

HIDDEN SAGES, INVISIBLE SAINTS, ANONYMOUS REDEMPTORS

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Abstract: *Against the background of universal salvation, the notion of hidden sages acquires redemptive connotations and slides sensitively towards the notion of anonymous saviors, unrevealed persons, manifested in the historical time, who thus mysteriously second the saving endeavors of the Messiah. Indeed, as the above-mentioned examples throw into relief, irrespective of the religious and cultural space they belong to, the undisclosed saints, the unrevealed sages are those the world is based on and those that limit the world's sinfulness and evil propensities. They provide a significant human help to the divine redemption of the sins committed by individuals and ethnical-religious communities, in the narrow circle of the earthly Babylon, through their secret gift, through their overwhelming, though occult, power to annul, to annihilate the various accumulations of evil. On the other hand, the anonymous saviors play the role of instruments of the divine will, they maintain a continuous dialogue with the Supreme Being, with the Ultimate Reality. As shepherds and guides of the human race, they are the driving force towards the unknown goal that God established for His creation. According to the sacred texts of the Abrahamic religions, there are several ways in which they exercise their attributions which are, in fact, variants by which their spiritual perfection finds its expression in the world: through goodness, tolerance, purity, love, science, wisdom, and strength, they often accomplish their mission unconsciously, completely ignoring their own value and the value of their deeds. Thus, the official spiritual hierarchies fall under the sign of appearance, uncertainty, and vanity, which calls for a careful, persevering, albeit somehow imponderable, axiological examination of the criteria of human excellence, in order to discover, recognize or recall the traces of the hidden saints, either the occulted individuals who once allowed the sapiential fruits of their presence to grow in the human orchard, or the tragically unveiled teachings of those forever identified with their beatified spiritual motherland. The hidden sages support the foundations of the world and their anonymous redemptive work, as secondary Messianic agents, is the true measure of the segmental, historical time, an impermanent bridge between Genesis and Apocalypse.*

Key-words: **Hidden sages, invisible saints, anonymous saviours.**

One of the most interesting delimitations involved by the adventure of the fundamental gnoseological attempts uses the distinction between common "revelation" and occult realities or notions, between what reveals itself to the eyes of the world and what remains hidden to these eyes, and between the messages predicated by the sages that belong to the texture of time and the non-predicated messages (always kept, consciously or subconsciously, at the thresholds of the power to be, at the Kafkian doors that watch over the entrance to the universe of orality or to that of textuality) of the sages that belong to eternity. Absurd as it may seem, the two categories do not mutually exclude, therefore multiple interferences and overlaps of nuances can occur, a fact that increases the difficulty and charm of decoding the arcane fabric of sanctified ontology. This approach allows for the perspective of an anarchic spiritual axiology due to the fact that it provides the possibility for the formal sapiential hierarchies (consisting of philosophers and teachers that appeared or appear in the

public domain) to be, in fact, false, while beyond them those who do know, the happy few, maintain a genuine and secret dialogue with divinity, know the ultimate purposes that determine creation and existence in duration, govern silently and covertly the destiny of the lost humanity and cover, through the temporal-historical continuity of the world itself, in compliance with the decrees of a superior will, the strange way between Genesis and Apocalypse.

Such a vaguely heretical position finds its justification in the famous Daoist sentence according to which the “true sage does not leave any traces”. Lao-Tse (Laozi; VIth century BCE) established the paradigm of being a hidden sage during the second half of the Chou Ch’ao (Zhou Chao) Dynasty (c. 1050-256 BCE). After writing down the approximately five thousand words about the Way and the Virtue, the Old Master vanished beyond the boundary, into the “chaos”, for the Empire was identical with the ordered, civilized universe, and with the world as the space inhabited by human beings. There is no place or time to attest Lao-Tse (Laozi)’s death, therefore his “trace” should be looked for in such enigmatic maxims as: “My words can be understood and followed easily, and yet, underneath the Heaven, nobody can understand them and nobody can follow them. My words have an ancestor, my deeds have a master, but the human beings don’t know these things, and consequently they don’t know me. Few are those who know me, and this is the reason why I deserve to be highly valued. Therefore the wise man is vested with rough clothes, but in his bosom he holds the jade.” Chad Hansen defined Lao-Tse (Laozi)’s primordial Daoism by comparison to Mencius (Meng-tzu; Mengzi; 372-289 BCE)’ philosophical system and in relation to language and antilanguage: “Lao-Tse (Laozi) was, like Mencius, a mystic in one key sense: he was antilanguage. But Mencius backs into that position, where Laozi seems to be fascinated with paradoxes of trying to state the limits of language in language. His theory of those limits, however, reflects the Chinese view of the role of language. Language purports to express *tao* (*dao*). *Tao* (*Dao*), as we have argued, is guidance. Lao-Tse (Laozi) discusses the limitations of language as a guide, not as a descriptive system. Lao-Tse (Laozi) shows his mysticism, as Mencius did, in rejecting the prescriptive role of language. The theory of the limit of language and the mystical tenor is practical, not metaphysical. Lao-Tse (Laozi), no doubt, was aware of the real world. That, by itself, does not justify attributing to him an implicit and unmotivated change in the then current account of the role of language. He has no motivation both to start treating the role of language as representing reality and then denying that representation is possible. (...) The text is perfectly compatible with the view that language is a tool for human organization. It provides guidance. *Tao* (*Dao*) guides differently when the language is different¹.”

In compliance with the intuition of the last consequences triggered by the normative character of this illustrious example, we are able to formulate the axiom of a maximum

¹ Lao-Tse, *Tao Te Ching*, J. J. L. Duyvendak (trans.), *The Book of the Way and Its Virtue*, LXX, Charles E. Tuttle Company Inc., Boston-Rutland-Tokyo, 1992; Laozi, *Cartea despre dao și putere*, LXX, Dinu Luca (trans.), Humanitas, București, 1993, p. 288; Chad Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought. A Philosophical Interpretation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York, 1992, p. 203. See also Marcel Granet, *La pensée chinoise*, Chapter III, La Renaissance du Livre, Paris, 1934; Max Kaltenmark, *Lao Tseu et le taoïsme*, Chapters I-III, V, Seuil, Paris, 1962.

uncertainty, relativity, and carefulness in discussing the real or illusory identities in the history of universal spirituality, as long as the energyless action (*wu-wei*), involved by the indirect, covert, but nonetheless constant presence of the hidden sages can change into nothingness and vanity the sumptuous and shining edifices of schools, authors, systems, and doctrines – in fact, nothing but, often, chimerical, illusionary fabrications of the lay philosophical fiction, momentary translations of the semantic veil which screens and prevents access to the unique essence of the truth.

The idea of *hidden sage* is related to the notion of *esoteric doctrine*, secret, unrevealed to the vulgar, revealed only to a small circle of people in the know. Plato testified in his *Seventh Letter* that his true teaching is not to be found in the books he wrote, but in the oral doctrine he preached in his school². The school and the oral preaching harbored by its environment constitute therefore, exclusively, the adequate framework for understanding and assimilating a doctrine because, by simply reading the written text, the *book*, the readers, prey to loneliness and uncontrollable individual interpretations, can distort the original ideas to a considerable extent. That is why, as the above-mentioned writing postulates, the person who really wants to assimilate Plato's doctrine should sit at Plato's feet, in the privileged sapiential milieu animated by the disciples' community and the proximity of the master. This syntagm is quite close to the rabbinic paradigm of learning on which the Jewish tradition of the Biblical exegesis, the *Oral Torah* (*Torah shebealpe*), is founded: the novices acquiring learning and wisdom while sitting at the feet of the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim* (c. 10-500) who were the leaders and masters of the rabbinic academies in Palestine or Babylon. The adepts of the Christian-Gnostic sects of IIIrd-Vth centuries Roman North Africa considered *Pístis-Sophía* ("Faith-Wisdom") as the esoteric doctrine which Jesus preached to His chosen few (apostles, apprentices, disciples) and which, as a result, was unknown to the large mass of Christians. *Pístis-Sophía* describes the difficult redemptive process whose purpose is to celestially re-integrate the human soul in the Divine *Sophía* and the *Pléroma* or divine „wholeness", a process achieved through the saving action of Jesus Christ – a Gnostic scenario based on redemption through knowledge (*gnōsis*) and the idea of a divine Messenger: "But that power of light descended upon Jesus and surrounded Him entirely, while He sat apart from His disciples, and He shone exceedingly, and the light that was upon Him was beyond measure. And the disciples did not see Jesus because of the great light in which He was, or which was upon Him, for their eyes were darkened because of the great light in which He was, but they saw only the light, which sent forth many beams of light. And the beams of light were not like unto one another, and the light was of different kinds, and it was of different form from below upwards, since one [beam] was more excellent than the other [...] in a great and boundless splendour of light. It extended from beneath the earth as far as the heaven³."

² Plato, *Seventh & Eighth Letters*, R. S. Bluck (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1947.

³ Edgar Hennecke, Wilhelm Schneemelcher (ed.), Robert McLachlan Wilson (trans.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, I-II, James Clarke & Co., Westminster; John Knox Press, Cambridge, UK-Louisville, Kentucky, USA, 1991-1992, I, p. 361-369. See also Kurt Rudolph, *The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, Harper, San Francisco, 1987, p. 27.

Gershom Scholem⁴ established that in the Jewish and Christian religious realms the origin of the idea of the hidden sage as righteous man is to be found in the *Book of the Proverbs of Solomon*, 10, 20-25: “The tongue of the just is as choice silver (...). The lips of the righteous feed many (...). But the righteous is an everlasting foundation (of the world)”. Also in *Genesis*, 18, 30, God reassures the patriarch Abraham that the world will never lack the presence of thirty men as righteous as Abraham himself: “And he said unto Him, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And He said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.” Various apophthegms founded on these Biblical enunciations are attributed to rabbinic Palestinian or Babylonian authorities of the IInd-IVth centuries, and some of them are incorporated in the *Babylonian Talmud (Talmud Bavli)* or the *Palestinian Talmud (Talmud Yerushalmi)*. According to the opinion expressed by Joshua Ben Levi, if the people of Israel deserved God’s blessings, eighteen of these thirty righteous men would live in the Holy Land, and the other twelve outside it⁵. Abbaye, a Babylonian teacher from the IVth century, was the first to mention the number thirty-six: “The world never lacks thirty-six men who receive the divine countenance daily⁶.” By applying the rules of the numerical speculation (*gematria*) to the verse “(...) blessed are all they that wait for Him” (*Isaiah*, 30, 18), the word “Him” is identified with the number thirty-six and thus the verse reads “(...) blessed are all they that wait for [those] thirty-six [sages]”. Gershom Scholem also mentions the hypothesis formulated by Sofia Amaisenova, concerning a pre-Biblical or non-Biblical (Egyptian, Hellenistic, or Asyro-Babylonian) astrological origin of the notion of thirty-six hidden sages: the division of the zodiacal circle (the 360 day-units of the year) into decades (36 sectors / sections, each of them consisting of ten units). Since every decade is governed by a deity, the doctrine of the thirty-six unrevealed righteous men might derive from the primitive astrological idea of the thirty-six deities that govern the decades of the zodiacal circle. It is also possible that, in order to justify this astrological doctrine with arguments derived from the Biblical text, the rabbis and the Jewish scholars from the Middle Ages might have given a new meaning to *Isaiah*, 30, 18, whose essence is the very emergence of the idea of hidden sages, thirty-six in number, an idea perfectly acceptable for the rabbinic tradition through *gematria*. Numerous collections of medieval Hebrew legends include references to the thirty-six hidden sages or anonymous righteous men, founded on various preceding Talmudic motifs⁷.

The same motif of the hidden sages is attested in the Islamic mystic universe (Xth-XIth centuries), where there are no longer thirty-six of them but four thousand. Idries Shah mentions the various forms and appearances through which the invisible saints (the “friends”) remain hidden to the eyes of the world, stating and improving by themselves the unknown ethics and spiritual practice of illumination, perfection and anonymity⁸. In the treatise entitled

⁴ Gershom Scholem, “The Tradition of the Thirty-Six Hidden Just Men”, in: Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1971, p. 251-256.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 252-253.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 254-255.

⁷ Such as Nissim Ben Jacob’s book, written in the 11th century in Kairouan, North Africa, or the *Book of the Pious* by Rabbi Judah the Pious who lived in Regensburg and Speyer in the 12th century.

Scholem, “The Tradition”, in: Scholem, *The Messianic Idea*, p. 251-256.

⁸ Idries Shah, *The Sufis*, Anchor Books-Doubleday, New York-London, 1971, p. 427.

Kashf al-mahjūb or *The Revelation of the Hidden*, Al-Hujwārī (c. 990-1072/1077) outlines the doctrine of the *ūfī* masters who chose to avoid through occultation the nothingness of the historical time: “Among them there are four thousand who are concealed and do not know one another and are not aware of the excellence of their state, but in all circumstances are hidden from themselves and from mankind. (...) But of those who have power to loose and to bind and are the officers of the divine court there are three hundred, called *Akhyār*, and forty, called *Abdāl*, and seven, called *Abrār*, and four, called *Awtād*, and three, called *Nuqabā*, and one, called *Qu}b* or *Ghawth*. All these know one another and cannot act save by mutual consent⁹.” Jalālu’d-din Rūmī (1207-1273), founder of the Order of the Whirling Dervishes or *Mevleviyya*, develops the same idea in *Mathnawī*: “Hundreds of thousands of hidden (spiritual) kings are holding their heads high (in the region) beyond this world. Because of God’s jealousy, their names remained hidden: every beggar did not pronounce their names. (...) Another party go (to and fro) exceedingly hidden: how should they become well-known to the people of externals? They possess all this (spiritual dominion), and (yet) no one’s eye falls upon their sovereignty for one moment. Both their miracles and they (themselves) are in the (divine) sanctuary: even the *Abdāl* do not hear their names. Or art thou ignorant of the bounties of God who is calling thee to come yonder? (...) Who is the *Abdāl*? He that becomes transmuted, he whose wine is turned into vinegar by divine transmutation. (...) The *Qu}b* is he who turns round himself, (while) round him is the revolution of the celestial spheres¹⁰.” In Sufism the idea of unrevealed or invisible sages can also be found in *Ikhwān al-safā’*, the “Faithful Brethren of Basra” or the “Brethren of Purity”, a group of unknown Arab scholars who published in Basra, in 980, fifty-two anonymous encyclopedic treatises in order to enlighten their fellow humans, to give ordinary people a whole range of the knowledge of the time¹¹.

Gershom Scholem claims that it is difficult to determine if the doctrine of the hidden sages originates in a Hebrew tradition, which is supposed to have been wrapped in a new textual form when it penetrated inside the mystical Islamic milieu, or if the idea crystalized within Islam, on the foundation of Biblical-rabbinic enunciations concerning wisdom-wise men and justice-just men, and later on it returned to Judaism as an articulate, elaborate, doctrinal system which only needed to be adapted and brought to unanimously accepted standards of compatibility with the Abrahamic traditions. The doctrine of occult sages found a landmark in Polish Hasidism (XVIIIth-XIXth centuries), a fact that generated its longevity and persistence in the modern world, and ensured its continuity. On the ground of the numerical value of the letters *lamed* (30) and *waw* (6), the thirty-six hidden sages of ancient times were called *lamedvovniks* by the Hasidic schools. There existed, thus, two categories of *zaddikim*: *nistar* (the hidden ones, who kept themselves to themselves) and *mefursam* (those who were known to their fellow men and who publicly performed the acts that stemmed from their spiritual mission). The former category belonged, undoubtedly, to a superior order, for

⁹ ‘Alī Ibn ‘Uthmān Al-Jullābī Al-Hujwārī, *Kashf al-mahjūb*, Reynold A. Nicholson (trans.), *The Revelation of the Hidden*, Luzac & Co. Ltd., London, 1976, p. 213-214.

¹⁰ Rūmī, *The Mathnawī*, Nicholson, II, p. 269-270; III, p. 174-175, p. 224; V, p. 141.

¹¹ Y. Marquet, “Ikhwān al-safā’”, in: H. A. R. Gibb; J. K. Kramers; E. Lévy-Provençal; J. Schacht; B. Lewis; Ch. Pellat (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1986, vol. III, p. 1071-1076.

anonymity thoroughly protected them against self-pride, worldly vanity, and every vulgar desire. These *nistar* often ignored completely their extraordinary skill and lived as the humblest of beings, unaware of their superiority and their privileged identity as “foundations of the world”. Two Kabbalistic forerunners of the *lamedvovniks* as hidden sages and redeemers are Rav Hamnuna Sava and Yanuqa, the protagonists of *Sava de-Mishpatim* and *Yanuqa*, two treatises included in *Sefer ha-Zohar* or *The Book of Splendour*. Rav Hamnuna Sava acts as a donkey-driver in the village of Mishpatim, he drives the rabbis’ donkeys from behind and illuminates for them the true meanings of the *Torah*. Yanuqa, his son, is a wonder-child whose otherworldly wisdom astounds the biblical scholars: “The companions came, prostrated themselves before the old man, and wept, and said: ‘Had we come into the world for no other purpose than to hear these words from your mouth it would have sufficed us.’ The old man said: ‘It is not for this alone that I began to speak, for an old man like me does not rattle on or raise his voice for one thing only. How confused the inhabitants of the world are in their understanding! They do not see the path of truth in the *Torah*, but the *Torah* calls to them every day in love and they will not ever turn their heads. It is true, as I have said, that the *Torah* takes a subject from its sheath, and it is revealed for a moment and then immediately hidden; but when it is revealed from within its sheath, and then at once concealed, it is revealed only to those who know it and recognize it.’ (...) ‘But with this child, whose light is stable, and who has perfect understanding, it is different. Furthermore, the Holy One, blessed be He, yearns to smell the scent of this apple, blessed is his portion¹²!’”

The doctrine of the hidden sages underlies the social and theological construction of Christian sainthood, particularly in the contemplative and metaphysical Christianity of Augustinian extraction. Henri Irénée Marrou (1904-1977) emphasized occultation and anonymity as a characteristic of Christian holiness: “Only exceptionally and for the good of His Church does God allow the holiness of one of His sons to become manifest and generate a cult (...). Usually, the saints remain hidden to our eyes (...), and the world subsists only thanks to them. (...) As the Apologists of the IInd century proclaimed (...), ‘What the soul is for the body, the saints [symbol for all Christians] are for the world; in the same way as the soul supports the body, they [the saints] support the world’. The saints contain, support, and maintain the world, they are for it a principle of internal cohesion, of unity, of permanence and life¹³.”

The undisclosed identity of the Christian saints is consubstantial to the Augustinian doctrine according to which the two cities on earth are indistinct, intimately mixed (*Perplexae quippe sunt*), till the end of life and Judgment Day¹⁴. The city of God’s saints constitute the

¹² Scholem, “The Tradition”, in: Scholem, *The Messianic Idea*, p. 251-256; Isaiah Tishby, Fischel Lachower (ed.), David Goldstein (trans.), *Sefer ha-Zohar / The Wisdom of the Zohar*, I-III, The Littman Library & Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991, I, p. 177-223. See also Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Schocken Books, New York, 1974, p. 161; Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, Dorset Press, New York, 1987, p. 215-222.

¹³ Henri Irénée Marrou (ed.), *Près Diogneton Epistolé / Epistola ad Diognetum*, 6, 1-7, *Sources chrétiennes*, vol. 33 bis, Cerf, Paris, 1965, p. 154; Henri Irénée Marrou, *Théologie de l’histoire*, Seuil, Paris, 1968, p. 69.

¹⁴ Aurelianus Augustinus, *La Cité de Dieu / De Civitate Dei*, Port-Royal, Paris, 1853, L I, p. 95.

embodiment of the divine attributes and of God's will. The city of the servants of Evil manifest the Principle of Evil as absence of the Principle of Good, an angelic or human defeat in front of the temptation to fall from the cosmic or moral-ontological heaven towards the inferior levels of blindness and sinfulness, a look downward and the conversion of the ascending affective and intellectual aspirations into descending affective torments impossible to thwart. The invisible saints will leave occultation and anonymity behind, in order to enact, in obeisance to the divine will, the saints' and the hidden sages' "resurrection", as the ontological acme of the resurrection of the dead, during the *Saints' Sabbath*, a stage which precedes, in the Augustinian millennial prophetology, the Sunday of sainthood and the enthroning of God's kingdom on earth¹⁵.

From the same exegetical perspective of the Christian theology of history, the German theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) considered the hidden saints, just like Henri Irénée Marrou, as divine agents invested with the power to mold the human continuity of history, who accomplish the divine plans concerning the destiny of creation and hasten, in the apocalyptic outlook, the enthroning of the Kingdom of Heaven and the universal regeneration, consecutive to the Second Advent: "To the extent to which His saints have been the most profound forces that molded history, they will be, together with Him, the norm of judgment¹⁶."

During the IIIrd-Vth centuries, the hermitages and monasteries of the Desert Fathers flourished in the Roman-Egyptian "Desert of niter" or *Wādī al-na}rūn*. The sayings which preserve their lives and teachings were collected and edited in the *Paterikón* or *Apophthegmata Patrum*, which includes the prosopographical collection of the desert saints whose names have been recorded by the ecclesiastical history (for instance, Anthony the Great, Paul of Thebes, Pachomius, Paphnutius, Macarius, Arsenius, Simeon Stylites, Sisoës), as well as the anonymous collection of the hidden desert saints who stood as the pillars of the Christian religious realm¹⁷. In this respect, the religious ethics of the hidden sainthood can be grasped from an apophthegm of Abba John the Dwarf (c. 339-410): "Abba John said, 'I think it best that a man should have a little bit of all the virtues. Therefore, get up early every day and acquire the beginning of every virtue and every commandment of God. Use great patience, with fear and long-suffering, in the love of God, with all the fervour of your soul and body. Exercise great humility, bear with interior distress; be vigilant and pray often with reverence and groaning, with purity of speech and control of your eyes. When you are despised do not get angry; be at peace, and do not render evil for evil. Do not pay attention to the faults of others, and do not try to compare yourself with others, knowing you are less than every created thing. Renounce everything material and that which is of the flesh. Live by the cross, in warfare, in poverty of spirit, in voluntary spiritual asceticism, in fasting, penitence and tears, in discernment, in purity of soul, taking hold of that which is good. Do your work in peace. Persevere in keeping vigil, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, and in

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, L XXII, C XXX, p. 798.

¹⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Théologie de l'histoire*, Fayard, Paris, 1970, p. 98.

¹⁷ Jacques Lacarrière, *Les homes ivres de Dieu*, Fayard, Paris, 1975.

sufferings. Shut yourself in a tomb as though you were already dead, so that at all times you will think death is near¹⁹.”

It is important to point out that, against the background of universal salvation, the notion of hidden sages acquires redemptive connotations and slides sensitively towards the notion of anonymous saviors, unrevealed persons, manifested in the historical time, who thus mysteriously second the saving endeavors of the Messiah. Indeed, as the above-mentioned examples throw into relief, irrespective of the religious and cultural space they belong to, the undisclosed saints, the unrevealed sages are those the world is based on and those that limit the world's sinfulness and evil propensities. They provide a significant human help to the divine redemption of the sins committed by individuals and ethnical-religious communities, in the narrow circle of the earthly Babylon, through their secret gift, through their overwhelming, though occult, power to annul, to annihilate the various accumulations of evil. On the other hand, the anonymous saviors play the role of instruments of the divine will, they maintain a continuous dialogue with the Supreme Being, with the Ultimate Reality. As shepherds and guides of the human race, they are the driving force towards the unknown goal that God established for His creation. According to the sacred texts of the Abrahamic religions, there are several ways in which they exercise their attributions which are, in fact, variants by which their spiritual perfection finds its expression in the world: through goodness, tolerance, purity, love, science, wisdom, and strength, they often accomplish their mission unconsciously, completely ignoring their own value and the value of their deeds. Thus, the official spiritual hierarchies fall under the sign of appearance, uncertainty, and vanity, which calls for a careful, persevering, albeit somehow imponderable, axiological examination of the criteria of human excellence, in order to discover, recognize or recall the traces of the hidden saints, either the occulted individuals who once allowed the sapiential fruits of their presence to grow in the human orchard, or the tragically unveiled teachings of those forever identified with their beatified spiritual motherland. The hidden sages support the foundations of the world and their anonymous redemptive work, as secondary Messianic agents, is the true measure of the segmental, historical time, an impermanent bridge between Genesis and Apocalypse.

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¹⁹ Benedicta Ward (trans.), *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers. The Alphabetical Collection*, Mowbray-Cistercian Publications, London-Oxford, 1975, p. 92.

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