

The Seven Mystical Gardens - by Sedir

(Les Sept Jardins Mystiques)

P R E F A C E

I thought it would be useful to offer to the readers of this little manual a few provisions regarding the diverse itineraries that exist between man and God, especially upon the Christian itinerary, and during the course of the latter, provisions regarding the narrower paths of Catholic mysticism and of perfect discipleship. It seems so very necessary to have an exact knowledge of the evangelical spirit, that I would like to expound for you one after the other all of the systems known concerning the inner life; their nuances, their filiations, their exactitudes and their illusions; but, volumes would be needed for this; moreover, had I all libraries at my disposal, could I comprehend all those theories exactly? Could I state the Truth such as it is? For, though Nature, the whole of Nature ascends to Perfection, there are not two creatures who proceed at the same speed, nor who follow the same path. Thought oscillates ceaselessly from the concrete to the abstract, from the particular to generality, from the individual to the universal, and it is still constantly subjected to the influence of its milieu, the influence of atavism, heredity, education, and example, plus to the much more subtle currents of the silent calls of the living Providence which succeed each other, in our Night. And since, after all, it is upon earth that we must live, and that our most subtle movements always end in acts, how can one measure the value of any system if not by its fruits? So, it is here that common sense agrees with

Divine purport, and that we find ourselves directed to, and face to face with the Gospel. Let us study the curve of this turnback. There is not a man who, upon delving into the depths of his self, fails to find within that self the obscure presence of a supreme Reality: that Presence is, he knows that It is. Here is the Absolute with its two metaphysical poles: Being and Sapience; with its two modes: Good and Verity; with its applications: moral laws and intellectual axioms; with its synthetic realization, Beauty which is the harmony between Truth and Good. Here again, outside of man, is the Absolute with its two ontological poles: all the consciences and the non-consciencies becoming individualized through spontaneities and necessities, meanwhile, expressing themselves during the course of involutions and evolutions, harmonizing themselves, and solving their antinomies through the mysteries conjugated by Providence and a Saviour, wherein we find the divine Persons again, which means to say the modes that Supreme Reality assumes so as to be accepted by us. The knowledge of Verity and the act of Good practically blend or join together in Religion—the social form of the third archetype—Beauty. These three terms, which limit the ensemble of natural phenomena and human acts and circumscribe the whole of Nature, replenish all sciences, arts and politics, also converge upon man—the object of all of these efforts, the agent of all these works, destined to reunite in himself the triple life of the absolute, of the world and of the Divine, through his general work which Providence guides him to do. * Hence, the religious problem appears to be at the origin of all other problems; the pages which follow are an essay on the diagnosis regarding the provisional solutions to the individual and inner corollaries of this problem. During the course of centuries, one sees the human species, lyrical in the beginning, inventing the legends and the myths, then receiving from Providence divers patriarchal revelations anterior to Fo-Hi, to Krishna, to Noah, to the first Zoroaster and to the Pharaohs; then man, having become a philosopher, organizes and coordinates the esoteric Mysteries. In recompense for this effort, this selfsame Providence hands over to man the new revelation of the Gospel thereby offering him the possibility of a definitive Salvation. Through the redeeming Word, eternal life, the reign of God—through these three sources of mystical leavening the fermentation of the whole human species begins, blending the relative with the absolute, Nature with God, matter with spirit; in short, mixing all of the opposite couples whose battles form the innumerable

modes of existence. Hence, it seems evident to us, human beings—sums of the reflections of these fires—that we should undergo the prolongations of these struggles, because in accordance with the image of the Creator, and in accordance with the image of the Universe, a triple life also does palpitate within our corporal envelope. The first image is the soul, I mean the pure eternal force; the second is the body; by that we must understand the substance itself under all of its forms whether ponderable or radiant; and in the middle of this stands our unseizable spirit, which, by turns, is conscience, love, hate, and will, and which circulates from our eternal flame to our temporal matter and reascends ceaselessly, just as in the Infinite, the Holy Spirit proceeds between the Father and the Son. The soul fills the same role with regard to the spirit and the body as God fills for humanity and for the universe—the soul supports the whole edifice, it lights the beacons, it guards and draws to the Heights. The corporeal center with its sensations, instincts and the non-conscious energies derived from the subtle states of matter; the spiritual center with its sentiments and passions; the intellectual center with its ideas and inspirations—these are the three organisms over which our will, enlightened by our moral conscience, reflection of the eternal soul, must extend its empire. Let us first become aware that the median organism, the affective center moved by desire finds itself in immediate rapport with the volitive center, which is nothing else but the refraction upon the mirror of the self of the free and spontaneous light of the eternal soul -- itself being the offspring of the Absolute. It is hence through the perfecting of our affective center that we shall obtain the best perfectionment of our whole being. Is it not better to treat and save a tree by ameliorating its sap rather than by washing its leaves. Therefore, among the methods of psychical cultivation, some take care of the leaves, others of the trunk, and others modify the surroundings; the only school which admits the physical ingestion of the Divine into the natural realm takes care of the sap, and that method is Christ's. Among the non-Christian methods some, following an experimental march, proceed from the external to the internal and from the bottom to the top; these tend to perfect man's skill, his vigor, his physical health, and the acuity of his senses; next, to perfect the state of the various fluidic forces such as electricities, etherisms and magnetisms; then to perfect the health of the mental and sentimental bodies; having obtained control over ideas, just as they had control over sensations, and over the acts of the vegetative life, these meth

ods seek to have control over the thinking principle itself, over that abstraction which, in us, knows that it knows. From then on, they introduce the disciple into the spheres of the unconscious, into the innumerable experiences effected by the means of diverse ecstasies. An example is the Radja-Yoga. Other schools, neglecting the corporal man, consecrate themselves to the care of the intellectual man. Such an example is Plotin. Others cultivate sentimental emotionalism, such are the Sufis and the Bhaktis. Finally, some teach how to stop feeling, loving, thinking: such were the primitive Buddhists. But all of them claim they can reach the Archetype by ascending from the outer to the inner; and their principle means, or the instrument they use, is ecstasy. * It is needless to delineate a new theory of ecstasy here; it would be verifiable only by a very small number of contemplatives and, moreover, each of the hundreds of schools to which I just referred possesses its own indubitable and sure theory. So, let us rather give a few preliminary remarks. Ecstasy is the awakening of consciousness to a universe unknown while the consciousness to the known universe recedes; it is a more copious dream; it is a psychical depolarization; but it may be obtained in several ways, and to each process a special experience corresponds. Through the use of certain drugs, by hypnotic, magnetic, spiritualistic or magic maneuvers, by the auto-magnetism of voluntary concentration, by fanatical exaltation or by the contemplation of abstract entities; all these methods, because they set into motion only relative, hybrid or local forces, remain illegitimate in their principle, their results are precarious and the excesses into which they almost always fatally abut are perverse. Their adepts pursue three principal goals: first, a more and more stable exaltation which renders the individual master of the most powerful psychic energies, which is to say, the most hidden; the next goal is to have a participation in creation by the practice of occult sciences; and the third, to have the direction of terrestrial destinies by means of secret societies and occult arts. On the other hand—other men exist who conceive God as independent and not diluted in the ocean of the world; they see His Providence ever active in the person of His Son, Who came in flesh and left, but Who is ever present; these men's sole preoccupation is to help their brothers grasp that salvation. This is the original characteristic of Christianity and its whole power. The purest expression of its method is to be found in the Gospel, to which one must instantly return in order not to lose one's self in the multiplicity of the commentaries to which it has been sub

jected for the past two thousand years. Let us try to determine what those principles are. * The non-Christian methods forget one action of common sense which is, that in us, the body, the fluids, the intellect, the emotivity, and the unconscious interpenetrate; there is no airtight, or watertight partition in man; for instance the stone which wounds the pilgrim's feet may provoke some kind of drama in the sublime region of his spirit; any type of emotion alters the chemical quality of our corporal exchanges, even pure thought has an influence upon the body; and the visitation of a genii received unconsciously in the superior tenebrae of our being may kill or heal us. Thus, during the training period of a man-founded initiation, the physical body of a disciple will not recuperate its perfect vigor if the fluidic bodies which animate it are not primarily healthy and pure; on the other hand, if the master makes him start the exercises through one, of the internal organisms, success will be compromised by the pathological state of the body of flesh. Moreover, if we subject the movements of the digestive tube, of the lungs, and of the heart to a voluntary control, will not this artificial rhythm open the door to invisible and injurious forces within the spirit? In short, how can one normally conquer internal energies by other energies to which they are foreign? Let us suppose that the consciousness of the disciple takes abode anyhow in the most obscure regions of the unconscious, and that it does reach the state of governing the self even to that central point from which it knows and has the notion of its own existence, one will only have attained this particular geometrical point, this metaphysical seed where knowledge and the being coexist; one will come in contact with the center of gravity of the wheel, but the hand which has built this wheel and which alone can take the material molecules from which it is made away from their fateful destiny, this hand—which is God the disciple of esotericism will not be able to grasp. None of the processes of human sapience can liberate us by revealing to us the Kingdom of the Spirit. So that we, relative beings, may reintegrate the Absolute it is necessary for the Absolute to descend and take us. This descent is the Incarnation of the Word. This hold, this possession is Jesus Christ - Sole Son of the Father. This is what the Gospel (the New Testament) is. To fully understand it, let us continue to define what it is not. In the pululation of the anterior schools of spirituality, whether pantheistic or naturalistic, one finds some straggling representatives of an antediluvian patriarchal tradition which I shall call orthodox, because it was monotheistic in fact and not

in theory only; because it taught the role of a salvatory Word Who was to come on earth and because it censured the use of occult sciences and arts—this was the school of Adam, of Enoch, of Osiris, of Ram and of Melchisedeck; the Bible hence became its normal result. As to the divergent initiations, after Christianity began, they continued to exist, probably still more numerous, bearing a stronger imprint of the characteristics of the will proper, with the tendency to become, from ante-Christic, anti-Christians. To define these hundreds of doctrines one after the other would take a whole library; but to understand their general characteristics is sufficient at the moment. The aim of non-Christic initiations regarding the inner life of an individual is to put him en rapport consciously with one or the other of the invisible realms, by means of practices leading to one of the numerous forms of ecstasy. As for the Christian, his sole objective is to be able to sacrifice himself more and more for others; and ecstasy (which means experiencing Christ and divine realities) comes by *suicrit*, as a crowning grace, always unmerited, always independent from the desires of the faithful. For the non-Christians, their consciousness of the Invisible remains local, exterior, relative, since it arises from the dis-polarization of psychic elements. For the Christian ecstasy is as total, as inner, and as absolute as his own receptivity permits; and it also gives to that dedicated soul all the sum of Verity, Beauty and Good that his self can hold. * The virtue or quality of the Gospel is unitarian and unifying, subject to the condition that its followers strive for unity—the willful unity of intellects, of acts and sentiments; the organic unity of pure instincts, of virtuous passions and of veridical intuitions; and the outer unity of the members of the great human family, by establishing unity among themselves and between all Christians and their Master. But the analytical tendency of reason has tarnished the clarity of this limpid doctrine. And if Christ speaks to us only of sentiments such as Faith or Love, St. Paul immediately mentions the dualism of soul and body; from this remark will spring the rigorous asceticisms of the hermits of the Thebes and of the monks of the Middle-Ages; St. Thomas whose whole intellectual technique is derived from Aristotle, acknowledges this psychological opposition while he explains it. From one century to another a thousand delicate nuances will differentiate the schools of Christian spirituality; to describe or classify them, to indicate which method would serve one individual better than another, would demand a superhuman finesse and superhuman experience. More

over, the immaterialistic atmosphere in which the mystical souls move changes from day to day; the 20th-century Christian is not identical to the 19th, nor to the 17th, nor to the 13th century Christian; Christ Himself does not reveal Himself under the same image at all times. Besides all this, the dissociating influences which emanate from the soul of the earth and from the Prince of this world have also produced other disturbances within Christian homogeneity; it is not feasible to inquire publicly for the deep-seated causes of these dissensions; however, to the curious observer, the heresies are interesting: they are the symptoms of the immortal human disquietude, they reveal unexplored corners, and they provoke salutary crises; also they do strengthen our faithful adherence to Christ by augmenting our admiration for His teaching, which is so simple, so right for all of mankind; as luminous in the metaphysical sense as it is in the concrete, and as right universally as it is for any particular case. In spite of this, heterodoxists boast a little too forcibly that they alone hold the true comprehension of texts and the true tradition of the rites—it is not exactly true that the Johannites, the Albigeois, the Vaudois, the Templars and the Gnostics had received a secret oral teaching direct from the Apostles; their doctrines are but the prolongations of the oriental systems—Pythagorism, Alexandrinism, Manicheanism, Mazdeism, Kabbala and Hinduism which, on the contrary, make them deviate from the Gospel; their spirit of liberty was useful to the equilibrium of religious life per se, by reacting against the temporary excesses of the centralising force whose See was Rome. Independence and authority rotate, necessarily, and their vicissitudes as permitted by God are regulated by immaterial hands whose invisible chiefs (whether legitimate or revolutionary) hold the reins of power. There is truly within Christianity a secret Church, officially known and bearing the title of the Communion of Saints—and officiously that of the Inner Church. It has never expressed itself outwardly through any kind of mystical school nor by any heterodoxical sect. This is the silent and hidden Church; even its members do not always know one another, they are the sheep dogs of the diverse herds of the Good Shepherd, and most of the lambs or ewes they protect and which they lead to pasture generally are unaware of them. That is about all that one can say about this, because they do not reveal their true identity save to those who can understand them and these have no need for any kind of written explanation. Moreover, the mystic has the right of withholding his secret, and he only re

veals part of it to shed a little more light into some corner of Tenebrae. I dare state that the stories of these exceptional Christians, contrary to what commentators say, remain incomprehensible. The rationalists who interpret the descriptions given by ecstasies as hysteria, are just as wrong as the symbolists who claim they are mere allegories. When a nun, worn out from her fasts and night-vigils speaks to us of quietude, love-wounds, raptures, bliss, spiritual betrothals and nuptials, this no more indicates the transposition of sentimental emotions toward Christ than it indicates psychopathic delirium. Of course, among contemplatives, there are some sickly people as well as compulsive fanatics; but one meets within their ranks many strong-willed people and well equilibrated minds. The veritable experiences of ecstasy are indescribable; one can easily borrow the musician's language to describe painting, but one cannot make an animal comprehend a da Vinci; so, a still greater distance separates the most sensitive human feeling from the sensitiveness of the disciple within whom God works directly. It is not a distance from the lesser to the greater, it is a distance due to quality. I would even add that, even among the professionals of the Perfect Life, very few indeed really enter within the true mystical sphere; most of them remain on the frontiers and transpose the enthusiasms of an artist or of a poet into the religious mode. * For each state into which we are called to live, the Gospel indicates a special perfection: there is a perfection for the man who governs, one for the mere citizen, one for the head of state, one for the servant, one each for the couples, the parents, children, workman, artist or scientist. This perfect life is the mystical life. It possesses two faces—one of effort, the other of heavenly gift; the former is called the ascetic life, which means struggles; while the other is the contemplative life. The latter is always a gratuitous gift, because in spite of the heroism of virtues being voluntarily practiced by us, the merits we derive from them seem as naught before the slightest favour we receive from God. In the other religions, those which are non-Christian, the merits won by the faithful bring them either material or spiritual benefits, because these faithful live in the realm of Nature, wherein any action calls forth a reaction; where Justice reigns and where psychic laws and physical laws hold analogous sway: that is the kingdom or realm of the Hindu Karma, and of the Hebraic law of retaliation. Most Christians do not understand the supernatural; they take position in the same realm of laws as the pagans and they suffer the same effects from retaliation. But the mystic

does not work under coercion any more; he works because of love and thus escapes from Nature's law; the profound comprehension he has of Christ liberates him from fatidic determinism; and because he loves, he does not take notice whether he fulfills the Law; his love shows him that he never really does enough, and because of his zeal which exceeds the rules, Heaven grants him gratuitous graces, such as: healings, prophecies, a direct insight into souls, and true cognisance into earthly as well as heavenly states. In the Christian Church, these things have always been known; but to answer the needs of each century, God delegates some servants whom He raises up to serve as examples for one or another aspect of this essential doctrine. That is why the frightful mortifications of hermits and of monks were permitted to counterbalance the carnal excesses of Rome and of the feudal Times. This is why St. Francis of Assisi, St. Bonaventure, and all of the Minors advocated sentimental asceticism: to do nothing save for the suffering Christ; St. Dominic and St. Thomas Aquinas received an intellectual mission: that of bringing the European thought back to God. Later on, when man's independence, raising its voice through Protestantism against certain excesses of traditionalism, launched Christianity upon the abysmal course of ratiocinating reason, then God brought forth a mystical school, the one of Ignatius of Loyola, which systematically bends the will to the curves of Divine Will; the rapid success of this discipline doubtless led the order of Jesuits outside of the frontiers of interior poverty, but they were forcibly called back to it due to the opposition of the social bodies, because, the excellence of their methods of realisation destroyed these movements' supremacy; and especially because Providence itself brought forth within the very bosom of their councils some very pure mystics such as the Reverend Father Lallemand and Reverend Father Surin, to mention but two Frenchmen. The admirable 16th and 17th Centuries offered to the Christian world the totality of the various aspects of the Gospel teachings: there began a humanism geared to the glory of Christ; the ardent and pure devotion of the Carmelites as reformed by St. Teresa-of-Avila; the patiently acquired and ingenious conquests which resulted from the will of the successors of Loyola having been subjected to the long and rigid discipline of their order; plus the healthy devotion as spread by the Capuchin monks, at the head of whom shine remarkable men such as the Gray Eminence (Reverend Father Joseph du Tremblay -- Counselor of Richelieu) and Father Yves of Paris, also the Bishop of Geneva

(St. Francis de Sales); then came substantial or material charity through the Poor Father and St. Vincent de Paul; the profound theology of a Carolus de Condren and of a Pierre de Berulle—all of this together represents the richest blooms of Catholicism [1] With the 18th-century, Reason rebels, taking the preponderant place it seems to hold to this day. Many various thinking men still imagine, (based upon the physicist's credo) that miracles do not exist and that (based upon the psychiatrist's credo) any mystic is unbalanced; even theologians exert a rigorous criticism upon the special states of contemplative life; and because of this general defiance against sentiment, one, may hope that, due to the providential play of equilibrium which is ever increasing, the 20th century will see a new concept of religious life bloom anew, one which will be much closer to the primitive evangelical concept. * Let us examine this Evangelical concept with all of the simplicity it embodies. Jesus has never said anything about the inner phenomena which one's ardent devotion might unleash; He has spoken only about the one act par excellence: the charitable act; and only about one's pure intentions and pure renunciation. This is because, from God's vantage point, Nature and Man are perceived merely under the form of unities; it is only when viewing them from Below that one discovers the innumerable divisions among psychologies, philosophies or polytheistic initiations. To feel, to think, to will and to do—is for Christ but one single gesture, one single fact. Matters, forms, species, essences, substances, ethers, gods, and demiurges—these are for Christ one thing only: Life. Our conscience proceeds by means of successive acts—it perceives, classifies, synthesises and imagines; but Jesus does not address Himself so much to one or the other of these faculties of ours as He addresses Himself to this central conscience; He comes to us through unity, He shows us unity and expresses Himself in the language of unity; and if at times He does make distinctions, it is out of regard for our myopia, while He, He sees the whole as one. When He speaks, at the same time He loves and He realises, (He brings things into realisation); His acts are ineffable discourses and works of Art at the same time as systems of thought; He is simultaneously the all-powerful Divine power and human powerlessness. He dwells simultaneously in the infinite and the finite, in time and eternity, and because He sculpts with one gesture everything which is transitory and the whole which is permanent, He is the sole One among beings Who creates living realities forever. Hence His disciples should become unified;

leaving aside the notions of body, soul and spirit, of progress, meditation, and contemplation, they should always stand naked, simple, poor, embracing the nutritive vine-stock from the Eternal Vine. Rather than aiming through ascetic regimen to experience the various ecstasies which are bitter and delightful in turn, they should, each moment of time, renounce their tastes, succour their brothers, and suffer with joy for the love of their Master. This is the practical meaning of the Gospel. If we swerve from this to follow one or the other of the adaptations it has suffered in the course of time, we risk becoming attached to a form, a useful one doubtless, and true for the circumstances for which it was made, but we reach the place where we act like the children Jesus speaks to us about, who weep or dance in the public squares, first of all playfully and then very seriously. The more one desires God, the more we must realise that He alone is free to give or refuse Himself; all the saints, whether Catholic or Orthodox, even the great Protestant mystics counsel our not trying to experience nor to desire celestial visitations, they say that by accepting the Night of the Soul and inner drought with gratitude elevates man higher, faster and in a more direct way. The true disciple must become a mere nullity, devoid of merit, unworthy of any favour. Sustaining this state of soul, along with the substantiality of the Divinity of Christ are the two mystical raisons d'être of the Church. The decor of the "Seven Mystical Gardens" which follows simply marks the steps of this march descending toward perfect spiritual poverty.

THE SEVEN MYSTICAL GARDENS INTRODUCTION

Knowing, my Friends, that you feel the need of taking cognisance of the precise spiritual degree you have attained, I shall try to construct for you a system in the compartments of which you will be able to find your own. Your desire is legitimate and if I have postponed satisfying it for a long time, it is because I was hoping to keep you in the state of simple unity where the sole ardor of serving Jesus melts and sublimates all actions, élans, thoughts, fatigues, hardships and repentances. At the superhuman moment when you gave your self to the Master, you

knew, you felt this unity. It is not surprising that you have not been able to abide in it. But do not lose courage—together we shall continue rising, my very dear Friends, because if God permits it, I shall not leave you whether you ascend or descend. However, beware of erecting idols out of analyses, classifications, and regulations; do not mistake means for goals. Experiences of psychophysiology, esotericisms and scholasticism are but instruments of research but are not the work itself. As one among us likes to repeat, 'it is not by reading manuals on gymnastics that one becomes an athlete, we must exercise our muscles'. Merely reading manuals on asceticism will not elevate you to sanctity. What I am going to tell you, is only how to take care of your working tools; on you alone depends whether you become worthy apprentices, sturdy workers capable of withstanding tough fatiguing tasks. In the past, many of you have meditated with the arhat or neophyte in his white cell before the old picture on gilded wood; others have deciphered ancient hieroglyphs; others, still, have read Cassian, Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and the suave Bishop of Geneva (St. Francis de Sales). You have all had the vision of flames, rocks and castles; but, it is the Light from which these flames come which you must seek; not the Light common to them, but the One which shined anteriorly, and which, at the end of time will spread over the Universe. It is the mountain where the rocks rise tier upon tier which you must climb; it is the invisible house, which the castles you saw are but mere copies of, that I invite you to enter. All created beings belong to the people of Light; all were born children of God; but for the most part they became prodigal sons. Even these, though they know it not, are walking in spite of themselves and unknowingly toward their Father's house. The world is a labyrinth whose most tortuous paths invincibly lead to the Centre. And the voyagers can be differentiated only because of their haste or indolence, and because of the straight path or detours they choose to take. Yet, they are all responsible for their belatedness. Many of the Father's children are vagabonds in His fields, busily engaged in being mischievous; this is the enormous flock for which you are called upon to become the vigilant sheep dogs—faithful only to the word of the sole Pastor. It is for them that you must withstand fatigues, for them you must set an example, give your tenderness, and shed imploring tears. But, there are also the good children. This is the minority which the moralists, ascetics and priests try to teach. These people have admirably analysed the phenomena of the inner life, the nuances of contem

plative sensibility, and they have established their manuals from these diagnoses. I believe that the classification of the states of will regarding action are far more real, and truer than those psychic states regarding contemplation. These are some of the pictures or rather some of the spiritual facts I propose for your study.

CLASSIFICATION OF SPIRITUAL STATES

The Master is truly the Lord of a marvellous castle; Heaven is truly the dazzling light which animates all flames, and the narrow Path truly scales all the rocky slopes of the mystical mountain. But the Word is primarily known as the God of Life ; His main action upon the world consists in multiplying life; the essential work of His servants is spiritual agriculture. Consequently, anyone who is primarily concerned with Divine things is a gardener. It should be easy for you, my Friends, to pursue the details of this symbolism: further; our ploughmen merely reproduce upon this terrestrial globe the care that the angels give to their Master's fields, because nothing exists here on earth that does not exist Above primarily. So let us say that there are Seven Gardens in the enclosure of the Good Shepherd; one succeeds another but the higher the garden, the less workers there are, alas, because the greater the difficulties and the more complex the work, so a smaller number of workers will be found in it. These enclosures are interdependent upon each other, from the first to the last, and the beauty of each feels the effect of the state of all the others.. Thus, the puniest of its workers must always remember that the least of his negligences endangers the entire work; the tiniest weakness, to which we give in here, may cause a possible crime to be committed at the other end of the world or it may prevent the fulfilment of a work of art a century hence.

NOMENCLATURE

In the first enclosure one finds the great majority of people, those who are concerned with the outer forms of religion. In the second, one finds those who pray only when an emergency or an urgent need needles them. Among the inhabitants of the third enclosure, the desire for perfection is born. Those of the fourth enclosure have taken the enthusiastic resolution of serving God. But those of the fifth know they must be completely attentive never to permit themselves the least digression. The workers of the sixth garden are always ready to accept all sacrifices. Finally, those of the seventh are the Veritable Poor, totally devoid of any thought of self. My Friends, you know that it is not our acts that the just Judge will weigh in the scale, but our motives; we classify ourselves in either one garden or another, dependent on the quality of the love which incites us, and secondly, according to our works. The love we may feel for God or for our fellow man remains phantom-like unless we give it a body, life, through our acts: end our most charitable works are dead unless Love animates them. Beware of the reef against which most small crafts will flounder. The majority of spiritualists are imaginatives or utopists in whom the sense of reality becomes blunted or in whom the will has become anaemic. As they mope and sigh, they navigate in a sea of dreams; and when because of their negligence they encounter controversies, they lie down, bewailing: "What can I do? I am nothing; Heaven willed it so!" They would rather undergo anything than overcome their laziness. We are slightly reprehensible for that, my Friends; let us not forget it, but remember the quotation of La Fontaine: "God helps him who helps himself." Let us also remember the verse of the Gospel: "The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the violent, and the violent will bear it away".

FIRST GARDEN

The majority of Christians are christian in name only; they attend church because it is customary and they like to follow the customs; but they never think of God nor of the poor; their sole preoccupation is directed to the temporal. We must take them out of this inertia without using force; God takes only the hearts which offer themselves. One must talk to these people with patience and kindness; one must suggest to them that man must give God more than the half-hour of the Sunday service or Mass which is too often spent in slanderous backbiting; we must let these Christians see that one's voluntary deprivation of a pleasure for the benefit of some afflicted one pleases God far more than an inattentive attendance at a church service. But it is more important to set a good example, a smiling, joyful example. Most important, one must intercede for them, offer sacrifices for them, fast spiritually and even physically for them. That is our principal work, my Friends. As soon as you see them on the path, starting this work, teach them precision in any undertaking; suggest their writing down each evening the faults committed that day; advise them to note and compare the advancement they have made, in the past few days, weeks and months; advise them to subject their moral effort to the same rigorous training as a professional athlete subjects himself to, physically. Selfishness can sidetrack us so cleverly; it resists constraint with such violence that never will the neophyte exert himself sufficiently to overcome that weakness.

SECOND GARDEN

The workers in the Second Garden feel the need for prayer; they enjoy it; but their prayers are usually sheer pious reverie and they often neglect to act. They are not sufficiently aware of the importance of their little defects. And he, who is not faithful in little things will not be faithful to greater ones. In this garden, and in the Third, the main work consists in sculpting within one's self an image, one closest to and resembling the image of the Word that one can

see therein. Only in the Fourth Garden does the lightning flash of Grace descend to animate the statue. So we shall follow the example of Nature which builds giant mountains out of the billions of particles it has accumulated for centuries and centuries through an infinite labor of constancy and regularity. That is why beginners should follow a precise disciplinary course of life: first, through the discipline of budgeting their time and-how to fill it; through the moral discipline of conscientious minute examination of one's conscience; by a severe fight against one's main fault; by charitable acts; by suppressing apparent indulgences in food and drink; by simplifying one's desires for clothes and comfort; by the practice of mental discipline through daily meditation. Besides our morning and evening prayers, one must maintain intimacy, or parrhesia with God. During this period, our fervor is at its lowest ebb and our attentiveness superficial. To bring our mental faculties to a satisfying fixity by concentrating its forces, to become aware of our intimate needs, to prepare ourselves for more substantial acts—such is the goal of meditation. Esotericism has resolved the problem by following a regime of progressive scientific exercises; and the steps which permit the Orientals to reach the monoideistic state precursor to ecstasy are based upon trying to obtain perfect physical health; secondly through a harmonious equilibrium of the magnetic organism; then through the mastery of intellectual perceptions, and finally through the inner control of one's thinking principle. I have explained elsewhere in what manner this method is both dangerous and illusory. The method of the Gospel is the reverse; it is solely concerned with the exaltation of the center of our being the root of the will. You know the method, I shall remind you of it when. I terminate these pages. Between these two extremes, these two methods, Catholic Theology has established a mixed one, which does not seek to regiment the physical and hyperphysical forces any more but to move the heart by means of the intellect. Here you will recognize the influence of Aristotle's philosophy, the offspring of Hindu rationalism, the inspiration of scholasticism. Please note: exclusive intellectualism encloses man in a sealed-in field, though it is filled with beautiful and pure forms. In order to reach God, the mystic must go beyond and away from logic; the essential enigma; to wit: the absolute, the Relative, the Divinity of Jesus, the conquest of the Kingdom, can only be solved through a supra-intellectual perception; from then on, one observes that the cerebral disciplines remain as means in the field of-asceticism, but they must

never be mistaken as goals. But this means is powerful; one must follow it methodically with calm and perseverance; we must consecrate to it all the time necessary, even to the extent of forsaking less fruitful occupations. The more sober among directors of conscience (sometimes called Master of novices) advise that if time is lacking in the morning, we should pursue our meditation during the course of the day, during the rest periods that separate our tasks. This concerns zeal and depends upon one's personal initiative. Whoever burns from God's desire shall not fear impinging upon his hours of sleep. But I do not advise anyone to think of God or to pray to Him simultaneously as one works; both of these pursuits would be badly done; the time has not yet come for us to be able to fulfill two tasks simultaneously. Each Religious Order follows a particular method of meditation. The one I shall indicate to you in the following pages is particularly adapted to the incommodious conditions of the life we have to lead, and to the multiple exigencies of our duties to our family, our professional, or social life. Engineer somehow to reserve a half hour each morning for the exercise; but if your duties or your health prevent that undertaking, know that your progress depends first of all from the depth and the number of sacrifices you will offer to God for your fellow men. In any case do not consecrate more than one hour to this silent colloquy. III

METHOD FOR MEDITATION

1. Let us begin by placing ourselves in the presence of God. He is everywhere; especially His only Son—the Word Jesus—is here, He sees us, awaits us; He directs the ineffable breath of the Spirit to our heart. We adore all three Persons, we implore Their help, Their pardon.
2. Let us focus our thoughts upon a mystery, upon a virtue we lack or upon a fault we wish to overcome—or better still focus our thoughts upon one of the scenes in the Bible. Let us focus our reflections upon this truth, this virtue or this fault; and probe into their nature, their mode, their influence and their consequences. Or else let us visualize Jesus in the midst of that scene. In any case, this scene exists permanently in the Light; our spirit may find it there if, we are able, through increasing fervor, to be moved from compassion- to admiration, on to adoration.
3. When our softened heart will dash toward its objective, we shall re-examine our self seri

ously, scrutinize our inferiority, wretchedness, and vacillating will; taking into account all that we lack in order to reach the coveted ideal we are pursuing at the moment.

4. So, turning toward Jesus, our Friend, our sole true Friend, we shall remind Him that He has promised to hear the prayers of whoever implores Him. Beseeching Him because of His sufferings we shall cry out: "You, Who has been hungry, help me overcome my gluttony.....: You, Universal Lord, Who has obeyed the most ignoble of menials, save me from my vanity....." we shall implore Him to make us better, solely that we may serve Him better. We shall also request the same thing from His Mother, the interceding Virgin.

5. Finally, we shall examine if our élans are pure, whether any kind of self-esteem has crept into them.

6. Taking a firm and calm resolution to do one certain thing, and to abstain from another, both having some rapport with the subject we meditated upon, we shall tell our self that, were we to fail that resolve twenty times a day, we would try a twenty-first time with identical calm and energy.

7. Moreover, the day we feel that exercise to be bothersome, then, we should prolong it five minutes, so as to overcome our apathy. * Should you have the care of someone in this Second Garden, teach them to think of God often as a matter of habit; for example, to address a prayer, or a short or fervent thought each time the clock rings the hour. Above all, treat, them affectionately—with sympathy; be kind and compassionate when they pour out their troubles; follow Paul's maxim: 'be all things to all men'; yet, at the same time, be firm in your directing, let your counsels be practical and geared to specific points; do not neglect to enter into minute details.

THIRD GARDEN

In the Third Garden are working those who have taken the definitive resolve of serving God. They follow a much more rigorous discipline: first, is the suppressing of needless words and unnecessary events, such as making mere social calls and attending shows for sheer amusement; 2. a severe choice in reading matter; 3. systematically breaking our preferences and love of ease, down to the smallest details—such procedure will their asceticism follow. They will derive benefit from concentrating for one month; during their daily examen (examination of conscience) upon one special point; for instance; either upon poverty, humility, benevolence, self-pride, inner peaceful contemplation, obedience, work, attention, inner cheerfulness, kindness and indulgence on how to pray, or upon any other virtues they will see fit to choose. Instead of adoring the Father only when the clock strikes, they will give their heart to Him, over and over, each time they have a few moments of leisure. Their state of soul might be suave or arid. When you shall find yourselves in a particular arid state, my Friends, be generous; do not bargain with Jesus; if He seems to Leave you alone in the conscious regions of your spirit, it is because He stands as close as can be to the very Tabernacle from which His Light shines perpetually. Let Him use you as He sees fit; He has only your greatest good in view. Patience—daughter of surrender is stronger than revolt. One tree alone bears all of the spiritual fruits, it is the tree of the Cross. Attach yourself to Jesus, hang on to Him, embrace Him in His Passion where He has endured all the things which you shall never have to endure; let your self die with Him, it will then resuscitate with Him through the Baptism of the Spirit, at the fountain in the last Garden. Meditation will become more arduous for you; your heart being more loving, your brain will reason less readily; it is needless to force it. Be content of conversing with God with tenderness; tell yourself that He is there; unburden yourself to Him, tell Him your worries, your hopes, your joys and weariness, your needs, but especially the needs of those who come to you. Recall all that Jesus has done for you, from the immense tasks to the infinitely tender considerations of His love—so love Him with your whole being. It is here that ends that which Catholic writers call Purgatorial Life—here Contemplative Life begins.

FOURTH GARDEN

The Fourth Garden is the most important; its great value demands numerous workers; most of them spend a lifetime therein. Yet they are hard workers, able to withstand fatigue and they do not spare themselves any efforts. Their desire of pleasing God has surmounted, in their heart, any anxiety about their personal salvation. But this zeal is more ardent than pure. They are quite often remarkable individuals: orators, writers, administrators, founders of charitable institutions; they draw the public's attention and often become celebrities. They remain bound to this Garden because, they themselves are bound by their own talents. Whoever wants Heaven can ascend to it without a halt only on condition of forever following the reverse of his likes and dislikes, his instincts and faculties if need be. From a human standpoint this seems like folly, I know, yet it is the formal precept of the Bible. God loves His good workers; by using all means to clarify them on what their true worth is, He subjects them to the severe tests of the night-of-the-senses and to the austerities of the mental-night. In that first night, the taste for divine things pales; celestial suavities do not reach the affective centre anymore; in the second night, the memory of God fades, lofty thoughts become vapid and foreign to one's judgment. One feels bound to God only through naked Faith; one knows that God is there, but it is emotionless, just as one knows a geometrical axiom. One desires to remain close to Him—but it is all without zeal, just as one desires to perform an arduous task. On top of that, temptations begin to pile up as addendum to this dual divestiture; forgotten) lusts and long buried covetousness emerge more powerful than before; or perhaps knowledge per se loses its attraction; intellectual powers slumber or encounter insoluble problems; or else one becomes indifferent to everything, dejected, incapable of feeling joy or displeasure, fear or hope. So the soul is forged, is hammered, is tried and retried; tempered, sometimes for years. All he can do is wait, immobile, silent; the least gesture tightens the straps; each complaint only deepens his solitude; nothing subsists in him but the will attached to God through an almost imperceptible contact; and the only word he can utter is: Jesus, Jesus! I know some disciples who have been undergoing this refining for the past ten, fifteen years; but they shall shine as stars in humanity's mystical Heaven, because their sufferings are deep, unknown and silent. At times,

one can also receive visions, revelations, and exercise some miraculous powers. I mention these incidents only to remind you of their quite secondary importance.

FIFTH GARDEN

The Fifth Garden represents approximately what the learned Doctors call the Unitive Life. Renunciation has extended from pleasures to sorrows; the workers are not affected anymore from any possible blows; as long as they can bring solace to their fellow men they consider themselves satisfied. Thus their energy takes on a character of superhuman serenity. They know how to maintain veritable solitude, the inner solitude in the midst of business worries; their humility resembles that of angels because they constantly feel divine action working in them as well as around them. Their desires, their reason, and their will are not in contradiction anymore; hence they are able to obtain, even in the temporal realm, the greatest results by the simplest of means. God helps them that much more because they are always ready to forfeit what merits they earned in favour of the latecomers. And, because of that purity of intention which always aspires to the Kingdom, the works of these men bear fruits in the present as well as in the future. For, if today some artist conceives a masterpiece, some thinker elaborates an august monument to science or philosophy, or some prince founds a beneficial social state for the multitude, these are, more often than one imagines, the result of unknown sufferings of some Poor-of-God which have previously evoked through some irresistible conjuration, the angel of that new beauty, the genie of that idea, or the god of that social organisation. To work in the Fifth Garden, one must accomplish all of ones obligations to perfection by living in the atmosphere of constant prayer, by accepting to bear all things with inalterable patience, by asking Jesus for a new task as soon as the former one has been terminated; and to have received from Him supernatural peace. This peace represents the first breath of the Spirit. Little by little He will permeate you, friends of the Friend; He; shall purify the chambers of the temple, He will form, up stream of your comprehension, an image of the Heavens which you shall

contemplate through a translucid penumbra—an image which shall give you evident certitudes. You shall then enter into supra-intellectual clairvoyance; whether you receive Seraphic ecstasies; whether it be only the tip of your will which rests in God, while the rest of your being flounders in the midst of business problems; whether inebriating ecstasies will ravish your body in spite of yourself; whether your spirit concentrates upon a mystery, the reality of which it experiences; yet without perceiving any image from it, nor gathering any logical demonstration there from—no matter; It is not up to you anymore to choose the terms of your colloquies with God. Your initiator is the Spirit. It is He Who shall give you Verity, either through an indefinable though invincible impression; through a freely given and voluntary adhesion for which He will provide the means; through a perception which is neither sensible, nor mental, but immediate and direct; or it shall be through the extraordinary “face-to-face” intuition, (I Corinthians 13:12) when the Consoler presents to the gardener a picture of the Absolute made especially for him. Only then, shall you pray the Father through that adherence of your heart which scales the heights and depths of all conscious notions, beyond the ever, the always, the nowhere, the elsewhere and the here and now. Throughout all of your occupations you will maintain a hold of the Divine Presence and you will not need to meditate anymore; your prayers shall be simple and free since it is the Spirit that shall pray in you; your distractions being 0.4 rare as the ruffles from summer winds on the surface of the waters, they shall disappear of themselves in the radiant abyss of Love. From now on, your sole concerns are: the Father’s designs, your brothers’ woes, and shedding light into tenebrae. You shall be-able to give material gold and your human strength, but also give your spiritual gold and your angelic collaborators. You shall learn not to desire anything except what God wills, even in the enterprises which seem good to you at first sight. You shall never ask anyone for anything anymore, only ask God; you shall never refuse anything to God nor to any of His creatures. Does such a state seem inaccessible to you? - Oh no; a great number reach that level and yet they are only in the back row of the hierarchy of faithful servants.

SIXTH GARDEN

To enter into the Sixth Garden, besides having mastered the works of the Fifth, it is still essential to suffer a third descent into hells, a third inner death, a third night: that of the Volitive centre.

The will is localised in several spots of the human person: in the fluidic body, in the double, in the passion centre, in thought; but its root stems from the spiritual; it is the root of individuality, the notion of the central "I", and of the centrifugal "Self".

This root must be purified from the ferment of selfishness while still maintaining its individualising property. For, it is nothing else than the reflection of the spark of the Word upon the mirror of the conscience.

The night of the Sixth Garden, hence, is an opaque veil thrown over the splendour of this spark. The soul finds himself as would a spectator who sees nothing in the Universe but the struggle of interests, of covetousness, and of forces; who sees nothing else but figures and drafts, nothing but cold mathematical equations; he finds no more charm, nor grace, nor superfluous beauty; nothing but an immense pitiless machine, nothing but impassible Justice.

His faults, his powerlessness, his general incapacity, his incomprehension terrifies the Poor-of -God; no one can imagine without having undergone them, what the consuming tortures of these terrible denudings are; Teresa of Avila remained in that state for eighteen years, Father Surin for eleven years, Cesar de Bus, 25 years. What is most incomprehensible is the persevering faithfulness of these servants.

Suspended to the cliffs over the abyss, they keep their faith, their eminent virtues, and maintain an outward attitude of calm and of animation. Their inner solitude, deepened by the impossibility of confiding in anyone, develops self-mastery and the faculty of performing two different occupations simultaneously. The physiological traits are transformed; any who was lymphatic equilibrates himself as a nervous type; the facial traits, the form of the body, the walk, the speech, the handwriting and even their gestures change, so great is the struggle against the instincts and passions.

Christ comes, and as is told in the Magnificat that "He hath put down the mighty from their seats and hath exalted the lowly", He shatters the whole being of these servants and operates therein a reorganisation which equals a new birth.

The longer the night lasts, the more magnificent breaks the dawn and the richer are its promises.

Angels often visit these tested ones; they open their eyes to ecstasies, and answer their prayers by performing admirable miracles; because, as humility digs in deeper in this tenebrae, so does Love refine itself at the same time. But this is not a rule; it may also be that no gift consoles these penitents, that nothing extraordinary happens; so, for this garden as for the others, the sole marks of the degree attained, are the purity of one's will, and the ardor with which acts are performed.

SEVENTH GARDEN

This is why a Seventh Garden exists, In the Sixth, there still subsists a desire, one, only: that of reaching the summit of the mountain; the workers are conscious of their state; they know what they have achieved and this is the very thing which bars them from the nudity of the Poor-in-spirit.

Hence, there is still one refining to be done. This is how it can best be described to you, that you may visualise it.

Angels will light such an ardent love in your heart that were this transport to last more than a few minutes, you would die. These are the first symptoms of the transforming union, of the psychic transsubstantiation of the human person into the divine person. Here is where the anagogy of the Song of Songs applies; these are the spiritual nuptials with their diverse modes; the Three Divine Persons will descend successively and will operate, within you, a triple transmutation which is the veritable rebirth which Jesus speaks of to Nicodemus. God lays bare His

treasures to the Gardener, whose petitions He grants in advance.

Man has obeyed so well and for so long, that God in turn takes pleasure in granting him everything. Through a singular favour, man stands equilibrated on the frontier between the Relative and the Absolute; he alone has the right of stating, regarding himself: "I am the least, I am nothing, I can do nothing", because he can step outside of time or enter into the eternal at will, if he thinks it right to do so. He is a free man. Indifferent to his surroundings and to his fate, he has no other concern than that of spreading Good, should he endure centuries of suffering for sowing these seeds. There is always at least one of these beings on Earth to check its corruption. But no one is capable of recognising them except those who are following the same route; this is why any word is in vain regarding them, and I do not want to insist upon anything more here, than to give testimony to these mysteries.

CONCLUSION

My friends, I wanted to give you, in these few pages, the resume, the epitome of hundreds of volumes on Mystical Theology, a great many of which are the works of magisterial intellects, and the works of saints. I also wanted, at the same time, to fathom and augment their descriptions.

I invite those of you who possess the capabilities thereof to relive, to reproduce my quests; but, you must pursue your analyses to the very end; ignorance is preferable to a half-science. And as, definitively, a thought is but a commentary upon a word of Jesus, in conclusion, let us return to the Gospel.

Instead of following in detail ad infinitum the various states of soul, the varieties of orisons, the examens, (examinations of conscience), all devout practices, which, subject to the commentaries of a wise director, constitute the most scholarly school of spiritual life --- I mean Catholic mysticism --- come, my Friends, each of you, just as you are, place yourselves here, stand erect face to face with Jesus.

Assemble your forces, take a breath, consider the obstacles, and see the guiding hands awaiting you, the importance, the grandeur, and the essential quality of the results you seek. Consider that you have just left the idling crowd; know that your deep concern about divine things is fluttering its wings in you. Recall to your heart the famous words that Pascal attributes to Jesus: "You would not seek me had you not found me". Then read the Gospels again.

First, you will discover therein that visions, ecstasies, and miracles are gratuitous gifts which in no wise would signify our progress nor even obtain any for us.

Then, you shall find therein that all the commandments, all counsels and all maxims can be summed up in the one commandment: to love one's neighbor for the sake of the love of God; that this is the synthesis of all providential decrees, the means to the state of perfection, the key to all mysteries. Finally, you will find therein that Jesus calls 'Friend', the one who does solely His will, the one whose love is so great that it goes as far as to give his life for others.

Why should you search for anything else? This is the Way; it is the narrow path, of course, but it is so bright, so luminous; and is the shortest. Is it really so terribly impossible to tell one self, once for all:

"From this minute on, I give my self to Jesus; I give my whole self; I am entirely His; I shall give no heed to anything but to serve Him; all that I have done until now—all my tasks—and works which shall continue to be my tasks and duties—I shall not accomplish them anymore solely for my benefit, nor for the love of anyone but Jesus. I shall accept the love of others only as a gift from the Father; I shall love no one save in God, as a work of God. I know the Father is with me; I shall not be worried about my fate, neither on earth, in the Invisible, nor in Eternity. I shall abandon to others all that I gain in the material sense as in the spiritual. Will not the Father issue new things ceaselessly from His treasure? Why worry about hell? Is it not Paradise to work for God? Also, how can I be happy if I feel that one creature still suffers far away? Has Heaven not promised that if I fulfill His will, all things will be given unto me?"

These views might seem simple to you, my Friends. The most ignorant may apprehend them; they exhaust the science of the most scholarly, the ideal of the artistic, the ambitions of the most willful; they satisfy the desires of the most loving.. Make them yours; speak them aloud; enlist in the service of the Great Sower; enroll in the company of the great Soldier. Not next year, not tomorrow: now—this very instant. Whoever does not take a step forward takes a step backward;

Enter into this fallow-land; the total potentials of your nature will find fruition. But you will need to have the tenderness of the little Brother of Assisi, the serenity of Marcus Aurelius, a Napoleonic will, the ardent candor of the Cure d'Ars, the profound thought of a Pascal, the charming expressions of Verlaine, the active compassion of a Vincent de Paul, the beauty of a Giotto—one after the other.

Soar above the world and above all the worlds with one sweep of your fluttering wings; land upon the eternal parvis, and from there, contemplate the hollowness of human motives. What a spectacle, my Friends, when one looks at the universe from the Terraces of Divine Wisdom; what immense activity, what miracles, what dazzling lights, what joys!

But you alone can decide; you alone can see your roads, can choose the immediate beatitude of the Divine Presence, or see the perpetually recurring disillusionings of daily life. But, better not, because this motive would be a refined element of selfishness. Consider rather that the Father offers you the power of reducing universal suffering. Search yourself. Would you have the courage to refuse this divine privilege because of fear? Would you be able to bear bowing that somewhere in this vast world, one sole creature is suffering because you refused bringing it solace?

Grasp the plough—my Friends, till the soil to that last day when all fields will have been tilled. Whatever be your sorrows thereafter; I guarantee that you shall never regret your enthusiasm nor your original dedication.