



Regnabit

Universal Review of the Sacred Heart

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Regnabit in domo Jacob in aeternum

Luke, I, 32

We are celebrating this month of June 2011 the 90th anniversary of the creation of *Regnabit*, a French periodical published from 1921 to 1929, as well as the 10th anniversary of the web site www.Regnabit.com, which was inspired by the theme of this periodical. The internet website is dedicated to the study of the metaphysical and universal symbolism of the Heart, and was inspired by the reading of the book *Ecrits pour Regnabit* (*Writings for Regnabit*), published in 1999 by PierLuigi Zocatelli, and containing 19 articles by French author and metaphysician René Guénon. The site also hosts an online periodical entitled *Oriens*, which publishes a variety of articles on the subject of the Primordial Tradition.

The *Regnabit* periodical was created in June 1921, under the direction of the Abbot Félix Anizan (1878-1944). It initially received strong support from the Catholic clergy. *Regnabit* had an objective to study all representations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. What separated this periodical from other Catholic publications – and perhaps what brought about its success as well as its doom – was the fact that it welcomed all sorts of collaboration, so long as the contributions were associated to the subject of the Sacred Heart. This unique range of collaboration inspired the subtitle “Universal Review of the Sacred Heart”.

The *Regnabit* name originated from the Bible passage “*Regnabit in domo Jacob in aeternum*” (Luke, I, 32), “*he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever*”, prophetic words spoken by the archangel Gabriel, sent by God to the virgin Mary to announce that she would “conceive and give birth to a son, Jesus ... Son of the Most High” (Luke, I, 31-32).



The Sacred Heart according to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque.

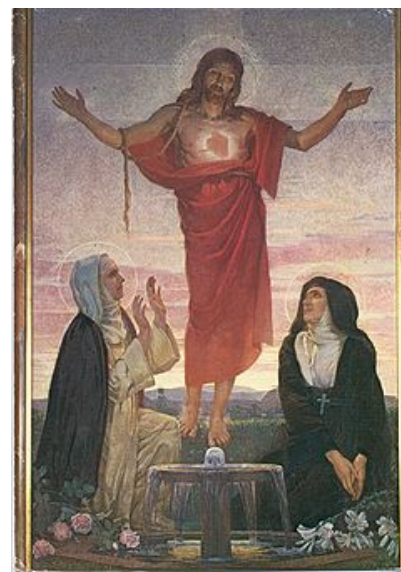
The devotion to the Sacred Heart

Over the years, *Regnabit* offered many praises to the Sacred Heart. It published a large number of iconographies and historical representations of the Heart of Jesus. The periodical was then able to show, thanks to archeological discoveries often provided by the subscribers themselves to the redaction of *Regnabit*, that the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus started long before the miraculous apparitions at Paray-le-Monial. Indeed, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ officially started with the visions of Jesus presenting his Sacred Heart to Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690), a nun and mystic from the Burgundy region at the now famous site of Paray-le-Monial, in France. Since these apparitions, the official Catholic Feast of the Sacred Heart has been occurring 19 days after the Sunday of Pentecost, typically during the month of June. It can be noted that the creation of *Regnabit* happened in June as well, in celebration of the Feast of the Sacred Heart. Some readers familiar with traditional symbolism will also note that the month of June hosts the summer solstice, which has a strong symbolical and traditional meaning with regard to the *door of mortals*, in opposition with the *gate of the Gods* which corresponds to the winter solstice around Christmas. These *solstitial gates* have an important meaning in the metaphysics of the Heart¹.

Historians were dating the beginning of the devotion to the Sacred Heart from the apparitions of Paray-le-Monial in the 17th century. However, what most of the contributors to *Regnabit* started to notice – and this is moreover what indirectly ended of the review several years later – is that the devotion to the Sacred Heart could be found earlier and indirectly, that is to say in a veiled or *esoterical* manner, through numerous symbols such as the symbol of the holy blood, sacred sources, the Holy Grail, the five wounds of Jesus, the spear of Longinus, the cross, etc., and after each new publication, new archeological evidences were brought up to support this thesis (ancient coins, engravings, paintings, wood carvings, articles of clothing, etc.).

We shall also notice the evolution of the themes studied by the contributors to *Regnabit*, particularly expanding upon contributions by René Guénon beginning in 1925. Thus, we can read this admission from Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, iconographer and engraver, scholar and fervent Catholic:

“Almost all the Catholics were still seeing yesterday the piety towards the Heart of Jesus as an innovation from the 17th century, when as early as as the 11th century, Saint Bernard, already, was singing it; when the theologians and the mystics from the following centuries glorified it and when, as early as the beginning of the 14th century, and maybe earlier, all kinds of artists multiplied the images of it. Even more



Painting showing the blessed Mary of the Divine Heart and of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, in adoration in front of the apparition of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

¹ See the articles by René Guénon on this subject, particularly “*The Solstitial gates*” and “*Concerning the Two Saint Johns*”, in *Symbols of the Sacred Science*, Sophia Perennis.

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nowadays, the devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus is seen as a relatively new aspect of the modern piety.

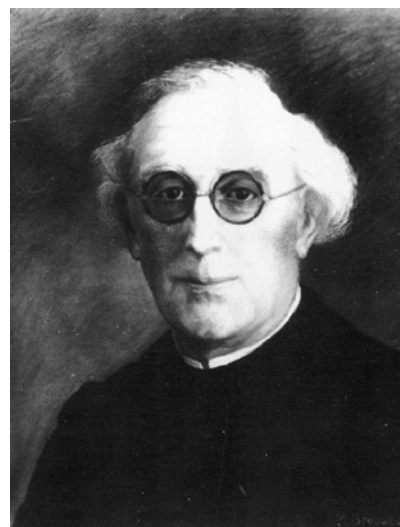
“This second mistake is identical to the first one; and the truth is that if the expression *Eucharistic Heart* is indeed relatively recent, the idea that it represents and the cult it points to are already, in the sacred iconography, at least six times centuries olders.”²

In reality, we can literally compare the *revealing* of the Eucharistic Heart of Paray-le-Monial to the *unveiling* of a symbol that was until now reserved for a group of initiates. It has brought to light (which is the meaning of *exotericism*) an esoterical principle. The heart, buried under the flesh inside the chest, was only an organ which symbolized *love* and *charity* for the public at large and for the Catholics. What the *Regnabit* scholars have demonstrated was that the heart had a multitude of other deeper meanings, such as being the *source of life*, the *container (Holy Grail)* of the sacred blood of Christ, the *cave* or *cavity* open by the spear of *Longinus*, the *central* aspect and the *moteur* of the being... *Regnabit* has therefore carried out a return back to traditional sources that the creators of the publication had not expected, and it is clear that Guénon in particular, as well as the scholar Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, played an important role in this.

The creator of the publication

As noted earlier, Abbot Felix Anizan was the founder of *Regnabit*. Since 1909, he had centered his faith on devotion to the Sacred Heart and he found necessary the creation of a publication whose *object* would deal with “questions of dogma, of moral, of ascetism, of mysticism, of liturgy, of art, of history with regard to the Sacred Heart: information about the congregations, the practices, the works made to the glory of the Sacred Heart; in short, everything about the Sacred Heart, here is the objective of the Review that we present to you”.³

Anizan initiated his project with the collaboration of the centre of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Paray-le-Monial. Among the first contributors are great theologians: Jesuit Augustin Hamon – former specialist on the mysticism of the Sacred Heart – Benedictine dom Demaret from the abbey of Solesmes, Oblate Émile Hoffet (1873-1946), the future Monsignor Léon Cristiani (1879-1971), as well as the secretary of the centre of Paray-le-Monial, Gabriel de Noailat. The publication surfaces under the auspices of a committee composed of the Cardinal Louis-Ernest Dubois (1865-1929), Archbishop of Paris, and of fifteen prelates from all continents, among which we find dom Gariador, superior general of the Congregazione Benedettina



Abbot Félix Anizan

² *Regnabit*, 4th years. – N° 1, June 1925, in *Les Images du Cœur eucharistique en Angleterre au XV^e et au XVI^e siècles (Images of the eucharistic Heart in England in the 15th and 16th centuries)*.

³ *Regnabit*, 1st year. – N° 1, Tome 1, June 1921.

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Cassinense. The approval of the review by the Church would then be confirmed on March 10, 1924 by a special Apostolic blessing – where congratulations and encouragements were expressed – sent to the redaction of *Regnabit* by the Secretary of State for Pius XI and signed by the Cardinal Pietro Gasparri. In spite of all this, the characteristic of the publication was to solely be the “voice of no specific work, of no specific pilgrimage, of no specific brotherhood, of no specific congregation, of no specific group. It is the “Universal Review of the Sacred Heart because ... it accepts, with gratitude, all kinds of collaborations, with regard to everything relative to the immense question of the Sacred Heart.”⁴ This is what would lead to the participation, a few years later, of René Guénon. Until then, this author focused his books and articles mainly on the subject of Oriental metaphysics.

Guénon’s participation

René Guénon started his collaboration to *Regnabit* in 1925, during the last years he spent in France before moving to Egypt, and he contributed 19 articles concerning the symbolism of the Heart, and in a more general way, on the universal and traditional symbolism of the *Center of the World*. He commented his participation to *Regnabit* by declaring that it was for him the opportunity to place himself “more specifically in the *perspective* of the Christian tradition, with the intention of showing the perfect agreement with the other forms of the universal tradition.”⁵ Until then, Guénon had dealt minimally with Christian symbolism, as the list of his first published books clearly indicates.⁶



René Guénon

Guénon unfortunately had to cease his participation in 1927 due to “the hostility of certain *neo-Scholastic* circles”⁷ and the accusations of *doing some esotericism* coming from *anti-sectarian* groups⁸. However, during his participation with *Regnabit*, Guénon developed an important relationship with a great specialist in Christian symbolism; iconographer and engraver Louis Charbonneau-Lassay (1878-1946) was another major contributor of articles to *Regnabit*. Their relationship continued with the exchange of letters well after the end of Guénon’s contribution to the periodical. Guénon regularly reviewed Charbonneau-Lassay’s articles in the periodical *Études Traditionnelles* (*Traditional Studies*).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Note in the article « The Mustard Seed », in *Symboles Fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée* (*Symbols of Sacred Science*), René Guénon, Gallimard, 1962, p. 433.

⁶ At the time of his participation to *Regnabit*, Guénon had only published the following books, besides his contribution to various periodicals: *Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines*, 1921; *Theosophy: History of a Pseudo-Religion*, 1921; *The Spiritist Fallacy*, 1923; *East and West*, 1924; *Man and his Becoming according to the Vedanta*, 1925.

⁷ *Ibid.* note 5.

⁸ Such as the *Revue Internationale des Sociétés Secrètes* (*International Review of Secret Societies*) directed by Mgr Jouin (1844-1932), denouncer of supposed plots fomented by secret societies and occult forces.

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Charbonneau-Lassay continued to publish many articles related to the subject of the Sacred Heart in *Regnabit* until the end of the review in 1929. He continued his scholarly work in another periodical *Le Rayonnement Intellectuel* (*The Intellectual Radiance*), of which he assumed the direction, and which was published from 1929 to 1939 somewhat in continuation of *Regnabit*. It must be noted that René Guénon's contributions to *Regnabit* was desired and "expressly requested"⁹ by Charbonneau-Lassay himself, who had met him through a common friend, Olivier de Fremond (1850-1940)¹⁰, member of the Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest (Society of the Western Antique Dealers).

Some of Charbonneau-Lassay's articles along with hundreds of remarkable, personally rendered wood-cut engravings (used instead of photographs, not common at that time) were later gathered in an extraordinary master work, *The Bestiary of Christ*, which was first printed in a very limited edition in Brussel in 1940, during World War 2. Tragically, only 35 copies survived the terrible bombing in Belgium that consumed all the books in flame, as well as the original manuscript and all of the author's wood-cut engravings.

Guénon is quoted many times in notes in the *Bestiary*, and it is clear that the two authors had a lot of esteem for each other, united by their deep interest in symbolism and for the Christian hermetism of the middle-age (Louis Charbonneau-Lassay owned archives from ancient Christian hermetico-mystical brotherhoods as we will see later), even if they disagreed on certain aspects. Today it appears that Charbonneau-Lassay's work was a reference in the matter of Christian symbolism for René Guénon, and in return Guénon was a reference for Charbonneau-Lassay on the subject of general traditional symbolism, as is evident by their personal letters on this subject.¹¹



Louis Charbonneau-Lassay in his workshop
(Archives Salzani-Zoccatelli)

⁹ *Le Lièvre qui rumine, autour de René Guénon, Louis Charbonneau-Lassay et la Fraternité du Paraclet*, PierLuigi Zoccatelli, Archè Milano, 1999, p. 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹¹ Many letters exchanged in between René Guénon and Louis Charbonneau-Lassay are available on the CESNUR website: <http://www.cesnur.org/paraclet/guenon1.html>.

The end of the publication

Guénon's contribution to *Regnabit* suddenly ended in 1927, concluded by disagreements in between the two sides, as shown in letters exchanged between Father Anizan, Louis Charbonneau-Lassay and Olivier de Fremond.¹² Zoccatelli, who has studied Charbonneau-Lassay's life and work, indicates, basing his information on unpublished documents which he was able to consult in Italian archives, a climate of disagreement amongst Father Anizan himself and his congregation as a "quarrel about the theological basis of the devotion to the Sacred Heart"¹³ which began in 1923 and ended the publication in 1929. As noted earlier, these disagreements amounted to the accusations of *doing some esotericism* by *anti-sectarian* groups of extremist Catholics. According to these anti-sectarian groups, studying the esotericism of primordial Christian symbols was redolent of free-masonry and occultism and had no place in a Catholic publication. As far as Guénon's opinion about the review *Regnabit* itself, he was very clear: "there is nothing interesting in *Regnabit* except my articles and Charbonneau's".¹⁴ What is also apparent, and we agree with Zoccatelli about this, is that Guénon and Charbonneau lifted a veil about the existence of a *Christian esotericism* that the Catholic clergy in particular had difficulties accepting. Anyone who has taken the opportunity to read at least parts of the original *Regnabit* periodicals, will notice that the majority of the articles referencing the devotion to the Sacred Heart are full of lyrical religious sentimentality – some would call them "cheesy" – incompatible with the intellectual rigor found in Guénon's articles. It is also interesting to note the introduction by Abbot Anizan of Guénon's very first article published in the edition of August-September 1925, entitled "the Sacred Heart and the legend of the Holy Grail", where the Father seems to excuse himself in advance to the readers of *Regnabit* for presenting the idea that the Holy Grail might have symbolized the Heart of Jesus well before the official cult to the Sacred Heart of Paray-le-Monial (note the lyricism that we mentioned earlier):

"These old myths that make the first education of humanity are like a foliation, and a charming one as well as dense.

"Beautiful rejections of the primitive tradition, or sweet free growths of the human spirit, wouldn't these legends express in their own way some aspects of Christ that the first man had to explain to his sons and that all souls, instinctively, await for?

"Monsieur René Guénon sees in the Grail – the mysterious cup mentioned in one of our mystical ancient romances – the figure of the loving Heart that "the Lord gave one day to Saint Mechtilde as the symbol of a golden cup where all Saints ought to drink the beverage of life" (*The Book of Special Grace*, 1st part, ch. 23, number 41).

"May the old myths let us drink in the traditional doctrine where the friends of *Regnabit* might find a pre-manifestation of the Heart of Jesus."

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁴ Letter to Guido De Giorgio dated March 4, 1929, quoted in *L'Instant et l'Éternité et autres textes sur la Tradition*, G. De Giorgio, Milan, Archè, 1987, p. 290.

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This term of *pre-manifestation* was indeed used by some Catholics to explain the existence of Christian symbols appearing before the birth of Christ (such as the cross). In reality we find here the negation of the existence of a primordial Tradition, or even of the universalism of symbols, by using the theory of *pre-manifestation* as a sort of prophetism announcing the coming of the Messiah.



Example of engraving by Louis Charbonneau-Lassay.

This astronomical heart engraved in marble was found in an old church of Saint-Denis d'Orques, estimated to date from the end of the 15th century. It also displays the opening of the heart by the spear of Longinus.

And, Louis Charbonneau-Lassay added in November 1925: "In the last installment of *Regnabit*, Mr. R. Guénon told us, with his undeniable authority, of this Christian hermetism which it would be childish to deny the existence and the important role in the Middle Ages."¹⁵ Our author would know something about it since he was himself the guardian of archives for two ancient hermetico-mystical brotherhoods, the *Etoile Internelle* (*Internal Star*) and the *Fraternité du Paraclet* (*Fraternity of the Paraclete*), knighthood orders founded towards the end of the 15th century or the beginning of the 16th century.

This is a turn of events that was not anticipated by the creators of *Regnabit*. What was supposed to be a publication dedicated to the relatively new cult of the Sacred Heart, had become little by little, revolutionary in its approach and its unveiling of an ancient esoterical symbolism related to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Le Rayonnement Intellectuel (The Intellectual Radiance)

It is however worth mentioning that in January 1925, Father Félix Anizan and Louis Charbonneau-Lassay had founded, in parallel to the *Regnabit* publication, the "Société du Rayonnement Intellectuel du Sacré Cœur (*Society for the Intellectual Radiance of the Sacred Heart*), which was to organize conferences, displays, etc. in addition to its publishing activities. Sending in January 1926 an appeal to "writers and artists" and wanting to be known, not as a **work of piety**, but as an **organ of conquest**, the appeal of the Société pour le Rayonnement Intellectuel was signed by:

"Félix Anizan, priest, general secretary of the Society for the Intellectual Radiance of the Sacred Heart;

Louis Charbonneau-Lassay, engraver and heraldist;

Jean Foussier, painter;

René Guénon, professor of philosophy;

Charles Grolleau, secretary to the Bulletin des Ecrivains et des Artistes Catholiques (Bulletin of the Catholic Writers and Artists)."

As we can see, Guénon appeared fully invested in this mission of transmission.

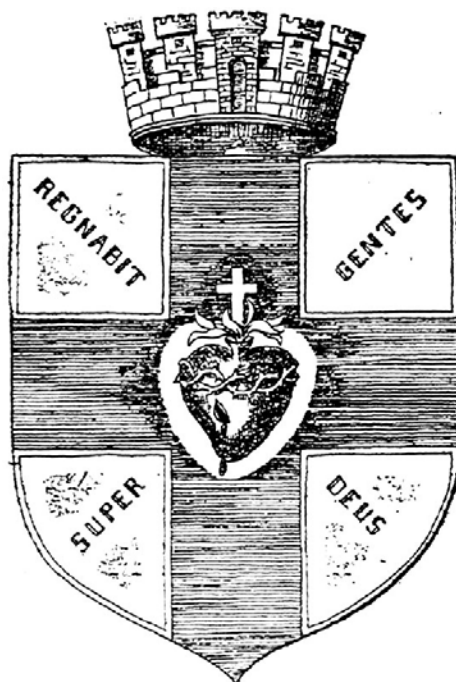
¹⁵ *L'Iconographie ancienne du Cœur de Jésus. A propos de deux livres récents*, *Regnabit*, November 1925.

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Société du Rayonnement Intellectuel du Sacré-Cœur

When Abbot Anizan ended the publication of *Regnabit* in 1929, Louis Charbonneau-Lassay immediately took the relay and started the publication of the periodical *Le Rayonnement intellectuel* (*The Intellectual Radiance*) which he directed and is considered the intellectual continuation of *Regnabit* whereas the devotional aspect was continued through the *Revue Universelle du Sacré-Cœur* (*Universal Review of the Sacred Heart*). It must be noted that Father Anizan continued to participate occasionally with Louis Charbonneau-Lassay's new periodical. This is also where Charbonneau published his major contributions which constituted the basis of his *Bestiary of Christ*. However, the edition of this periodical was so limited that there are today no copies in any public libraries, neither in France or abroad.¹⁶



¹⁶ *Études de Symbolique Chrétienne*, L. Charbonneau-Lassay, Paris, Gutember Reprint, 2005, p.414.

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NOTES :

- a) Almost every copy of *Regnabit* is available online at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (French National Library) website: <http://gallica.bnf.fr>. Search keyword “Regnabit” or go directly to :
<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb32850416j/date.r=Regnabit.langEN>.
- b) We are looking for original copies of *Regnabit* as well as of *Le Rayonnement Intellectuel*, for collection purposes. Contact us for any offer through the website www.Regnabit.com.