des hôtes de Ramlah bint al-Hārith au quartier de Nadjdariyaa les ambassadeurs juifs et chrétiens. C’est l’année nommée “Am al-Wufūd”,

c'est-à-dire l'année des ambassadeurs, où les délégations sont reçues par Mahomet. C'est Bilāl le muezzin noir qui guide les ambassadeurs ... dont Abraham, abbé arménien du couvent Saint-Jacques de Jérusalem et du monastère Saint-Grégoire-de-Sion, ambassadeur du catholicos d'Arménie qui réside dans la plus ancienne abbaye du monde, Etchmiadzin, fondée en 285 dans les contreforts du Mont Ararat, sur le lieu où saint Grégoire l'Illuminateur reçut lui aussi la révélation de Dieu par une illumination identique à celle que reçut saint Paul sur le chemin de Damas... Mahomet lui posa une question: «A Jérusalem se trouve une secte chrétienne (monothéiste) adoratrice de Sirius, l'étoile du chien; que représentent donc le chien et cette étoile?» Abraham répondit : « L'étoile, c'est celle de l'illumination que reçut saint Grégoire l'Illuminateur sur le mont Ararat. C'est l'étoile du soir à 16 rayons, celle du Dikpala qui désigne le Vanatur du mont Ararat... dans l'étoile du matin et l'étoile du soir, chacune à huit rayons... Unies, elles désignent la manifestation de Dieu sous forme de l'illumination. Le chien... désigne le Tarîqa qui a les sens de chemin, de voie spirituelle ; il est le conducteur de ceux qui se soumettent à Dieu... Révélé par l'étoile du soir... » (*Apocalypse de Jean*, signalé par Jean-Charles Pichon dans *Les Sectes des temps anciens*). Mahomet fut ravi de voir qu'Abraham se soumettait à Dieu dans son monastère de Jérusalem... (les termes de *se soumettre à Dieu*, en arabe, se disent : *musulman*). « La soumission à Dieu est ma ligne de conduite » répondit le prophète.

[Muḥammad receives Jewish and Christian ambassadors in the guest-house of Ramlah bint al-Hārith in the neighborhood of Najdariyyah. It is the year known as *am al-wufūd*, namely, the year of ambassadors during which delegations were received by Muḥammad. It is Bilāl, the black muezzin, who guides the ambassadors... one of whom is Abraham, the Armenian abbot from the Monastery of St. James in Jerusalem and the Monastery of Zion, who is the ambassador of the Katholikos of Armenia, who resides in the oldest abbey in the world, Etchmiadzin, founded in 285 on the foothills of Mount Ararat, on the site where Gregory the Illuminator received a revelation from God by means of an illumination that was identical to the one that Saint Paul had received on the road to Damascus... Muḥammad asked him a question: “In Jerusalem there is a (monotheistic) Christian sect that worships Sirius, the dog-star; what does that dog and that star symbolize?” Abraham answered: “The star symbolizes the illumination that Saint Gregory the Illuminator received on Mount Ararat. This night star has 16 rays; the one of Dikpala represents the Vanatur of Mount Ararat... both the morning and evening stars have 8 rays... [like the Christmas Star that overshadows the Virgin and Child in Eastern Orthodox iconography—C.U.] Together, they symbolize the manifestation of God by means of illumination. The dog... represents the Ṭarīqah which signifies a spiritual path; it is the guide of those who submit to God ... revealed by the evening star” (*Apocalypse of John*, pointed out by Jean-Charles Pichon in *Les Sectes des temps anciens*). Muḥammad was pleased to see that Abraham submitted to God in his monastery in Jerusalem... (in Arabic, the word *Muslim* literally means “to submit to God). “Submission to God is my tradition,” responded the Prophet.]<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The tradition in question was related by Virgil Gheorghiu in his book, *La Vie de Mahomet*, which was translated from Romanian into French by Livia Lamoure (1962: 416-417; 1989: 304-305). The reference mentions that this event took place in the 9<sup>th</sup> year of the *hijrah* and is also referenced by Maqrīzī (1363-1442 CE) and Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh (1908-2002).

[Comment by Charles Upton]

Although the Semites, both Jew and Arab, tend to despise dogs and regard them as unclean—the appearance of a dog as guardian of the Companions of the Cave in the *Surah of the Cave* notwithstanding—the dog occupies an honored position in Zoroastrianism as “the friend of Man”. Consequently the dog as symbol of the *Tarīqah* or spiritual path suggests the possibility of a Persian influence (see *Dogs from a Sufi Point of View* by Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh, Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1992). “Canine esoterism” could have formed part of the doctrine of the Nazirite Brotherhood<sup>2</sup>, and who sometimes worked as shepherds. The Talmud mentions a certain “Nazirite shepherd”, and the prophet Amos, who was himself a shepherd, laments the persecution and degeneracy of the Brotherhood. In the words of the Prophet Muhammad, “there has never been a prophet but that he was a shepherd.” And if the Nazirites were shepherds, they must have employed dogs. Some, such as the Christian visionary Anne Catherine Emmerich, present evidence that the shepherds who were present at the birth of Christ were in spiritual contact with the Zoroastrian Magi<sup>3</sup>; the same connection has been claimed for the Essenes. Those “shepherds who watched their flocks by night” in the narrative of Christ’s nativity in the Gospel of Luke were most likely Nazirites; to “watch one’s flock by night” is to act as spiritual guide for an esoteric school. Dogs, too, keep watch by night and carry on mysterious discourses in the darkness in an unknown language; they also howl in veneration of the Moon, emblem of the Prophet Muhammad. The notion of the dog as guardian of the mysteries can be traced back to the Egyptian god Anubis, who conducted the souls of the dead—the sheep who made up his flock, insofar as he was originally a sheep-dog—to the other world. (That Anubis, the jackal-god, was originally a sheep-dog is not impossible; the shepherds of the Balkans used to interbreed their sheep-dogs with jackals.) Speaking in esoteric terms, this is precisely the function of the *Tarīqah*, the Spiritual Path: to conduct those who have “died before they die” to the world beyond time. That the mystics of Islam are named *Sufis* (“wool-clad”), and that Jesus Christ (who is depicted with the long hair of a Nazirite) called himself “the Good Shepherd”, are part and parcel of the same constellation of symbols. Furthermore, the word for “dog” in Arabic is *kalb*, while the word for “spiritual Heart” is *qalb*. Is the Cave guarded by the Dog in the *Surah of the Cave* actually that point of ultimate spiritual depth within the human being that the Hindus call “the Cave of the Heart”?

As for the “worship” of a star, I am indebted to Gautier Pierozak<sup>4</sup> for informing me that Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, author of the celebrated *Bestiary of Christ*, had access to archives from the 16th century that were loaned to him by representatives of a secret Catholic group

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<sup>2</sup>The Nazirites, who are mentioned in Numbers 6:1-21, are thought to have pre-dated Moses. The Nazirite vow forbade wine-drinking, cutting the hair and being in the proximity of corpses, and could be taken on a temporary or a lifetime basis. Samuel, Samson and John the Baptist were Nazirites. Jesus made various pronouncements that, according to some, identified him as a Nazirite; cf. Mark 14:22-25 and Luke 22:15-18. That he was criticized as a “winebibber” [Matthew 11:19] is puzzling, since drinking wine was no sin for Jews in general, but it would have made sense if by drinking wine he had broken his Nazirite vow. (Wine drinking in itself, however, did not terminate the vow.) Nazirites were forbidden to approach corpses, but perhaps Jesus fulfilled this taboo in his own unique way: by bringing the corpses back to life. When a temporary Nazirite reached the end of his vow he was required to sacrifice a ewe, a lamb and a ram. At the expiration of his own vow—which was his life—did Jesus fulfill this ritual duty by sacrificing—himself?

<sup>3</sup>See Anne Catherine Emmerich, *The Life of Christ and Biblical Revelations*, TAN Books edition, Volume 2, p. 270

<sup>4</sup>See <https://fr.ulule.com/gauthierpierozak/>

named *l'Estoile Internelle*, the Inner Star, and which contained lore relating to the Holy Grail, among other themes. Items of this lore later appeared in René Guénon's *Symbols of the Sacred Science*, most likely thanks to his extensive correspondence with Charbonneau-Lassay, in the course of which he elucidated many of the symbols that the author of the *Bestiary* had compiled. The Grail, of course, has a legendary association with the Knights Templar. Charbonneau-Lassay also collected material on the Templars from other sources—and, as is well known, Guénon believed that the Knights Templar had made contact with representatives of the Supreme Center of the Primordial Tradition during their occupation of the Holy Land. Be that as it may, the notion of the star as a symbol of inner illumination, whether or not it can be proved to bear any special relation to Templar doctrine and practice, is directly in line with both the New Testament and the Holy Qur'an. 2Peter 1:19 says:

So we have the prophetic word made more sure,  
to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a  
dark place,  
until the day dawns, and the Morning Star arises in your hearts.

Cf. also the *Surah at-Tariq* (“The Night-Visitor”), the first four verses of which are:

By the heaven and the Morning Star—  
Ah, what will tell thee what the Morning Star is?  
The piercing Star!  
No human soul but hath a guardian over it.

The *Surah al-Najm* (“The Star”), on the other hand, begins as follows:

By the Star when it setteth,  
Your comrade [Muhammad] erreth not, nor is deceived;  
Nor doth he speak of (his own) desire.

“The Star when it setteth” indicates the Evening Star, which, according to the Armenian Abbot Abraham, reveals—or, let us say, heralds—Sirius, the Dog Star of the full night, who represents the *Tarīqah*, the Spiritual Path; likewise verse 49 of the *Surah al-Najm* reads:

And that He it is Who is the Lord of Sirius.

The Morning Star would seem to symbolize the light of God as it comes into this world, both as Revelation and in the form of new-born human souls, each with its angelic guardian. Consequently the Evening Star would represent initiation into the Spiritual Path as the response of the human soul to the light of Revelation, its transcendence of the created world and its return, together with all things, to its point-of-origin in Allah. *Al-Najm* is the surah which describes the advent of the Angel Gabriel, or Jibrail, to bring the revelation of the Holy Qur'an; Allah is assuring the Prophet that his vision of Jibrail is truth, not deception, because Muhammad is on the *Tarīqah*, the Path of return to God. Sirius would then be the Illumination or *Ma'rifa* which is the final fruit of that Path, the eternal Knowledge of God which synthesizes Revelation and Realization because it is beyond birth and death, beyond the two worlds.



[Dr. Morrow]

Falque de Bezaure's account of the transmission of the Covenants of the Prophet is ground-breaking. He relates that:

Ces firmans deviendront des *ḥadīths* dans un corpus musulman intitulé la Sunnah et seront transcrits plus tard dans les *maisons de la sagesse* à Bagdad et à Damas. Ils passèrent plus tard, entre les mains des califes Omeyyades, Abbassides et Fatimides ... Ce sont aussi ces documents qui, au XIIe siècle, seront donnés par Michelian, évêque et patriarche monophysite d'Antioche, à la dynastie des rois d'Arménie, les Roupénides, en particulier à Mleh, Maître des Templiers d'Arménie, en même temps que les documents des Alaouites-Assassins-Nusayris installés dans la chaîne de l'Armanus en Cilicie. Ces documents concernent les mystères de l'illumination des anciens prophètes chrétiens, juifs, et de Mahomet. Ce sont les fondements et la base du *secret des méditations spirituelles* qui sera donné au Dôme du Rocher par Hugues le Pêcheur chanoine-prêtre du Saint-Sépulcre auprès des trente premiers proto-Templiers cités dans les chroniques arméniennes de Michel le Syrien déjà cité. Ce fut le secret, selon Migne, des *méditations* des Jésuites. (Réf. : manuscrit n° 37 de la Bibliothèque de Nîmes, et *Milites Templi* de Bernard Falque de Bezaure, chapitre "Hugues le Pêcheur").

[These firmāns would become *aḥadīth* in the Muslim corpus known as the Sunnah and would later be transcribed in the houses of wisdom in Baghdād and Damascus. They later passed into the hands of the Umayyad, 'Abbāsīd, and Fāṭimid Caliphs....These are also the documents that were given, in the eleventh century, by Michael, monophysite bishop and patriarch of Antioch, to the dynasty of Armenian kings, the Rupenids, and to Mleh, the Master of the Templars of Armenia, in particular, at the same moment that the 'Alawī-Hashashīn-Nusayrī documents entered the chain of Armanus in Sicily. These [latter] documents concern the mysteries of illumination of the ancient Christian and Jewish prophets as well as Muḥammad. They represent the foundations and the basis of the secret spiritual meditations that were given by Hugues de Payens, the ordained priest of the Saint Sepulcher [the Church of the Holy Sepulchre], to the thirty-one proto-Templars cited in the Armenian chronicles of the aforementioned Michael the Syrian. [This would certainly seem to corroborate Guénon's belief that the Templars received esoteric initiation in the Holy Land from the keepers of the Primordial Tradition.—C.U.] According to Migne, this was the secret of the meditations of the Jesuits.<sup>5</sup>

In both the *Covenants of the Prophet Muḥammad with the Christians of the World* and this current book, *Islam and the People of the Book: Critical Studies on the Covenants of the Prophet*, attempts have been made to explain the mode of transmission of the Muḥammadan Covenants. The theory proposed by Bernard Falque de Bezaure certainly makes a great deal of sense. Founded by Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786-809 CE), the *Bayt al-Ḥikmah* brought together

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<sup>5</sup>See manuscript n° 37 of the Bibliothèque de Nîmes, and *Milites Templi* by Bernard Falque de Bezaure, chapter "Hugues le Pêcheur".

leading Muslim and non-Muslim scholars from all around the known world, including many of Christian background. They translated ancient books into Arabic. They preserved Arabic and Islamic sources. Within a century and a half, the House of Wisdom had grown into the largest repository of books in the world.

Bernard Falque de Bezaure theorizes that the Covenants of the Prophet Muḥammad all found their way to the *Bayt al-Ḥikmah* where multiple copies were made by scribes. These, in turn, were sent to a series of Caliphs who, in turn, included them in their own library collections. Other copies were certainly provided to other Muslim authorities, administrators, and judges. Copies of the Covenants of the Prophet were probably provided to libraries throughout the Muslim world. The *Bayt al-Ḥikmah* of Baghdād and Damascus would have been focal points in the geographic dissemination of the Muḥammadan Covenants. With the destruction of the House of Wisdom following the Mongol Siege of Baghdād in 1258 CE many if not most of the original copies of the letters, Covenants, and treaties of the Prophet Muḥammad were destroyed, leaving only copies in circulation. It was, after all, in the *Bayt al-Ḥikmah* or one of its branches that the original copy of the Covenant of the Prophet Muḥammad with the Christians of Najrān was brought to light in 878 CE. This lends credence to the claim that the House of Wisdom was the repository of many original writings of Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh, the man known to the world as the Messenger of Allāh.

As if this were not enough of an accomplishment, Bernard Falque de Bezaure advances another astonishing and audacious theory; namely, that the secrets granted, and jealously guarded, protected, and transmitted by the Knights Templar and other secretive Christian societies, consisted of the Covenants of the Prophet Muḥammad. Since the Dome of the Rock contains some of the most ancient examples of early Arabic and Islamic writing, it is also likely that the complex contained precious documents from the dawn of Islām, including, apparently, copies of the Muḥammadan Covenants. Many have theorized that the Knights Templars were actually converts to Shī‘ite Islām. Their veneration of a holy woman, who was supposedly not the Virgin Mary, allegedly alludes to Fātimah al-Zahrā’. The symbolism of fourteen pillars, two of which are identical, is found in their architecture, is said to symbolize the fourteen infallibles, Muḥammad, Fātimah, and the Twelve Imāms from the Progeny of the Prophet.

If this theory is correct, and not some New Age nonsense founded in fantasy as opposed to fact, some Crusaders may have come to the Holy Land as Christian conquerors and, after coming across the Covenants of the Prophet at the Dome of the Rock, were so moved by the protections that the Prophet granted Christians that they embraced Islām, wishing to imitate such a just and righteous man. The Knights Templar would thus have become the Keepers of the Covenants of the Prophet, committed to protecting the true teachings of the Messenger of Allāh until the end of ages. Seeing how far Muslims had departed from the path of the Prophet, and how certain rulers had systematically attempted to suppress and corrupt the *sunnah*, they assumed the responsibility of protecting the Covenants of the Prophet from Muslims themselves. When word of their initiation ceremonies reached King Philip IV of France (1268-1314 CE), he set out to eradicate the Templars on the grounds that they were worshippers of Baphomet, a corruption of Mahomet or Muḥammad. Whether or not one accepts any or all of this interpretation has no bearing on [the question of the validity of] the Covenant of the Prophet Muḥammad with the Armenian Christians of Jerusalem. It simply opens an entirely novel line of enquiry.



[Comment by Charles Upton]

The Arabic root TRQ, upon which the Arabic word *Ṭarīqah* is based, refracts itself into various words meaning *path; road; spiritual Way; one who knocks* (as a metaphor for *night visitor*), and *path or orbit for the passage of stars or other heavenly bodies* (who are also “night visitors”). Jesus (speaking in Aramaic, closely allied to Arabic) called himself “the Way”, and said: “Behold, I stand at the door and *knock*”. And in Luke, Chapter 11, he tells the parable of the man, a night visitor, who knocks on his friend’s door at midnight asking for bread to feed his guest, and says “*knock* and it shall be opened unto you.”

Also highly interesting is the fact that stars are commonly associated with angels, even with angelic armies; Luke 2:13 refers to the angels as “the Host (Army) of Heaven”. Did the Templars think of themselves as earthly reflections or representatives of this Angelic Army, charged by God with the secret governance of the world?



[From *Findings: in Metaphysic, Path and Lore*]

One day, as I was reading the *Surah of the Cave* in the Rodwell translation of the Noble Qur’an, the answer to the riddle posed therein—i.e., the exact number of the Youths known as the Companions of the Cave—came to me. And after a short internet search, I was fortunately able (to my great relief) to confirm to my own satisfaction what at first had been no more than an intuition. Here is the pertinent passage according to Rodwell, Q.18:8-26 [Pickthall, 18:9-28; Muhammad Asad and Yusuf Ali, 18: 9-27]:

*Hast thou reflected that the Inmates of the Cave and of al-Rakim were one of Our wondrous signs?*

*When the youths betook them to the cave they said, “O our Lord! grant us mercy from before Thee, and order for us our affair aright.”*

*Then struck We upon their ears with deafness in the cave for many a year:*

*Then We awaked them that We might know which of the two parties could best reckon the space of their abiding.*

*We will relate to thee their tale with truth. They were youths who had believed in their Lord, and in guidance had We increased them;*

*And We had made them stout of heart, when they stood up and said, ‘Our Lord is Lord of the Heavens and of the Earth: we will call on no other god than Him; for in that case we had said a thing outrageous.*

*These our people have taken other gods beside Him, though they bring no clear proof for them; but, who more iniquitous than he who forgeth a lie of God?*

*So when you shall have separated you from them and from that which they worship beside God, then betake you to the Cave: Your Lord will unfold His mercy to you, and will order your affairs for you for the best.”*

*And thou mightest have seen the sun when it arose, pass on the right of their cave, and when it set, leave them on the left, while they were in its spacious chamber. This is one of the signs of God. Guided indeed is he whom God guideth; but for him whom He misleadeth, thou shalt by no means find a patron, director.*

*And thou wouldst have deemed them awake, though they were sleeping: and We turned them to the right and to the left. And in the entry lay their dog with paws outstretched. Hadst thou come suddenly upon them, thou wouldst surely have turned thy back on them in flight, and have been filled with fear at them.*

*So We awaked them that they might question one another. Said one of them, "How long have you tarried here?" They said, "we have tarried a day or part of a day." They said, "Your Lord knoweth best how long you have tarried: Send now one of you with this your coin into the city, and let him mark who therein hath purest food, and from him let him bring you a supply: and let him be courteous, and not discover you to anyone.*

*For they, if they find you out, will stone you or turn you back to their faith, and in that case it will fare ill with you forever."*

*And thus made We their adventure known to their fellow citizens, that they might learn that the promise of God is true, and that as to "the Hour" there is no doubt of its coming. When they disputed among themselves concerning what had befallen them, some said, "Build a building over them; their Lord knoweth best about them." Those who prevailed in the matter said, "A place of worship will we surely raise over them."*

*Some say, "They were three; their dog the fourth:" others say, "Five; their dog the sixth," guessing at the secret: others say "Seven; and their dog the eighth." Say: My Lord best knoweth the number: none, save a few, shall know them.*

*Therefore be clear in thy discussions about them, and ask not any Christian concerning them.*

*Say not thou of a thing, "I will surely do it tomorrow;" without, "If God will." And when thou has forgotten, call thy Lord to mind; and say, "Haply my Lord will guide me, that I may come near to the truth of this story with correctness."*

*And they tarried in their cave 300 years, and 9 years over.*

*Say: God best knoweth how long they tarried: With Him are the secrets of the Heavens and of the Earth: Look thou and hearken unto Him alone. Man hath no guardian but Him, and none may bear part in His judgments:—*

*And publish what hath been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord—none may change His words,—and thou shalt find no refuge beside Him.*

Rodwell's translation of part of his verse 22, *and ask not any Christian concerning them*, appears to be an extrapolation based on the fact that the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, with whom the Companions of the Cave are often identified, was current in the Christian world, and remains so today, where they are identified as Christian martyrs. They are part of the Roman martyrology; there is even an Eastern Orthodox icon depicting them. Other translators, however, either leave those whom Muslims are not to question about the number of the Companions unidentified, or identify them with the Pagans, or never define such a group at all. Following Rodwell's translation, however—or his extrapolation—we can further conjecture that the number of the Companions was not seven, since any Muslim who asked the Christians their number would likely have been answered "seven", in line with the Seven Sleepers story. And the Qur'an even more explicitly denies that the number is either three or five, since these are defined as mere "guesses."

According to the inner voice I heard, their number is "Nine", with their Dog (presumably) being the Tenth. What evidence might be brought forward in support of this intuition? And (assuming that Nine is the right answer and that I was not subject to deception)

what might the Nine Companions and their Dog symbolize in terms of the more arcane levels of meaning enfolded by the Noble Qur'an? The Book itself tells us to *be clear in your discussions of them* (Rodwell), or *contend not concerning them except with an outward contending* (Pickthall), or *do not argue about them other than by way of an obvious argument* (Muhammad Asad), or *enter not, therefore, into controversies concerning them, except on a matter that is clear* (Yusuf Ali). We are being told, in other words, that the answer to this riddle is something clear and explicit, not a vague ethical sentiment or mystical reverie. And this, if the truth be known, is the way with all good riddles: they carefully avoid abstraction; their answers are always clear and concrete. Likewise, in performing exegesis of sacred scripture, the best practice is always to first clarify the literal meaning as much as possible; only then will the concrete symbols appear that can support a more *batini ta'wil*, a more esoteric hermeneutic.

In quest of such clarity, I did a short internet search, and found a *Wikipedia* article on the legend of the Seven Sleepers, where it was asserted—incorrectly—that the Qur'an explains the 300 + 9 years that the Sleepers occupied their cave as representing the 9 year discrepancy between 300 solar years and the same length of time computed in lunar years, since during their long sleep the calendar had been changed from solar to lunar. The unnamed writer of the article undoubtedly drew upon a second writer, also unnamed, who saw in the number 300 + 9 in the *Surah of the Cave* the discrepancy between solar and lunar calendars; it is to this second writer that I am *absolutely* indebted for the confirmation of my original intuition. And so, calculating as *clearly, explicitly* and *outwardly* as I can—since I was unwilling to leave an assertion by an unknown source uncorroborated—I can now confidently state, given that a solar year is approx. 365.24 days, and a lunar year, approx. 354.38 days, that over 300 solar years the discrepancy between lunar and solar time amounts to approximately 9 (lunar) years. The Youths in the Cave symbolize these Nine years, with their Dog—the *Tenth*—representing the *remainder* of .0077886 years—in the *decimal* system, that is, based on the number ten. The Dog waiting quietly at the mouth of the Cave over the long centuries, with his two paws outstretched, also immediately suggests the posture of the Sphinx, patroness of riddles—and the Egyptian solar calendar, or the calendar they used to keep a time closest to solar time, with a discrepancy of only 12 minutes per year from true solar time, was calculated based on the rising of Sirius, the Dog Star.



[Charles Upton]

Since the same period of time calculated in days and hours amounts to both 300 solar years and 309.0077886 lunar years, the number Nine (plus .0077886) represents the union of Sun and Moon. In Islamic symbolism this indicates the end of the present world or cycle-of-manifestation; in the science of Alchemy it symbolizes the union of Soul and Spirit, which in esoteric terms comes to the same thing, since the Soul perfectly conformed to the Spirit has transcended the cycles of time. Nine is also the traditional number of the original brotherhood of the Knights Templar, which (as I once speculated) might have been intended to suggest the Nine Choirs of Angels in the system of St. Dionysius the Areopagite. Dionysian angelology was adopted in slightly altered form by St. Bernard of Clairvaux<sup>6</sup>, who sponsored the Templars and gave them their rule. Nine is also the symbolic number of Beatrice in Dante's *La Vita Nuova*;

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<sup>6</sup>*Bernard of Clairvaux, Selected Works*; Paulist Press, 1984, pp. 153-154

met her when she was nine years old, “courted” her for nine years, etc. A number of scholars, including René Guénon, Julius Evola, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Luigi Valli, Eugene Aroux, Mircea Eliade, Alfonso Ricolfi, Arthur Schult, Henry Corbin and William Anderson, have asserted that Dante was an initiate of an esoteric spiritual order known as the Fede Santa (“Holy Faith”) or Fedeli d’Amore, the “Faithful of Love”, who have been described as a Third (lay) Order of the Templars—and he, as the Templars were supposed to have done, venerated “a holy woman who was not the Virgin Mary”—Beatrice herself.

Furthermore, Miguel Asín y Palacios, in his 1919 book *La Escatologia Musulmana en la Divina Comedia*, demonstrated that Dante derived much of his lore from popular Islamic accounts of Muhammad’s *miraj* or Ascension to Heaven, as well as from the works of the Shaykh al-Akbar, the “Greatest (Sufi) Shaykh”, Ibn al-‘Arabi. Therefore we are justified in speculating that the story of the Nine Original Templars might have been a symbolic fable patterned upon the Companions of the Cave from the Qur’an—particularly since *thirty-one* as the actual number of the first Templars (according to Michael the Syrian) has more historical evidence backing it up—and also that Dante’s veneration of Beatrice could have been derived from a Christian/Courtly Love imitation, as practiced by the Fedeli d’Amore, of the Shi’ite veneration of Fātimah.



[From *Vectors of the Counter-Initiation*, with deletions and additions]

Some scholars speculate that Freemasonry has its origin in various esoteric contacts made by the Templars in the Holy Land. Craft guilds, such as masonry, tended to take on some of the characteristics of esoteric secret societies in both Islam and Christianity, as they indeed did in classical antiquity. They were considered to have been founded by a certain saint or prophet with a legendary association with the craft in question, and they possessed “trade secrets” that were often given a symbolic/esoteric interpretation; outside of masonry, the craft where such tendencies are most clearly evident is that of alchemy. And it is often asserted that some Templars, after the suppression of the Order, took refuge with the Freemasons. It stands to reason that the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Masjid on the Temple Mount would have been repaired and maintained by such a guild of masons, seeing that the maintenance of a holy site, the third holiest in Islam, was unlikely to have been simply “outsourced” to the lowest bidder. The gothic arch, which appeared in France in the 12th century, could well have been based upon the pointed arch used in Islamic architecture, the first appearance of which was as part of the al-Aqsa Masjid<sup>7</sup>; the Knights Templar also constructed octagonal churches reminiscent of the Dome of the Rock. And given that the Templars occupied al-Aqsa, they certainly could have had dealings with a guild of sacred masons charged with the maintenance of the site, whose techniques would most likely have been interpreted symbolically, and thus quasi-esoterically; they did in fact make renovations to this building<sup>8</sup>, as well as retaining as slaves all captured Muslim craftsmen, whom they employed in many capacities.<sup>9</sup> Such a guild might have presented itself to the Templars as one group of “spirituals” to another who shared with them a

<sup>7</sup><http://www.muslimheritage.com/article/pointed-arch>

<sup>8</sup><http://erenow.com/postclassical/the-real-history-behind-the-templars/13.html>

<sup>9</sup>See John J. Robinson, *Dungeon, Fire and Sword: The Knights Templar in the Crusades*, 1991, pp. 347-348

reverence for the same sacred site, and have been eminently capable of fascinating them with tales of the history and symbolism of the Dome of the Rock and the Temple Mount, possibly in hopes of mitigating their hatred of Islam and moderating their depredations in the Holy Land. The Knights Templar in turn could have established and maintained an alliance with such an order of esoteric stonemasons, some of whom might have accompanied them to the west. The Knights, who built castles in Palestine and churches in Europe, employed many stonemasons; and since they apparently incorporated certain design features that were taken from Islamic architecture, the construction techniques if not the technicians themselves would have entered the west through their patronage. Such techniques would likely have been given symbolic interpretations by the Muslim craft guilds who used them, and this lore could certainly have passed to the Templars. As Peter Levenda points out, “if the architectural innovations came from the Middle East, then it stands to reason that someone had to train the local European craftsmen in these techniques and designs. These would have been men who served in some capacity in the Crusades, either as masons and carpenters hired by the military orders to build fortifications or as members of the orders themselves” [*The Secret Temple*, p. 66]. And who would the Templars have been more likely to hire to repair the al-Aqsa Masjid than the local craftsmen charged with maintaining it? It is possible, then, that Freemasonry grew out of something like a Sufi *tariqah*—perhaps, as some have speculated, *al-Banna*, “the Builders”, reputedly founded by the great Sufi Dhu’l Nun Misri, who is said to have incorporated ancient Egyptian lore into the Sufi tradition. This or some similar initiatory order would have been entirely orthodox within the context of Islam, but would have inevitably deviated into heterodoxy if it attempted to become, under the Templar influence, a kind of “esoteric Christianity”. This would explain the highly ambiguous nature of western Freemasonry, its uneasy blend of quasi-esoteric universalism with a subversive, anti-clerical hatred of the Catholic Church, at least in certain jurisdictions and at certain historical periods. (This enmity was certainly reciprocated, especially under Popes like Pius X.) A derivation of Freemasonry from Islamic esoterism may never be provable; it is nonetheless highly interesting, in view of some of our speculations above, that Ibn al-‘Arabi’s book on Dhu’l Nun is entitled *Al-Kawkab al-durrī: fī manāqib Dhī-l Nūn al-Misrī*—in English, *The Brilliant Star: On the Spiritual Virtues of Dhu-l-Nūn the Egyptian*.

At one point the Templars entered into a military alliance with the Hashishim—who, as Shi’a, were also opposed to Saladin, a Sunni; and it is entirely possible that the Shi’a saw the conquest of the Holy Land by the “Franks” as a chance to throw off the Sunni yoke. The Hashishim, like the Templars, were a brotherhood of “sacred warriors” with grades of initiation; this could have led certain Shi’a scholars or theosophers in Jerusalem to make overtures to the Templars, especially after their hunger for spiritual and esoteric lore, now that they had reached the archetypal Holy City of Jerusalem, became better known.

Jerusalem, specifically the Temple Mount, was the first *qibla* or direction-of-prayer in Islam before the *qibla* was transferred to the Kaaba; this fact could have led Muslims to read the Apocalypse, with its prophesy of the descent of a *cube-shaped* Heavenly Jerusalem [cf. Apocalypse 21:16], as predicting the later pre-eminence of Islam, and esoteric Muslims to see the Kaaba itself as a kind of three-dimensional hermeneutic of Temple lore in terms of sacred geometry (see Henry Corbin, *Temple and Contemplation*). And the Templars might well have been open to this kind of esoteric/symbolic lore. Medieval Christians generally saw Muslims either as Pagans or as a heretical Jewish sect; the high regard in which Muslims held Jesus could have come to the Templars as an intriguing shock, and led them to enquire further.



[Charles Upton]

Regarding Falque de Bezaure's theory that the Templars converted to Shi'a Islam, I think it more probable that they would simply have adopted certain doctrines and symbols from the Shi'a—as well as from other groups they could have made contact with in Palestine, such as the Sufis and the "Johannite Christians"—rather than converting *in toto*. Instead of seeing Islam as an *alternative* to Christianity, the notion that the Saracens, in line with the Holy Qur'an, venerated Jesus and the Virgin Mary, would more likely have expanded their conception of Judeo-Christianity to include Islam as an integral part of the larger "Abrahamic Tradition". If this was in fact the case, they would have faced the dilemma that all who accept the Transcendent Unity of Religions will inevitably encounter: the need to determine exactly where to draw the line between a heterodox, exoteric syncretism and a truly esoteric universalism whose fundamental doctrine is: "The Truth is One because God is One."