



How René Guénon Discovered Islam

Review by Mircea A Tamas

We received the information that a Muslim website (islamweb.net) posted at the end of July a text about René Guénon from Muhammad Haneef Shahid's book *Why Islam is Our Only Choice* (Dar-us-Salam Publications, 328 pages). We did not read the book, but we know that it tries to endorse the conversion to Islam and presents a list of people of various categories, people who chose Islam, describing why they converted. Since René Guénon also entered Islam and during the second half of his life he lived exoterically as a true Muslim, the author thought it would be worthy to mention him, not to say that following René Guénon's advice, some of his collaborators converted to Islam (Fritjhof Schuon, Michel Vâlsan, Titus Burckhardt, Martin Lings, Vasile Lovinescu, etc.).

There is nothing wrong with the author's intentions. The only problem is that René Guénon was not just another "personality," and writing about him in the way Muhammad Haneef Shahid wrote means to deceive the reader, or the truth is important as the author himself admitted when he talked about Guénon's "thirst for Truth." For the sake of this truth, we will record below some of the author's errors:

1. "Sheikh Abdul Wahid Yahya was a well-known French Scholar, writer, philosopher and mystic" – none of these are true (maybe "writer"), and René Guénon would have been very upset to read this presentation.
2. "René Guénon was born with a silver spoon in his mouth" – we visited his house in Blois and it was not a mansion, but a small ordinary house.
3. "He did not accept the so called Christian dogmas and rituals" – why "so called," since Christianity is an orthodox tradition, and where the author got the idea that Guénon rejected the Christian rituals?
4. "Consequently, he had not only a thorough and deep comparative study of religions, but also he held discussions and had meetings with thinkers and philosophers of fame" – "the comparative study of religions" was something René Guénon did not appreciate and he criticized more than once this profane method; also his "meetings with thinkers and philosophers of fame" is laughable, and has nothing to do with Guénon, "fame" being so far away from Guénon's thinking.
5. "Due to this spiritual journey and mental chaos, he left the university" – we are to assume that the "mental chaos" refers to the university.

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6. “he met two 'Reverts to Islam.' The first of these two scholars was Sheikh Abdul Haq, formerly Schamrino of French origin. He was a scholar of repute and edited a magazine namely ‘Al-Tareeq’. The Christian name was Iavon Gustav” – The two “Scholars” (???)¹ were in fact Léon Champreneaud (Abdul-Haqq) and Ivan Gustaf Aguéli (Abdul-Hâdi).
7. “Before his departure to Cairo, his father, mother and wife died, so he left for Cairo with a heavy heart” – his family did not die at the same time and the “heavy heart” is a little bit too in accord with the modern mentality.
8. “René Guénon married Karima Bint Abdur Rahman, which proved a sort of solace and comfort for him” – his wife’s name is Fatima Muhammad Ibrahim.
9. “He dedicated the rest of his life for the cause of Islam and Muslims” – He dedicated all his life for the cause of the Tradition.
10. “Frithjof Schuon well known Professor of philosophy and is regarded an authority on 'comparative study of Religions’” – no comments.
11. “Martin Lings is considered as a specialist on mysticism” – like in the case of Schuon, the author proves his “scholar” mentality, a mentality René Guénon fought all his life.
12. “Titus Burchhardt is another scholar (?) who embraced Islam after being inspired and impressed by Rene Guenon. He has made a thorough research on Ancient Civilization (?) and written a marvelous book on mysticism (?). His book "On Chemistry" is regarded the best one on this subject” – The book is called *Alchemy*: not “chemistry,” a profane science, but Alchemy, a traditional science; huge difference.

We hope that the author prepared better the presentation of the other “personalities,” because this one was terrible.

¹ The author says that they were “competent in sociology.” Terrible.