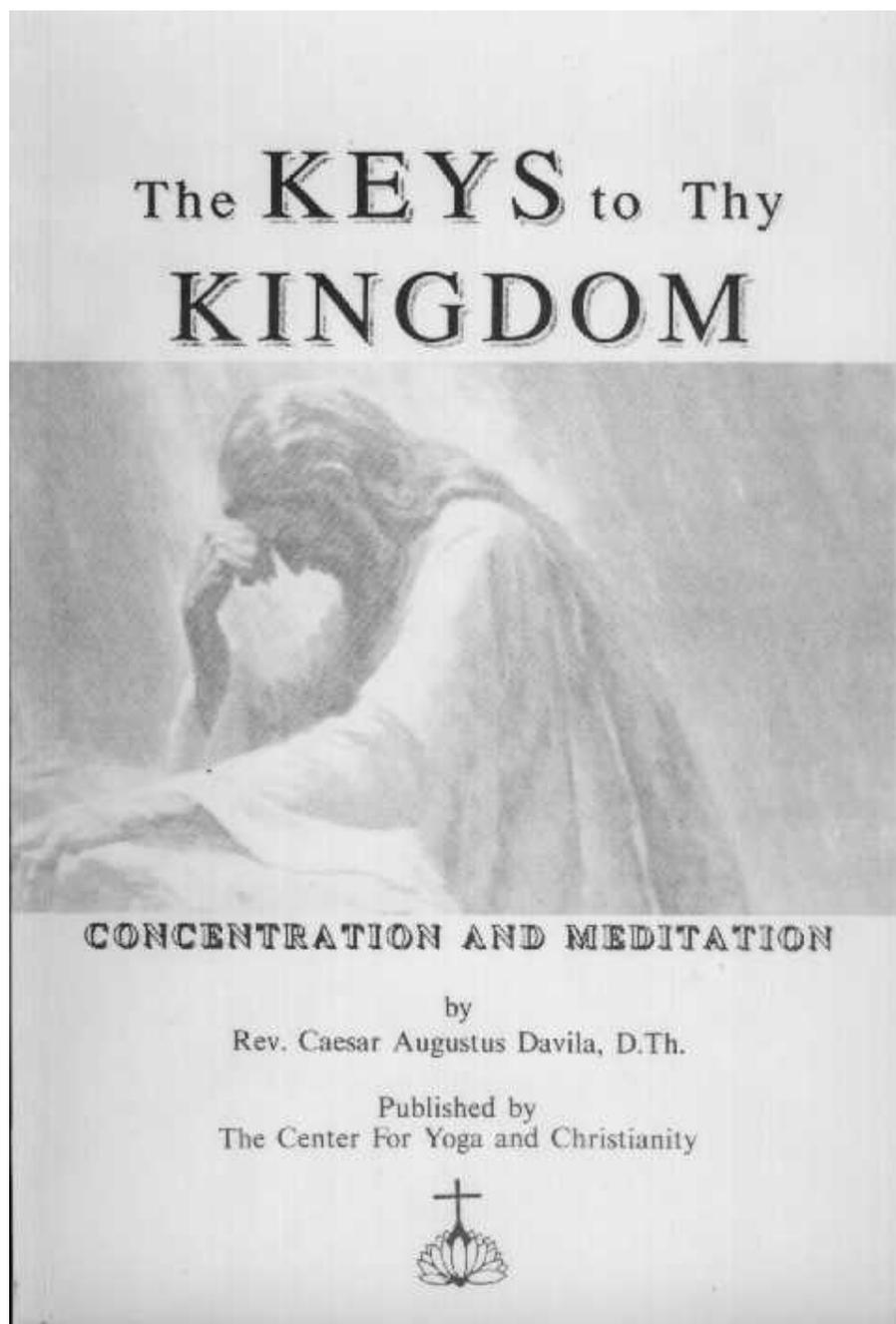


Book cover



**THE KEYS TO THY KINGDOM:
CONCENTRATION
AND
MEDITATION**

by

Rev. Caesar Augustus Davila, D. Th.

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This book was written by Rev. Caesar Augustus Davila, D. Th. and Doctoral Canon of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Quito.

(signed) Msr. Angel Humberto Jacome
Vicar General of Quito
(Ecuador, SA.)

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to you, my dear students and through you to all my brothers and sisters in whom my Beloved Father wished to imprint the splendor of His Christ. This brother of yours wishes to remind you that you own the keys to your kingdom. Concentration and meditation are the keys that will enable you to open the doors and find the hidden treasure: GOD. Only you can do it. It is your task. God wants us to make the effort to find Him. Try. Go ahead.

Text of back cover:

ABOUT THIS BOOK

In this book the author offers to modern man a broad knowledge acquired through his life of studies and service. One of the objectives of this work is to demonstrate the convergence of Eastern and Western mysticism.

Millenary Eastern techniques, solid and authentic Christian principles, and simple practices together form a unit of clear and true ideas which make these pages the keys that open the doors to success and happiness.

In a fluid style and lively language, the author proves his deep knowledge of the Laws by which God directs His creation.

The reader will find the concepts that definitely and clearly reestablish all that man has forgotten and disdained about physical, mental, and spiritual life. It scientifically demonstrates that through the techniques of meditation, man attains the necessary equilibrium to lead a serene life.

“The Keys To Thy Kingdom” is a complete study of the effects upon man of correct respiration, appropriate diet and physical exercise. The book reveals that which many people still consider a privilege of the initiates: the secret of prayer.

Those having had the privilege of knowing Dr. Davila can say that what he teaches is a result of his daily experience. Every day of his life unfolds in the midst of total calm and joy. The depth and consistency of his prayer lend him an uncommon intuition and universality. Effort and work do not affect his health. A great admirer of Paramahansa Yogananda, he practices the principle of “living actively serene and serenely active.”

“Father Dávila” — as he is known in Ecuador — is a secular priest, founder of the Asociación-Escuela de Auto-Realización, through which he teaches the doctrine of Jesus Christ’s love and the way to reach the Father.

We are sure that this book will change the course of many, many lives, as it is a most generous gift from this “man of God” to all men of good will.

REVIEWS OF THIS BOOK

The book is divided into parts with a key sequence, demonstrating first the incongruity of man when he ignores or only ritualizes God. It examines meditation as the most spiritual means of communication with divinity. It revises in detail all corporeal conditions and practical exercises which fit the body and prepare it for concentration. It reveals the mantric and esoteric preparation that protects and helps the meditator.

Not only does it teach you to depend on disciplined human qualities — disciplined and perfected through spiritual exercise — it also guides you in your search for the assistance and response of God.

Upon reading this book, one commentator has said that the greatest value of the book is that it brings meditation up to date and extends it to all: young and old, male and female, Christian and non-Christian, virtuous and in need.

Christ is the model the author has taken to direct his readers and lead them to a spiritual life with an intense relationship to Eternity. He recognizes that the perfect oral prayer is the Our Father, taught by Jesus Christ. But also, without any prejudices, he projects the esoteric experience, a stream of Eastern resources, the teachings of Bhagavad Gita and the masters and saints of millenary India.

EL UNIVERSO (Daily Journal)

Through this book the author gives the contemporary man the vast knowledge he has accumulated throughout his life, wherein millenary Eastern techniques, solid and authentic Christian principles and simple practices form a whole and clear presentation of true ideas which make this book the “keys” that open the doors to success and happiness, where man may find all that he has forgotten and disdained about physical, mental and spiritual life. A well-edited book, with a direct and fluid style, and of great erudition, which, through a series of chapters, reminds us that we have the keys to open our Kingdom, which is God — source of peace, joy, bliss, and unalterable mental health.

EL TELECRATO (Daily Journal)

This master, who insistently teaches meditation, is a man with a very active, tireless inner life. He concentrates easily, disconnecting his senses with the greatest serenity, and enters deeply into direct contemplation of the Word and spiritual vibration.

In the book “The Keys to thy Kingdom,” he communicates and explains in detail the process of concentration and meditation which he has not ceased practicing daily for over 25 years.

“The Keys to thy Kingdom” is a book of spiritual character for a practical mysticism. It is dedicated to students and other persons who, because of their confusion in this problematic world or modern man, have not practiced concentration and meditation as a means of directing their lives, for the self-realization and discovery of “the most profound source of human dignity: the communion with God.” In this book, the conviction, articulateness and talent of the author blend and harmonize with the yoga techniques, philosophy and cosmic vision of Eastern origin, together with the experience, scientific progress and religious faith of Christian civilization, in converging viewpoints wherein essential values of revelation melt, and new confluences of its oecumenical and original purpose arise.

Dr. Javier Espinosa Zevallos
DIARIO EXPRESO (Daily Journal)

In these days, with so much crude materialism, so much worry about conventional and external matters, and so much anguish in the search for the transitory, this book brings us an intense spiritual message... Father Davila teaches in his work “The Keys To Thy Kingdom”... that the kingdom is within ourselves, and that its doors can only be opened by us.

With a sincere and profound interest, Father Davila-Gavilanes wants to see the fraternal union of Eastern Yoga and Western Mysticism. It is not a matter of a fusion of beliefs, but of a brotherhood of ideas.... Eastern thought is one of the many paths to reach Truth ... Our Mysticism, the great Christian Mysticism, is the most beautiful and profound way to reach Him ... But all paths leading to Him are good.

This is a book of meditation .. Reading these pages you will simply become absorbed. The sources are clear, simple and understandable in a way that anyone may drink their crystalline waters.

Rigoberto Cordero Leon
EL MERCURIO DE CUENCA (Daily Journal)

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FOREWORD

“It is a book worthy of being presented to the public in many successive editions, each edition having an abundant number of copies.”

Gaspar Sangurima

When Ruben Dario (the unequalled Prince of the unequalled Poetry) wrote the poem “Philosophies,” the Poet-Priest of the universal — every true Poet is — made us vibrate with one of his “Mantrams” in a pantheistic trance, saying to the beats of nature:

“Greet the sun, Spider do not be rancorous. Give thanks to God, O Frog, for you Are.

The hairy crab has thorns like a Rose, and the Mollusks reminisce of women.”

And he ended his great poem by saying:

“May the Grasshopper sing by the light of the moon, and may the bear dance

Just as there are mantram-poems, to use the sacred term of the Easterners, I believe there are mantram-books which seem rare in the present environmental state of the world, a world plagued with deafening noise, political confusion, machine guns used for mass assassination, meetings for peace that is never attained. This book of sacred origin, “The Keys To Thy Kingdom,” has been given to us by the Ecuadorian Master Rev. Caesar Augustus Davila Gavilanes, D.Th.

Those who are on a permanent search for spiritual well being or recovery through lawful means shall reach the full realization of their healthy thirst for knowledge through the reading of this recent book, which is a powerful aid in recovering what we had thought lost in ourselves.

Written with an ease of style, with learned mastery of religious matters, full of an amenity difficult to obtain in this kind of reading, true and severe yet always noble in its judgments, scholarly and well-informed, this constructive and edifying book brings us an ecclesiastic attitude with a parsimonious eclecticism, and is magnificent as it presents itself as an efficient catalyser between philosophical and religious trends. The conciliatory attitude comes from far in the labyrinth of minds. Let us not forget that Ramakrishna saw Christ when Mallik, an Indian from Calcutta, read the Bible to him in 1874. Then he heard the voice of Christ in his heart. Romain Rolland establishes the Narendra Vivekananda said of the Baghavan: “It was completely Bhakta without and completely Jnani within.”

To some extent “The Keys To Thy Kingdom” is a course and teaching. But it is also the product of a theological mind well aware of the mystical starting point and its enriching experiences. Let us keep in mind that the current deviations in the lives of the youth of the world are due to the fact that they have wanted to substitute Religion — the author himself establishes this — with the false power of materialism. The “obscure traveller,”

loaded with frustrations, is always threatened by the dangers of the unknown. These are his words.

This method of recuperating the lost treasures for the human soul is what I consider Rev. Davila's major ascertainment: to oppose the hemorrhagic torrent from which an evasive humanity is suffering, and from the reality from which, in its bitterness, it is trying to escape — a frightening reality, where people swaddle in the devilish veil of drug addiction. Let us not forget that the Scriptures themselves say that you cannot enter the Kingdom through the back door.

In the case of the aforementioned fugitives, while they may fall into mortal sin and not reach the Kingdom, they are aware of its existence. It is in this vein that Ouspensky speaks to the "Anesthetic Revelation." He often speaks of Prof. William James, founder of American philosophical pragmatism together with Charles Pierce. Pierce gives strong emphasis to narcotics in his book "The Mystical States." Cited by Ouspensky in "Tertium Organum," James proclaims the existence of cosmic Consciousness and says: "I have friends who believe in anesthetic revelation. For them ALSO such revelation is a monistic knowledge in which ALL ELSE appears in diverse forms absorbed in the ONE." "Cosmic Consciousness" would evidently occur, as well as entry into the Kingdom, without the consequences of a final disaster, following the path of ascesis; and that is how the sole, direct way to God is to be found. On this path, already well-worn during the course of thousands of years, there are examples of holiness here and there in India. That escape towards God — as the commentators on mystical experiences put it — has six registered phases or circles which are known today more liberally, more publicly, not only by the associations and "ashrams" of the West, but also in the particular forms of common life. From "Samadhi" to "Nirvikalpa-samadhi," the book "The Keys To Thy Kingdom" is a book worthy of being offered to the public in many successive editions, each edition having an abundant number of copies.

It is very, very different from those courses of Lobsang Rampa, written for a large audience and therefore ones in which we cannot place our entire trust. Indeed, the author is a true master who has drunk from the Bible and the Upanishads. He is an experienced master, by no means a "bookword," with the spiritual power of a Paramahansa. He is a master of the superior order of the Sannyasins, someone who may be compared to one of three "startsy" of Leo Tolstoy... . This famous Titan of "War and Peace," repeating saint Matthew, constructed the most divine story when, in a mantric trance, he placed the following words in the mouth of one of them:

"You are Three; We are Three; Grant us your Grace . .

Considering these marvelous words of Tolstoy — jubilously repeated by Yogananda — only the mantram "OUROBOUROS" of "space, you have defeated me" of our immortal and unequalled Cesar Davila Andrade, author of the Monument, could be mentioned. Let's remember "Ode to the Architect" of this excelsius semi-god of the Illuminated Word, when he said to Him — Whose name is not pronounced, only insinuated with the syllable OM:

You on the bare shoulder of the creek, in the froth and in the slow prick of sound in sleep in the concentric tremor of the wounded lakes and in the wandering sepulchre of the voices that were.

In the music which has been wandering for centuries through the sky, and one night comes down and reaches our ears.

You, in us, asleep, watchful and profound. In the secret cloud of melancholy In this dark voyage of adversity and glory in this vague mortuary dream which we endure, You breathe our joy, our sorrow, our air and in our last night you breathe in our soul...

Francisco Yépez Alvarado (San Juan de la Cruz in heaven) also knows this “night”: “dark night” of the climbing of Mount Carmel, whose nights are “active in senses,” the “activity of the spirit,” and correspondingly passive. And everything of the whole appears during this night of the Supreme Respiration, summed up in this Supreme Stanza of his dark Night:

Oh night which you guided
Oh friendly night more than dawn
Oh night which joins both lovers,
in the transformed Love...!

As his illustrious namesake save in God (except in the critics and the dishonest people); as the great poet César Andrade, the Father and Master Caesar Dávila-Gavilanes is one of God’s sublime and privileged writers.

César Andrade Cordero

INTRODUCTION

“The essence of Human Dignity is man’s calling to enter into communion with God.”

Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes No. 19

When I began to write this book, I asked myself the following question: besides being useful, would it be necessary to publish a book about concentration and meditation, sublime activities of the soul, which are ignored by and foreign to the vast majority of men, and known and practiced by a small minority which is trying to find the golden link that would unite it with transcendental life?

Dear friend, let us reflect upon the human being: what you are, what I am, what we all are. This will be the starting point for answering our question.

Man-Problem The Second Vatican Council — composed of the most prominent personalities speaking all tongues, representing the people, races and nations of the Earth — proposed the study of the Man-problem thus: “Man is an unsolved problem to himself, confusedly perceived.”¹ Further, “Man is divided within himself, and thus the entire life of man, individually as well as collectively, appears as a struggle; not just an average struggle, but one between good and evil. Men feel incapable of independently controlling the aggressions of evil, and each one feels like he is bound in chains.”²

Man — An Enigma Man is an antinomia, a great mystery, an enigma. When I visited the pyramids of ancient Egypt, very close to the pyramid of Cheops, I contemplated the sphinx covered by the unmistakable patina of time. Man, every man, is like that sphinx in the desert, with a grave, melancholic, solitary, sad, deeply thoughtful look, counting the sea, hours, days, months, years and centuries with its deep contrasts of light and shadow, love and hatred, hope and despair, joy and pain, tempests and calm, nostalgia towards the past and awareness of the present, dreams and realities, triumphs and defeats, to be or not to be.

Man — A Study Each page of history describes man as he was seen or understood. Anchored in time and space, he has always been an object of study, observation and severe criticism, he has been neither ignored nor forgotten in his history. As he progresses along the path of time, his own children — the ethnologists, archaeologists, anthropologists and philosophers, the sages, scientists, priests, politicians, theologians and guides, thinkers and literary figures, artists, prophets, ascetics and saints — have analyzed him from every angle, some working diligently to solve his problems, others to exacerbate them. No one has been studied as he — so well-observed, so carefully described. What hasn’t been said about man?

¹ Gaudium et Spes. No. 21

² Ibid. No. 13

Man And His Origins Upon studying man from count zero of his existence, some see him coming down from the sky above. Others degrade him and make him more or less an intelligent anthropoid. The latter place him in five major categories according to his evolution: Polar, hyperborean, Lemurian, Semitic, Mongolic, and finally, the fifth root race, or Aryan race, which is the present one.

Others take him back to the genesis of the Earth on which he lives. They say that his presence on this planet is as old as the Earth itself, that he follows the same evolutionary rhythm, and that he will last as long as the Earth itself — unless man himself accelerates his own destruction by exploding thousands of atomic bombs which, in his stupidity, he has stored up, making him capable of destroying all life on the planet for hundreds of times over.

Some have attributed to him a “divine origin” so much as to consider him a totally foreign being to this planet. Others have made him so “human” that they don’t want to see in him more than a particle of the cosmos, with no other destiny than his life on Earth. Some consider him to be the son of God who came for new experiences — others consider him to be the son of the circumstances in which he has been placed.

Man and His Conscience In the course of time, man appears to be deeply troubled. His individual conscience is seriously threatened by an overwhelming mass; his historical conscience, distorted by those who relate and evaluate events according to their own viewpoint; his philosophical consciousness fatally disfigured by those who look upon philosophy as a mere “reflection compromised with the present”, unaware that philosophy examines, analyzes, judges and studies the past; his social consciousness frustrated before the materialistic demagogue which has promised him a seat at the banquet table with all the abundance of material goods, but which has done nothing but increase his misery and frustration, and blow on the passion of hatred, rancor and envy of his more fortunate brother; his religious consciousness turned two-headed, with one head seeking the divine not because it is divine, but because it is the last hope he has to overcome his frustration, the other head seeking only to satisfy his personal interests. With one head he loves, with the other he hates; with one he creates, with the other destroys; with one head he wants to be loyal, with the other he commits treason. Drugs are just as much a menace — If not more so — as the atomic bomb: both seriously threaten to extinguish the human race.

Man: A Victim of the Fortune Teller This desire for escape, this flight from reality, has brought about the immediate and necessary presence of many people who offer to use their ingenuity to solve all of man’s problems with ease: problems of money, love, friendship, health, conflicts among fellow men, problems of the present, past and future. Thus were born astrologers, black magicians, chiromantics, geomantics, witches and fortune tellers, whose offices are filled with “clients” of all kinds. To give but one example, it is said that in Paris there is a fortune teller for every 120 inhabitants, and over four thousand such “offices” registered with the police department.

The mentioning of these facts causes us to stop and consider that the human problem, man’s problem, is very deep and complex. The human being is besieged from all

around. In the words of Christ, he is like a house hit by a downpour, hurricanes and storms.³

Each man is like a hieroglyph which has to be deciphered. He is a question that requires an answer.

Man and Death The enigma of the human being becomes more profound when confronting a reality from which he tries to escape by any means: total extinction; death.

Philosophers such as Heidegger aggravate the problem when they try to create a false image of man, as if he were fatally condemned to suffer anguish, despair, abandonment, failure, nothingness.

Science has refined its power to destruct to a high degree, and, paradoxically, has made unbelievable efforts to prolong man's life span. Some human bodies are kept in hibernation in an effort to indefinitely perpetuate man's existence on Earth. What is really behind all these scientific efforts? A wish, or inborn aspiration for immortality? The seed of eternity within every man is always struggling to break through the core of the human heart and give birth to immortality.

The Seed of Immortality is Within Man Himself What matters, then, is to try to realize that this seed of eternity has already been planted deep within oneself. Jesus referred to this when he said: "The Kingdom of God is within you."⁴

The Great Secret Do you know, dear, friend, where to find the secret of happiness that you are seeking so diligently, which I have sought, and which all men are seeking? Well, the secret is simply to find this kingdom within ourselves. When you feel the presence of this kingdom within yourself, you will feel illuminated within — everything in your life will change. You will no longer feel frustration; nor will you feel discouraged, desperate or bitter. This kingdom is entirely yours to enjoy: you give the orders.

The enjoyment of bliss in this kingdom will never disappear, never die: it will always accompany you, throughout eternity. Only when you enter into communion with Him, with your God and my God, with your WHOLE and my WHOLE, with your Delight and my Delight, will you find yourself — and believe me, not before. In your meeting with him, says the II Vatican Council, is the essence of Human Dignity.

The New Creature This self-discovery will turn you into a new being. You will no longer be the problem without a solution; you will no longer be the great mystery; your real consciousness will come forward transparent, pure, shadowless, it will not fool you as when you were a child...You will be a human being in the deep sense of the word: someone who thinks by himself, who creates, who is capable of making judgement, who lives a full life. You will no longer be a robot, nor a puppet, nor a machine,-nor a mannequin, directed by others via remote control. You will be your own master. You

³ Matthew VIII, 25

⁴ Luke XVII, 21

will no longer be the typical evader, a constant fugitive from yourself and from the reality in which you live. Your eyes will see, and you will realize that you have been very, very far away from yourself.

The Road to Realization When you discover this kingdom, when you have found yourself that is, when you have found the road that leads to them — what is there to fear? Your fellow men? Events? The obstacles life places before you? Death? No, never. With him, for him, and through him you shall find everything — I assure you of that. Through all you feel, experience, suffer, think and do, you will, little by little, weave the cloth of your full realization. This is what Rabindranath Tagore, one of the great, genius writers of millenary India, says: “The history of man is the history of his progression to the unknown, which drives him to constantly seek the realization of his immortal soul. Through the rise and fall of empires, through the accumulation of riches and the unsuitable squandering of them; through the creation of vast symbolic systems which shape his dreams and aspirations, only to be immediately forgotten like the toys of his infancy; through the magic keys with which he believes he can unlock the mysteries of creation; and through the frustrating and time-consuming efforts to go back to the drawing board and initiate new projects and activities — yes, through all that man moves little by little towards the complete realization of his soul, the soul which is greater than all the things he accumulates, greater than the activities in which he participates, greater than the theories he formulates; the soul, whose progress is interrupted neither by death nor dissolution.”⁵

The Goal is Realization Self-realization is man’s true goal. And there is no other realization. This crisis is essentially a spiritual crisis. This truth is accepted by all who, in some way or another, are concerned with the problems of the human being. “humanity today” says the great philosopher Teilhard de Chardin, “though at the peak of its power, doubts and suffers because it has not defined its spiritual pole. It has no religion.”⁶

Humanity is without a spiritual pole — it has no religion. That is the great truth. Until he finds the way to his own realization, man will be but a poor traveler constantly threatened by the dangers of the unknown.

Until he discovers that the goal he must reach is not at the end of his stay on Earth, but awaits beyond; until he is formally convinced of this truth, man shall have to feel his way as he walks, and shall be like a dislocated bone which has not fused itself back into the body of humanity.

The sole purpose of this book, dear brother, is to help you solve your problems by helping you solve the most important one of all: finding yourself.

The fate of man — who is the only creature on this plane who thinks and loves — depends upon the mind and the will.

Depersonalized Man The great majority of people do not live their own lives as people, following their creative minds or their conscious wills: they live depending on

⁵ Sadhana. El Sentido de la Vida. Ed. Kier. Buenos Aires, page 68.

⁶ Ciencia y Cristo. Ed. Taurus, page 25.

what others have done or thought. They suffer from some kind of collective hypnosis which leads them to do what other, more audacious people impose upon them — not what is really good for them. This dehumanization is an undeniable fact.

The Robot-like Man Today, we can truly speak of the robot-like man who is directed by remote control by the most clever and astute of his fellow men. We can speak of man as a puppet who, in an unbelievable case, will kneel before a bastard interest. We can speak of a mechanical-man who no longer wants to think because other men have made machines that do everything for him: the calculators, the electronic brains, the computers, etc., of mannequin-man who makes no decisions and who falls victim semi-consciously to his own problems and the problems of those around him.

Present-day man is the typical evader, the fugitive, the deserter who escapes from himself and from the reality he lives in.

The Drug Addict This strong desire to escape, this running away from the self, explains why young men and women — when beginning to learn about life alone or in organized communities — start taking “trips” by taking such hallucinatory poisons as LSD, mescaline, cocaine, morphine, marijuana, etc.

The dependency upon drugs has become so great that some European and South American countries have had to legalize the use of drugs, which are rapidly undermining not only the morale, but the very existence of man.

Concentration and Meditation: Higher Disciplines Concentration and, particularly, meditation, are two practices, two exercises which train the human mind and will power. Concentration and meditation are very effective tools that enable man to find himself.

Concentration and meditation are the only paths recommended and practiced for centuries by a very small group of incarnated souls who take the trip back to the kingdom whence they have come. I invite you to also be a part of this small group. Concentration and meditation will lead you, child of God, to the kingdom of your father-God.

This book has been written in a very simple style, a very didactic one, because its purpose is to teach, not to entertain you; it is meant to guide you, not to entertain you for it wishes to lead you into practice, not to limited theories.

The mystics of the East and the West have reached us through their many writings. The Easterners, favoring the value of their methods, have neglected the study of those applied by the Westerners. Likewise, Westerners ignore almost completely what they can learn from Eastern mysticism. This book tries to avoid extremes by making a balanced consideration of the methods used in both the East and the West.

This book is dedicated to those who have already felt to some extent, or are feeling at least the presence of, the kingdom of God, the principle and purpose of true happiness in the human being.

Chapter One – What is concentration?

Teaching of Eastern Art Who hasn't ever stopped to glance for at least a short while at one of those mystical allegories with which Eastern art represents divinity? When facing the hieratic figure of a Buddha, in the classical lotus posture, with his legs very naturally crossed over the thighs, the ecstatic gaze directed to the space between the eyebrows, the hands resting peacefully upon his legs . . . you immediately feel you are contemplating a metaphysical world, transcendental, seeking to represent the Divine essence in its purest aspect. The spirit feels imperceptibly illuminated by that symbol which expresses in all its power the aesthetics of the Light of Scotus Erigena, the metaphysical aesthetics of Albert Magnus, Thomas Aquinas or St. Buenaventura, the aesthetics of the allegory of Ricardo de San Victor, or the aesthetics of the symbol of Plato.

Such symbols teach us to discover the transcendental world that each one of us carries within himself. They invite us to the concentration and meditation that will open before us the doors of the kingdom. Jesus, the Great Master, also taught us this art of concentration and meditation.

Christ's Gaze The Pharisees — and how many there are in this world! — sent their young disciples, together with the Herodians, to ask Jesus if the Jews, who were at that time under Roman rule, should or should not pay taxes to Caesar. The Lord, after rebuking them for their hypocrisy, tells them: "Show me the money for the tax."⁷

The Master looked at the Roman coin for a moment.

To Look is to Concentrate This act of "looking" is called concentration. Concentration means not only to look, but to look attentively, fixing your attention on only one thing, the way the Master of Masters did. But this "looking" is not looking with the eyes of the head, but with the eyes of the mind — the eyes of that electrifying power, that formidable power that dwells in our spirit.

To concentrate is "to focus the mind on a certain point." Our mind is similar to an immense lake from which an infinite amount of drops of water run through canals; it is like the light of a reflector, like the fire of the volcano.

Concentration prevents our ego — that is, all our being, our conscience, our mind — from scattering or diluting into infinite objects, from trying to simultaneously encompass an infinite number of things.

What Concentration Does To use the same comparisons, Concentration is the mental discipline, it is the mental effort we make so that our mind (a lake of abundant waters) may flow through one channel only, that is, through only one thought, so that it may continue with the irresistible strength it had at its origin and may move a great dynamo, or irrigate many lands without being wasted.

Concentration makes that great reflector (our mind) focus its beam of light upon a certain point so that it may be seen in all its details.

⁷ Matthew XXII, 19

Concentration prevents our mind from wasting its immeasurable strength in smoke, in lava, in destructive fire, as does an active volcano, but helps it to burn in creative power.

A True Fact One of the most recent philosophers in millenary India, Sri Ramana Maharshi, made this reflection: “The mind of a common man is full of innumerable thoughts, and therefore, each one of them, individually, is very weak. When instead of many of these useless thoughts appearing, only one thought appears, it is a power in itself and has ample influence.”⁸

This is, unfortunately, a true fact. The great majority of men do not know how to use the power of the mind because they don’t know how to concentrate, because their minds are diluted in innumerable thoughts that turn them into anemic patients. Very few know how to concentrate their minds on a certain object. Those who do acquire formidable powers that seem superhuman.

The Mind and the Photographic Camera Our mind is like a photographic camera that can capture all images. When the objects are out of focus, when they appear blurred, distorted or obscure on the lens; then the resulting photographs are just as blurred, distorted and obscure. It does not matter if the camera is

one of good quality or not. Whether ordinary or fine, it must be well focused in order to clearly reproduce the image. Otherwise, it does not serve the purpose for which it was made.

And so with our mind. When it is out of focus, the thoughts, ideas, judgments produced through the senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, are blurred, distorted and obscure. Let’s not forget that the mind is like the camera: it captures the objects on the outside and stores them in the “ego.” From here, they are later selected to be reproduced again.

Concentration makes the mind “focus” the object, and capture and photograph it neatly. Everything which has been captured is stored in the memory and is kept there until again reproduced. In that register, all sensations received from the outside are stored. Concentration makes the mind “neatly reproduce” the photographed object.

Concentration in Daily Life The need for concentration in daily life derives from the following. The student who knows how to concentrate will necessarily be a better student. It does not matter if nature has not given him an outstanding capacity: concentration, exercised in whatever task he may undertake, will substitute for what his nature lacks.

On the other hand, he may be a genius, but if he doesn’t know how to concentrate the attention of his thoughts on one subject, he will be a mediocre man.

This is the law of concentration: concentration turns mediocre men into geniuses. And likewise, not knowing how to concentrate turns the geniuses into mediocre men.

⁸ “Técnica de Concentración” Ed. Fabril, C. G. page 16.

Concentration is the Principle of Success Concentration is absolutely necessary if you want to succeed in any activity in human life. The great discoveries of science did not happen by chance, as is sometimes innocently believed. There is nothing, absolutely, which happens by chance. This word was created to acknowledge ignorance of something whose existence is unknown. Eastern philosophy does not acknowledge this word in the sense in which Westerners understand it. What we call chance, or accident, is the result of successive causes which we ignore.

Concentration, Discoveries and Divine Laws The great discoveries of science were the result of years — sometimes centuries — of research. Discoverers made great use of the art of concentration to study the law or laws that rule man and nature.

To discover is not to create. The discoverer does not create anything, he does not invent anything, he only arrives at the knowledge of how a certain thing operates.

God has conditioned the existence of all beings and all things to the simple laws which man translates into mathematical formulas — or physical, chemical, artistic, biological or philosophical formulas, etc.

Concentration leads the human being to such discoveries. Without it, the divine laws that operate in creatures and in things would still be sleeping the sleep of the stone age.

As with scientific discoveries, so with industry, commerce and everything else. The one who knows how to concentrate will necessarily be successful in whatever activity he may engage. On the other hand, when the mind is divided and scattered, chances of success are few, and sometimes nonexistent. The mind directed in various directions simultaneously, sometimes at very short intervals, cannot achieve the same success as when it is directed at and focused upon only one object.

Concentration Awakens Occult Powers: Examples Concentration awakens formidable powers that are dormant in man. I knew a man who, using his powers of concentration, could cause light bulbs to break by looking at them fixedly from a distance. I testify that the following occurred: A student of yoga was having his car's flat tire changed. From a distance there appeared a violent and impulsive man, screaming and yelling, who approached him with an aggressive attitude as if to hurt him. The student simply kept his calm and looked directly at the man's forehead. This fixed and concentrated look, which has the power of a thunderbolt, made the aggressor walk backwards without him even being able to turn his back, until he backed into a wall. Such is the power of mental concentration. The phenomena of telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, materializations, are so intimately related to the power of concentration that it is impossible to separate them from one another.

Human Transmitter Receivers in the Nautilus In 1958, the atomic submarine "Nautilus" started out on a cruise around the world. The entire trip was to be made under the surface of the water. When crossing the northern polar region, the thick ice would practically have disconnected the radio communications with San Francisco in California. What would be done then? The Nautilus took a human transmitter-receiver along. Another human transmitter-receiver stayed on land. Communication was out in this way. From a distance, both persons interpreted the symbols of the nautical maps during the trip.

The Pentagon's Press Office reported that 80 per cent of the data were correct.

Help of Extraterrestrial Creatures in Conquest of the Moon Years later, the same telepathic experiments were used in the trip of the Apollo XIV when this space ship first landed on the moon. One of the astronauts had to communicate telepathically from the spacecraft to the Control Towers of Cape Canaveral. The results of the experiments are being kept secret by NASA. It is logical to assume it was successful.

From other absolutely reliable sources we know that there was powerful help (let's call it telepathic help) from extraterrestrial creatures when man first set foot on the moon. These extraterrestrial creatures are neighboring inhabitants from our solar system. The NASA files contain photographs of strange objects (UFO's) taken during the space trip of the Apollo VII over the Soliman mountains in Pakistan. It is unnecessary to make any more comments about that. Without systematic training in concentration, no telepathic communication is possible.

Concentration and Hypnosis Before bringing this chapter to a close, it must be made clear that it is impossible to perform any experiment of hypnosis upon someone who cannot concentrate. This has been proven many times. A person capable of concentrating on the word of the hypnotist can be easily hypnotized. The states of catalepsy and deep somnambulism, or any other kind of experiment one may want to perform, such as unfoldment, mental suggestion, transmission of thoughts, mediumnity, forevision, regression, Acashic readings, and so on, can only be achieved when the subject is able to concentrate.

Scientists such as Franz Anton Mesmer, James Bridge, Charcot and his school of Salpêtrier, Bernheim and the school of Nancy, Mendel, Zimssen, N. Bejterev, I. Pavlov, K. Platonov, etc., agree that it is impossible to perform any hypnotic experiment with people who are unable to concentrate.

Concentration as a Gate to Meditation Finally, it is necessary to note that concentration is a necessary step prior to the practice of meditation. Most of the difficulties which the student encounters in meditation can be prevented or solved through CONCENTRATION.

This would be cut short, incomplete, if it only spoke about the easy way to obtain success in various human activities. That is not the goal of this book. It wants to go further. It wants to reach an objective, to show you the goal: to reach GOD.

Concentration, Gurus, Yogis, God The Yogis, Sadhus, Sannyasins, Gurus of the East, take great care to teach their chelas, disciples or followers the different techniques of concentration and meditation. The authentic yoga pursues this goal: GOD.

Not a single one of the true masters of the East, not a single true yogi, pursues any other goal in their teachings or practices besides the goal of encountering God: an encounter which is real, true, human, experienced, perhaps tangible, and which is with God, alpha and omega, beginning and end, bliss and joy, wisdom and love, infinite omnipotence, intelligence, happiness.

An authentic Guru feels an intense need to show his disciple the sure way to find that which will make him eternally happy: GOD. Concentration is the step prior to reaching this goal.

Chapter Two – Preparing the physical body for concentration

It has been said that our ideas, our thoughts, our judgement, and our feelings are born in our minds. Our body, with its five senses, its imagination, its common sense, and its abilities of estimation and memory, plays an important role in the elaboration of the ideas, thoughts, judgements and reasonings. Our whole being takes part in this complicated process. Therefore, it is not superfluous to talk about how to prepare our physical body for our concentration practice.

Concentration is the discipline which teaches the rules of, shows the technique of, and fosters the practice of focusing thoughts in one direction only.

What is the purpose of preparing our physical body? We must first realize that if we want to obtain positive results in our concentration practice, this practice is absolutely necessary.

Mens sana in corpore sano The masters of the East begin by teaching their disciples how to educate their physical body so that, instead of hindering concentration and meditation, it may be a docile instrument that may serve the spirit.

Latin philosophers created this old saying: “Mens sana in corpore sano,” which means “The mind is healthy when the body is healthy.” If we want our mind to be in a favorable condition in order to function better, we have to begin by preparing our physical body. If our senses (especially sight and sound) are under proper control, if our physical body is in good health, and if we add to this all the other practices which help the action of the soul through the body, concentration will never be difficult.

The Rider (Soul) and the Horse (Body) Eastern philosophers, and Plato among the Greeks, have a different concept from that of Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Suarez and other scholars, about the union between the body and the soul. For the former, the union is merely accidental, comparable to the one existing between a rider and his horse. The rider is the soul, and the horse is the physical body. And once the rider has trained the horse, the (body) shall obey the rider (soul). The physical body shall be like a wild horse that will rebel against the rider and shall not obey him if the soul has neglected to train him. For the latter group, the union is substantive. Personally, I agree with the Eastern thoughts expressed through the philosophers.

Practical Rules To prepare the physical body appropriately for concentration, it is important to do the following:

1. LEARN TO RELAX YOUR BODY.
2. FOLLOW AN APPROPRIATE DIET.
3. BREATHE APPROPRIATELY.

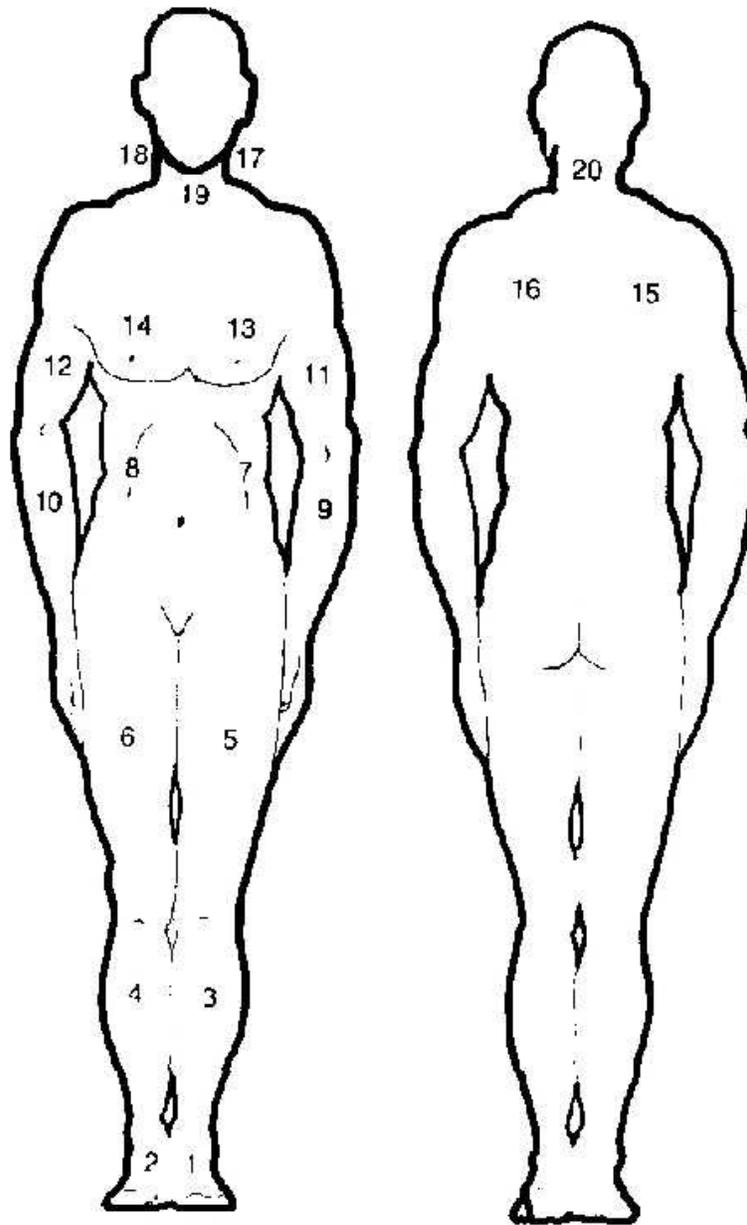
4. ADOPT A CORRECT BODY POSTURE.
5. CHOOSE A PLACE AND TIME FOR CONCENTRATION PRACTICE.
6. PRACTICE CONCENTRATION AND MEDITATION.

Learning to relax your body

As human beings progress on their way to obtain the comforts which make their lives more pleasant, tensions grow in every way. Today man lives under permanent stress: at home, away from home, in the office, in the shop, in the factory, in business, on the street, on trips, day and night. These tensions make him nervous, restless, unsatisfied and preoccupied. his nervous system is especially deeply altered. For this reason, many are forced to take tranquilizers which only temporarily — while the drug is still working — relieve or diminish the tensions, and in the end they cause the neurosis to become worse. For such states, yoga offers, among other technique, the tension and relaxation techniques, which we are going to explain.

Relaxation Technique Lie on your back on the floor, on any cover, rug or mat. Do not use any head rest. Feel relaxed. Look at the ceiling of the room. If it is white, so much the better. This color will be a powerful help in relaxing. Don't forget that colors produce in the human psyche certain sensations, and awaken certain occult reactions and powers. White always produces peace, calmness, easiness, tranquility and quietness.

If you are worried, in a bad mood or have problems, look at something white, whether a pencil, a handkerchief or a piece of paper. If you do that and look at this color for a few minutes, allowing the vibratory waves of this color to act upon you, you will soon feel at peace.



But let us continue explaining the exercise I am suggesting to you, which is well known, and also recommended by the Self Realization Fellowship founded by Paramahansa Yogananda, the yogi saint of our century.

Twenty Parts of the Body Divide your body into twenty parts when performing this exercise. Begin with your left instep (1), then on to the right one (2), left calf (3), right calf (4), left thigh (5), right thigh (6), left hip (7), right hip (8), left hand and arm (9), right hand and arm (10), left forearm (11), right forearm (12), left side of back (13), right side of back (14), left side of chest (15), right side of chest (16), left side of neck (17), right side of neck (18), throat (19) and back of neck (20).

A Rule of Relaxation Carefully study and follow the illustration entitled. Once you have divided your body into twenty parts as directed, start exercising by energizing and relaxing each part in the above order. To energize is to direct energy to a certain part of your body with all your willpower. To relax is to draw back the energy you sent, energize and relax these twenty parts, one after the other.

In order to practice this exercise perfectly, do the following: standing, stretch out one of your arms in front of you, and then send energy to that arm, feel how it becomes tense, rigid and strong, and make it vibrate. It vibrates when you perceive a slight repetitive movement. Do the same with the rest of the twenty parts. Practice the exercise three times, with intervals of one or two minutes between exercises.

Three Advantages of the Relaxation Technique This technique has many advantages. First, it calms, lowers and eliminates physical tensions to which you are subject during the day. Second, it makes you discover a source of power and energy which was hidden to you: your will power, for your will power and only your will power gives orders to your body. From the beginning you learn to rule your body through your mind. Later your body will obey you humbly, and you shall never more be the slave of your body and its instincts. Your mind, your "I," shall guide and direct your physical body, not vice versa, here is the great difference between one who practices a discipline and one who does not.

Whenever you feel pain or uncomfortable on account of a physical problem, send energy to that aching part and then draw it back. In other words, tense and relax that aching part. You will feel immediate relief if you concentrate your attention on this exercise.

This is the basis of the Eastern teaching of healing through will power. The important thing is to feel that the energy gets to that part of the body and to feel that the energy is drawn back. Practice this exercise up to five times. And finally, leave that energy which you were controlling through your will power in that spot.

The third advantage of this technique is that you are already doing a basic mental concentration exercise when sending energy to and drawing it back from each one of the twenty parts of your body.

Select a Hard Bed

This exercise must be practiced daily, preferably upon getting up in the morning, in your bed, as long as your bed is a hard one and you can relax. A bed that is too soft will not allow you to perform this exercise correctly. It is highly recommended that for your body to really rest while sleeping, you should have a hard bed, since we all know that this allows the body to relax properly. A soft bed is the cause of many illnesses, especially those related to the kidneys.

As previously mentioned, in order to practice this exercise, put away the pillow. I assure you, thanks to my own experience, that if you practice this technique upon getting up, you will feel neither tired, nor in a bad mood, nor sleepy.

How many people there are, dear friend, who deprive themselves of all the of these simple practices which are taught by the great masters of the East, just because they don't want to make a small effort!

Following an adequate diet

Meat Diet in the West We are now entering an area which is understood badly, or very little, by most Westerners. Most Westerners feel a natural and congenital aversion to adopting a meatless diet. In the West, the custom of eating meat is so deeply rooted in hotels, restaurants, coffee houses, delis and homes, that it is very difficult to introduce the idea that a meat diet has many disadvantages and that it is the cause of many sicknesses. In Western homes, not eating meat at least once a day is a sign of extreme poverty. In our native races — the Indians — this meat diet is deeply rooted. There is no celebration, no gathering of friends, where the succulent meat dishes on the menu aren't the favorites.

Meat for the Easterners In the East, customs are different. Animal meat is not one of the basic elements in the diet. We all know that in India, for example, there is great poverty, but this is not the reason why they do not eat meat. Rather, it is because the vegetarian diet is a powerful aid for better mental and spiritual efficiency. This diet is compulsory for those who intend to lead a spiritual and intellectual life. Not a single guru, not a single spiritual teacher allows his disciple the choice of his diet.

Western schools, such as Rosicrucians, Freemasons, Brothers of the Great Universal Brotherhood, Transcendental Meditation, etc., which are inspired by the teachings of Eastern masters, recommend that their disciples and followers adopt a vegetarian diet.

There is a very well known proverb among them: "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are." There is truth to this saying.

The Human Body is What It Eats We are not going to make any profound analysis of the influence of meat eating on the body, mind and soul of man: this is not our purpose. Our purpose is merely to show some of the disadvantages of such a diet.

If we briefly examine our physical body, we shall find that its millions of cells are made up of and represent nothing else but the elements supplied by the environment in which they live and develop. Just like the cells of the infant in his mother's womb are nothing but the sum of the elements which the mother supplies him, the human body is the sum of the elements with mother nature provides him.

The human body needs a source of power or energy to live. This energy is taken from diverse elements existing in nature.

Mother nature supplies our body first of all with the radiation of the sun, then with water, proteins, vitamins, carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, phosphorus, sulphur, chlorine, calcium, sodium, magnesium, potassium, iron, copper, manganese, cobalt, zinc, iodine, fluorine, etc. These elements are used by the body, some in extraordinarily small amounts, others in large amounts.

Modern pharmaceutical medicine simply provides the human body with those elements which it lacks or, in certain cases, where a deficiency or imbalance is found. The doctor prescribes the amount lacking in each case.

Metabolism Biology give the name “metabolism” to the different stages of assimilation of elements absorbed by the human body from nature in order to transform them into vital energy.

Metabolism comprises two essential operations: catabolism and anabolism. The first one consists in burning materials; that is, in decomposing them until they are used as energy and to maintain physical life. The second one consists in using this material which is already prepared.

Easterners say — and they are right — that, in addition to these two elements that Western science considers necessary for human life, there is another element which they call PRANA. PRANA is found in the air, and especially in the mineral and vegetable kingdoms.

Likewise, it is known that the different glands of internal secretion in the human body produce the hormones that regulate the complicated process of metabolism basal.

There is No Reason for Adopting a Meat Diet Why is there no reason to adopt a meat diet? In the first place, because if the animals which man eats receive their necessary proteins, fat, carbohydrates and minerals from nature, why should man then need to consume the bodies of dead animals to obtain the necessary energy for his own body?

Isn't it more logical to take direct advantage of all those elements, in their pure state, which are so generously provided by God in mother nature? Or do we spare our body from working by eating animal meat? On the contrary, that work is doubled, for it requires twice the effort to first assimilate the things which nature offers, and second to use those same elements already transformed, digested and modified by the animal.

Corruption Process Second, the process of putrefication of a dead animal, which only appears useful to life, is very harmful and produces death, as this process of decay is immediate. Within hours, the process of fermentation produces carbonated and sulphured hydrogen gases, carbonic acid (lethal poison), a high rate of cadaveric alkaloids, promanies, cadaverine, and putrescence. Later there appear beetles, lepidoptera, bacillus, and other death agents such as the lucila and sacrophagus fly, which are attracted by the smell. The effort made by the human body to use and transform these elements of death is very great. And it is not worthwhile putting it through all this strain just for some protein, fat carbohydrates and minerals which — as we have already said — the human body takes directly from nature.

We must add something very important: food poisonings caused by meat are very frequent. Cases of instant death occur. And it is explainable if you take into consideration that the amount of toxic substances which the carnivorous man eats is enormous, and that the human body is not made to assimilate materials which are already in the process of decay: he is not like the carnivorous animal (dog, tiger, wolf).

Let us take note of the allegory of the Genesis, where the Lord instructs Adam — first inhabitant on Earth — about his nourishment. He tells him: “Behold I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with

seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.”⁹ He does not say, “There I give you every animal which is upon the face of all the earth and you shall have them for food.”

And he adds: “And to every wild animal of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to every creature that crawls on the earth and has the breath of life, I give the green plants for food.”¹⁰

Finally, the processes of blood circulation, breathing, digestion, and secretion of the meat eater and of the vegetarian differ. For the former, it is very difficult and complicated; for the latter, it is easy and simple.

Some Advantages of the Vegetarian Diet Experience has demonstrated that the mind of a vegetarian is clearer, more alert, more awake than the mind of a meat eater: their powers of concentration differ. Spiritual achievements are very difficult and sometimes impossible, greatly due to an inappropriate diet, particularly when the diet consists mainly of meat. It is for this reason that monks and nuns in the East as well as our own priests and nuns, especially those who lead and have as their goal a contemplative life (that life of substantial communion with God), adopt in their internal rules and recommend their followers abstain from eating meat. Doctors also recommend patients who are in a delicate state to temporarily adopt a vegetarian diet, or at least a diet based on fowl.

Meat Substitutes There are many foods which substitute advantageously for meat and which do not contain any of the poisonous substances we have mentioned above.

These are: avocado, which provides abundant fat and proteins; nuts and tocte, abundant in protein; eggplant; and generally all fruits and greens which offer us in their primitive pureness all the necessary elements to maintain the vitality of the organism.

Hidden Reasons for Rejecting a Carnivorous Diet Westerners who are not familiar with the mentality or the teachings of the great masters of the East only accept what they can see with their eyes, or perceive with their other senses, or test in a laboratory. Their culture is mainly materialistic and positivist, and does not allow them to penetrate into matters related to transcendental life.

Parapsychology seeks to explain all the phenomena of psychic life through natural causes or reasons. Not even proven miracles escape their efforts. And what don't they say about all the other theories which contradict their materialistic dreams?

Easterners are right when they say that all creatures on Earth (including, of course, men and animals) have an astral shape, form or body apart from their physical bodies. This astral body shines or vibrates just like light, with a certain vibratory frequency. The astral body remains after the death of the physical body has taken place, and so do its vibrations. Such vibrations are positive or negative, according to the person or the kind of animal involved. If the person is spiritual, these vibrations are highly positive; if not, they are negative.

⁹ Genesis 1, 29

¹⁰ Genesis 1,30

The same occurs with animals. For example, when eating meat such as pork, man also, in a certain way, is digesting all the highly negative vibrations of this animal.

Fruit and vegetables, on the contrary, have only positive vibrations.

Sattwic, Rajasic, and Tamasic Food We shall end this part by talking about the different kinds of food. Easterners classify them into three categories, according to the mental and spiritual effects they produce in man.

There are sattwic, rajasic, and tamasic foods. Tamasic foods are forbidden to those who want to follow a path to a superior life and its realizations, and those are: pork, beef, liquors, tobacco, rancid foods, and unclean, rotten or re-heated foods. These connect us directly to ignorance and debase our consciousness.

Rajasic food connects us to external activity, makes us boastful, frivolous and vain, and encourages pride. These are: meat of other animals, sour food, aphrodisiacs, excessive salt, highly seasoned and refined foods.

Sattwic foods are those which facilitate the functions of the body, disconnect the mind, and liberate the soul. Among them we have milk, cream, cheese, butter, fruit, vegetables, honey and lemon.

Learning to breath adequately

Yogi Ramacharaka, in his book hindu Yogi Science of Respiration, has a chapter entitled: "To Breathe Is To Live." Breathing is the most important function of the body, and other functions depend upon it. He makes this important statement: "The intelligent practice of the faculty of breathing lengthens our days on Earth giving us more endurance, but a careless breathing tends to shorten our days, diminishes our vitality, and fosters conditions which will make us suffer from many illnesses and serious sicknesses."¹¹

Apart from the physical benefits of correct breathing, he states that "it is impossible to increase the mental energy of man, his happiness, self-control, clarity of vision, morality, and even his spiritual improvement by penetrating into or deeply studying the Science of Breath."¹²

In reality, a correct method of breathing produces many benefits, whether physical, mental or spiritual, according to the same author.

Westerners accept the importance of breathing to the maintenance of the body, but they know very little or nothing about its value in relationship to the mental and spiritual life.

For Easterners, the masterpiece of creation corresponds to two moments of divine life: the first, that of inhalation, or absorption, whereby everything — absolutely everything — returns to God during the great night of Brahma; and the second one, of exhalation,

¹¹ Yogi Ramacharaka in "Ciencia Hindú Yogi de la Respiración" Ed. Kier, 1947, Buenos Aires. page 22

¹² Ibid. page 23

or outward projection, whereby all worlds are born and organized during the great day of Brahma.

Thus breathes everything in nature. The tides correspond to a diastole and a systole of our planet. The planet and mineral kingdoms breathe, the plants of our garden breathe, the millenary trees of the forests and all vegetable species breathe through some kind of lungs fixed on the leaves called stomas.

This function is different from that of photosynthesis through which light is transformed into chlorophyll and other elements, which together with water and the minerals of the earth, make them grow and bear fruit for man.

Our body also performs two very important functions which are united and complement each other: breathing and blood circulation.

Blood is the most important vehicle of substances which our organism needs to live. It incorporates products which come from the digestion of food, transports compounds elaborated by the cells in the tissues, and carries all leftover materials to the excretion organs. In addition, it fixes and transports the oxygen supplied by the breathing organs and distributes it to the whole body. One part is liquid, the plasma, the other one solid, consisting of the free cells which are in the plasma. These cells have several names which correspond to their specific functions. There are red blood cells (also called erythrocytes), white blood cells, and the platelets, or thrombocyte. The erythrocytes contain a red pigment called hemoglobin, which is the substance which fixes in our body the oxygen obtained through breathing.

In the normal human body storing about six liters of blood, there are about 30 billion erythrocytes. Each one of these contains about 240 million molecules of hemoglobin with four molecules of iron each, combined with about 960 million molecules of oxygen.

White blood cells produce substances which destroy bacteria, capturing them and digesting them. They form real defense regiments to fight infections. Their number vary between six and eight thousand per cubic millimeter of blood. Platelets are very small cells (ca. 600,000 per cubic millimeter of blood) which act as stoppers in case of bleeding or flowing of blood, solidifying as they clog wounds.

Until recently, breathing was considered to be a mechanism through which air entered the lungs, passed on to the blood and oxygen contained therein, and set itself upon the hemoglobin, to be distributed throughout the organism. Then, oxygen was exhaled after merging with the carbon and the organic material taken by the body, which provided heat and energy. Today we know that not only the lungs breathe, but also all the individual living cells. The amount of oxygen molecules combined in 30 million erythrocytes, or red blood cells, at a rate of 960 oxygen molecules, is really enormous (960 x 30 billions).

This calls for an appropriate breathing technique, to supply not only the amount, but also the quality of oxygen required.

Yogis divide breathing into four categories, that is:

- A. Upper, superficial or clavicular breathing.
- B. Medial or intercostal breathing.
- C. Lower or abdominal breathing.
- D. Complete, profound, or diaphragmatic breathing.

Upper Breathing Only the upper part of the chest takes part in this breathing, and the lungs expand only slightly, the oxygen reaching the face of the ribs. With this kind of breathing, oxygenation of the hemoglobin is poor: cells become sick. This way, as well as the subsequent ways of breathing, is a frequent cause of different disorders in the human body.

Medial Breathing Although a bit better than the clavicular or high breathing, this is not the best one. Air hardly reaches the upper lobule of the lungs. Oxygenation of the erythrocytes is also imperfect.

Lower Breathing With this method the air reaches the inter-lobular areas of the lungs, which are located on the lower part of the lungs, yet oxygenation remains incomplete.

Complete or Diaphragmatic Breathing This method activates the entire respiratory system: lungs, from the face of the ribs to the edges of the diaphragm, intercostal muscles, scalenes, pectorals, and most important, the diaphragm.

The diaphragm is a flat, transversal muscle, membranous partition, which separates the abdominal and thoracic cavities. It is in the shape of a dome, and its concave side faces downwards. During respiration, this muscle works upwards, allowing the air to penetrate and to be rhythmically expelled in very large amounts. This way of breathing is the best one.

In Yoga, other types of breathing are known: the purifying, the vitalizing or invigorating, the rhythmic, the retentive, the alternate, and other respirations. We shall explain the rhythmical and the alternate respirations.

Rhythmical Breathing Having adopted the posture indicated in section below, do the following:

1. Determine your rhythm of respiration, since it varies with each person.
2. In order to discover your rhythm, you must check your pulse. The rhythm is in direct relation to the pulsations. Thus, if while inhaling and exhaling the air I have counted up to six pulsations, my rhythm shall be 6. If my pulsations are four, my rhythm shall be 4. If eight pulsations, then it is 8.
3. Once you know your rhythmic number — 4, 6, 8,10 — you must try to keep your inhalation and exhalation identical.
4. Between inhalation and exhalation you will retain the air half that time, like this: if your rhythm is 4, inhale counting to 4, hold your breath counting to 2, and exhale counting 4 again.

For a rhythm of six it shall be: 6,3, 6.

For a rhythm of eight it shall be: 8, 4, 8.

For a rhythm of ten it shall be 10,5, 10.

And so on.

Alternate Breathing Do the following:

1. Sit comfortably.
2. Using your right thumb, close the right nostril while your right palm rests on your forehead.
3. Deeply inhale, through your left nostril, all the air you can, expanding your chest, raising your shoulders, and lifting your diaphragm as done in the complete respiration.
4. Hold the air without forcing. Meanwhile, change to the left hand and do the same operation you performed with your right hand. Now close the left nostril, exhale through the right nostril, and hold the air.
5. Exhale and repeat the exercise about six times from the beginning.
6. Don't worry about the time of inhalation, exhalation or retention. Just follow its course. Do not force it. Do everything naturally.

Daily practice of this respiration will not only make you expand your chest, and invigorate the lungs and other respiratory organs, but it will also awaken occult powers in you: it will sharpen your memory, you will easily have telepathic experiences, thought transmissions and mental healing powers, and it will greatly help concentration.

Without these means, offered by Yoga, you will never obtain your desired results.

Adopting a correct body posture

This is an important piece of advice. Eastern schools of Yoga advise their followers to adopt an adequate body posture for concentration and meditation practices.

Here is the rule. Try to keep the spine completely straight. Sit on a bench with no back, or on the edge of a chair, so that you don't have to use the back of it. Put your hands on your legs. Your forefingers and thumbs must touch one another's tips. The palms of your hands must be upwards. This rule must be specifically observed during meditation, as well as when you concentrate on objects which are in front of you at a certain distance.

A human being interacts with his environment obtaining food, but also through language, through functions performed through the nervous system (comprising encephalon and spinal medulla), through the peripheral nervous system, the autonomic nervous system and ganglion, or through chakras, which are located along the spinal chord from the encephalon down to the coccyx. The nervous activity is performed by the neurons, which are certain anatomic and physiologic cells, channels through which the spirit (mind and will power) generates certain waves, and also receives waves from the external world. Whenever mind and will want to express themselves, they send their

message to the neurons, which in turn activate the whole mechanism required to perform any conscious act such as eating, drinking, sleeping, resting, playing, moving, etc.

Likewise, certain neurons receive the impressions sent by the stimuli of the external world and conduct them to the mind and will power, making you aware of them.

Every voluntary manifestation directed from the inside outwards (centrifugal way) or from the outside inwards (centripetal way) is performed through the neurons.

The autonomic nervous system is the one regulating and coordinating all involuntary operations of the different organic functions, such as heart beats, breathing, peristaltic movements of the digestive tube, the secretion of glands, etc.

These brief considerations will lead us to think that, in the human body, the most important thing is the nervous system. Therefore, we have to take care of it and keep it fit so that it may be productive.

Injuries to the nervous system are the causes of most serious sicknesses such as mental disorders, nervousness, loss of consciousness, loss of self-control, and automatism.

An important remark: when we practice respirations, particularly the alternate respiration, let us first visualize the spinal cord. Picture it for a few minutes. Then, let us begin the exercise by imagining that, while inhaling, the energy flows upwards along the spine — from the coccyx to the brain, and from there to the Third Eye or Christ Center, located in the space between the eyebrows. When we exhale, let us imagine that the energy moves downward back to the coccyx, from the Third Eye or Christ Center through the same channel, to the coccyx.

Do this ten times. This is one of the best concentration exercises.

Place and time for concentration and meditation practices

If we want to practice the techniques recommended by Yoga for our physical, mental and spiritual improvement, we must take the time we need, as well as choose the appropriate place and hour. Throughout evolution, the human being has acquired customs which differentiate him from other creatures living on planet Earth.

The man of today's civilization requires a special place in his home for such activities as cooking, eating, sleeping, receiving visitors, reading, listening to music, watching TV, and so on. He lives in accordance to the world surrounding him. The environment has given way to special customs. Unfortunately, today's man has not cared about having a special place in his home dedicated exclusively to his self-improvement. It is sad, but it is so. The great masters of the East emphasize that in order to achieve satisfactory results in the realm of mind and soul, it is necessary to select an adequate place and time for the practices.

Place If possible, the place should be a quiet one. Self-realized men, avatars, gurus, build their ashrams far, far away from towns. They prefer places like the himalayas, caves in hills, rough nevados, and so forth.

In the West, there are special places where we pray and celebrate liturgies. It is necessary that we have a place in our own home — a special place — where we may enter in communion with God. A Church is not enough. It is not suitable for our purposes, since it is not a quiet and calm place. It is not appropriate for meditation. There is too much noise there that distracts us. Our organization recommends that every student have his own place at home for meditation. When meditation is done in groups, it is necessary to have a special room exclusively for this purpose.

Time Any time is good. Just as there is a time to take our meals or to sleep, an appropriate time for our concentration and meditation practices must be observed.

Examine your daily schedule, routine and occupations. Include in it the most appropriate time for your practices. A good time is the early morning, before any other activity is started. Another is at night, before going to bed. But once you have chosen and established the time in your schedule, be faithful to it and respect it. Remember, your success or failure depends upon this. Everything is difficult in the beginning: is anything easy? Consider that your future is seriously involved, a future which very few people have in mind: the next world awaiting us after this earthly life. Most men imitate the ostrich: they put their heads under their wings, and whatever will come will come. Do you want to continue playing the ostrich? Wouldn't you like to know what awaits you not far from now, after this life which is not the teal one? If you want to remain the same, it is not worth your while to continue reading these pages. If so, just put the book aside: it is not for you. Live your life. Have fun and play. Vegetate, enjoy yourself. But remember, that is not the way to prepare yourself for the trip to the unknown. Try. Try out what this older brother of yours has already experienced for a long time and which has made him very, very happy. Because no joy can be compared to the joy of the soul.

Duration How much of your time should you devote to practicing meditation? It depends upon the results you want to obtain. The more time you devote to this practice, the sooner you will master it. Remember the old Latin proverb: "Fabricando fit faber," meaning, "Working, you become a master." We could also translate it in this way: "Meditating, you become a good meditator." You will only master concentration by practicing it.

Do not miss a single day of practice of the exercises presented in the following pages. They are the key to your success.

Devote at least five minutes daily. I assure you that if you are consistent, you will soon learn the art of mastering your mind.

Chapter Three – Concentration exercises

As mentioned before, we use concentration to focus the mind in a certain direction, on a fixed object. When interested in seeing something, we gaze at the object and try to catch all the details. Our mind, which is the internal faculty of the spirit, unveils the occult side underlying all creatures of the universe. The internal view of the mind unveils to us all the delight which it offers us. Without the mind, we would be like stones watching time pass by: we would be present at the birth and the death of the being, but knowing neither what they are nor what the world surrounding them is like.

Let us recall a principle of classical philosophy, which reads:

“Nihil est in intellectu nisi prius fuerit in sensu,” which means, “Nothing exists in the mind which has not first existed in the senses.” This reminds us that our corporal senses are the windows through which all the sensations which we experience enter our soul: pleasure, pain, grandeur, pettiness, love, hate, misery, abundance, attachment, rejection, anguish, consolation, hope, desperation, happiness, sadness.

Beings who come to this world without the blessing of one or various sense organs are very far from having all the experiences of normal beings.

Having received so many things from the Father, we are obliged to constantly be thankful to Him and say like the prophet David did: “Blessed is the Lord because he is good, because his mercy is eternal.” He makes so many things available to us!

In concentration techniques, we use our five senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. We perform those exercises with our five organs, or five eyes of the mind, as I would say.

Before going into the details of the different exercises, bear in mind the following rule: we always have to begin from the Universal to the individual, from the whole to the part, from the big to the small, from the complex to the simple, from the abstract to the concrete. If we forget this rule, it will be difficult to master the art of Concentration. When we take an object for our concentration practice, let us begin by observing first its major parts, and then move on to the details. If we want to concentrate on one idea belonging to the abstract world, let us start practicing with objects which our senses perceive.

Here are several exercises related to the concentration technique.

Sight exercises

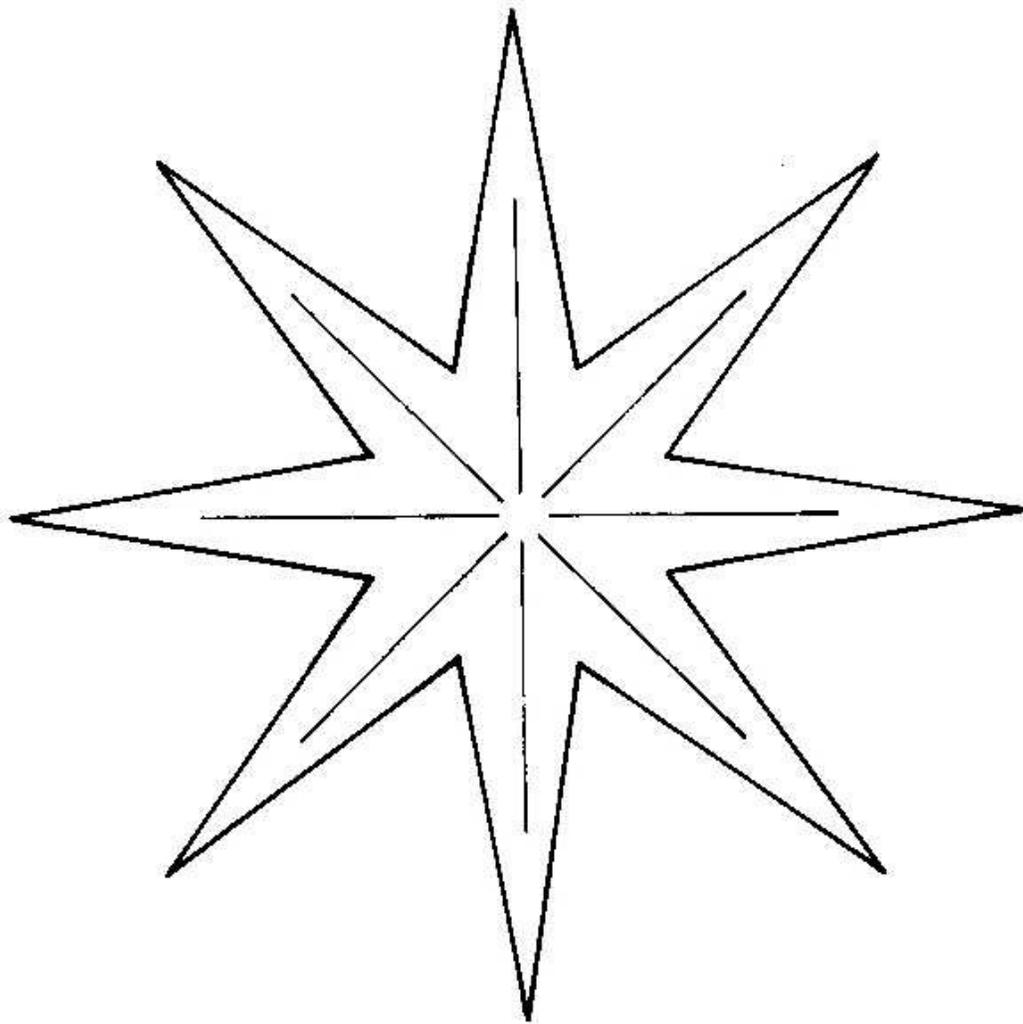
Observation of Objects For these objects, it is preferable to use things and objects of nature. A flower, a leaf, an herb, a fruit, a cloud, a fountain, a pool, a nevado, a volcano, a waterfall, the sea, etc. At the beginning we have to use personal objects — those which are in our sight, which are in our room — and then any other object.

Exercise One: THE STAR Draw a star, similar to the one in the picture. Begin by looking attentively to the center point, hold your attention on that spot for at least two minutes. Then observe, one by one, how the lines originate from the center.

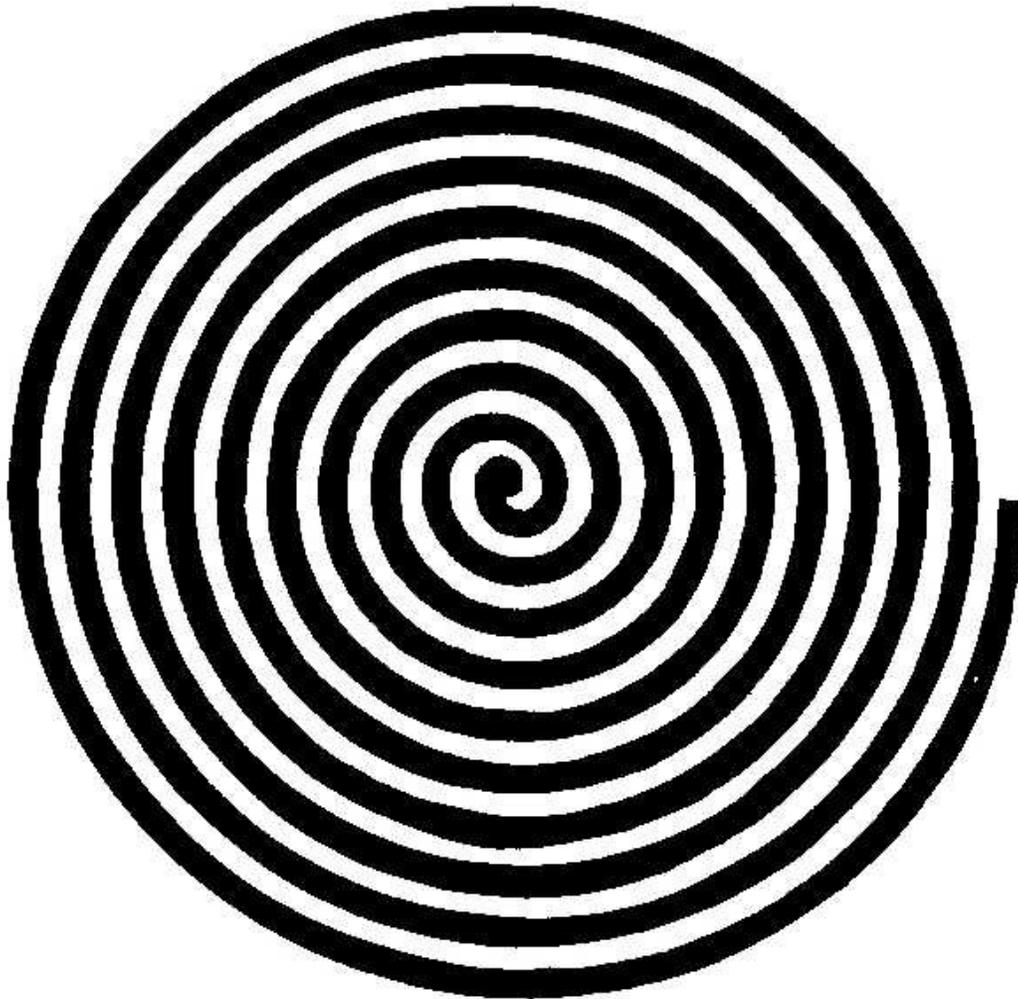
Compare two at a time and see if they are identical, if they are equidistant. Count them. Observe the similarities and the differences.

Now look at the whole picture; that is, the star as a whole. This practice should last six to eight minutes, no less. Close your eyes and visualize this same object, reproducing it in your imagination. Fix it in your memory. Open your eyes. Rest. You will immediately notice the result of this exercise: you have taken a great step towards relaxing your mind. You feel much quieter, secure. You start feeling a peace you did not have before.

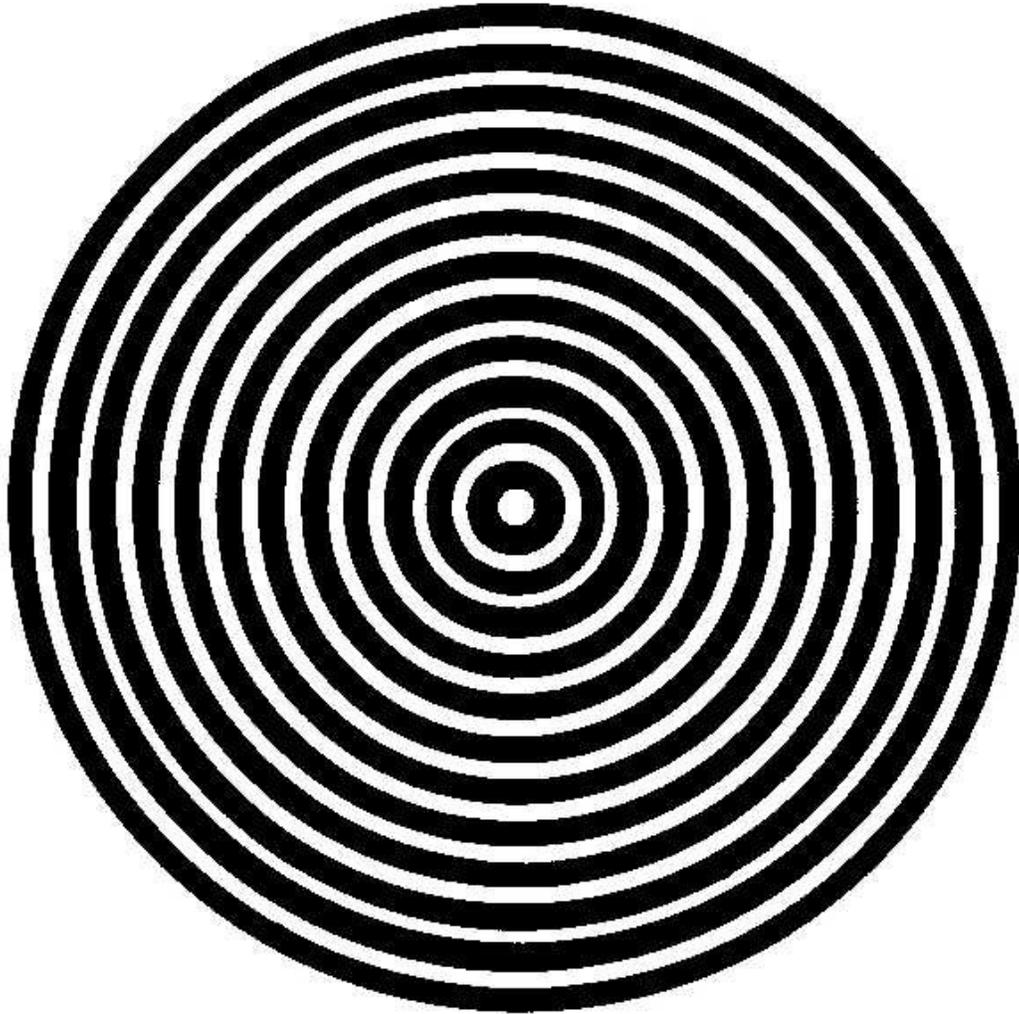
This first and very simple step will open the doors of the Sanctuary of the joys of the spirit. Follow this rule in all the exercises and in those you do on your own.



Exercise Two: THE COIL Observe the picture attentively. Look at the center point for one or two minutes, and very carefully follow the winding line until the end. Count the rings. Inversely, Start the exercise following the winding line to the center. Close Your eyes. Picture the coil. Rest. Enjoy the peace of this exercise. At the beginning it will seem that the parallel circles blend into each other. Try to clearly establish the differences between them.



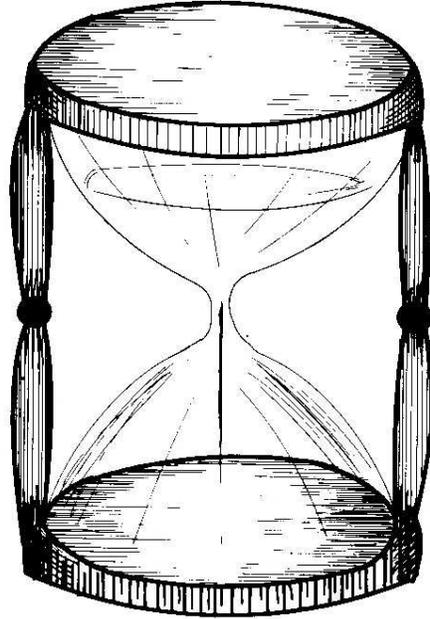
Exercise Three: THE CIRCLE Observe the picture. Start the exercise at the center point. Then, go on to the following circles until you reach the last one containing all of them. The important thing is that you observe each circle attentively. Count the circles. Use only your memory. Do not write down the number. Observe if they are equidistant. Observe well if they aren't.



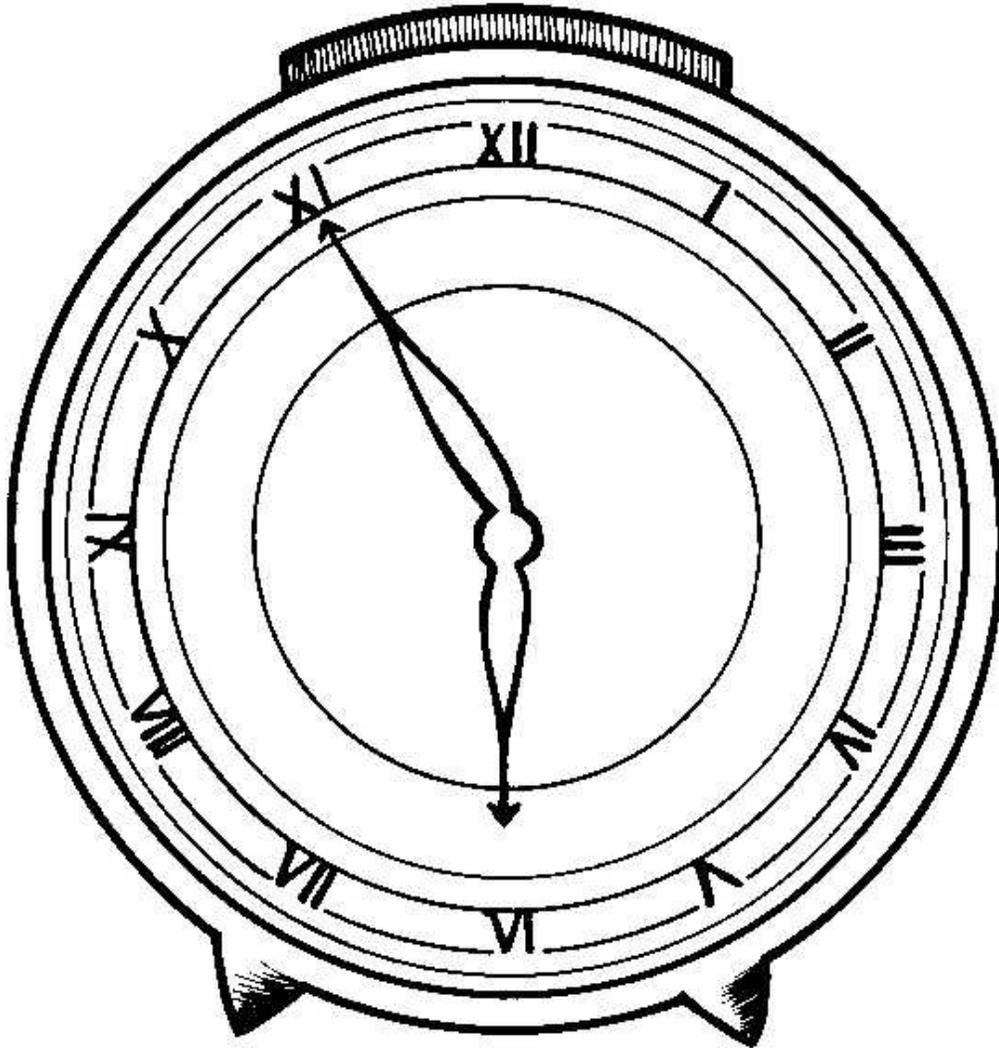
Exercise Four: THE SHOWER Begin this exercise from the top. Look closely at the water falling. Imagine that those line are drops of water. Try to listen to the sound they make. Feel first the cold, then the heat of the water falling. This is a more advanced exercise of concentration. Close your eyes. Picture the exercise; feel the result.



Exercise Five: THE CLEPSYDRA Picture the drawing. This is a water clock that was used long, long ago. Find out how it worked. From where did it get its water? how did it measure time? It does not matter if you don't find the right answer. The important thing is that you observe the drawing and make your imagination work. Close your eyes. Picture the drawing. Feel the result.



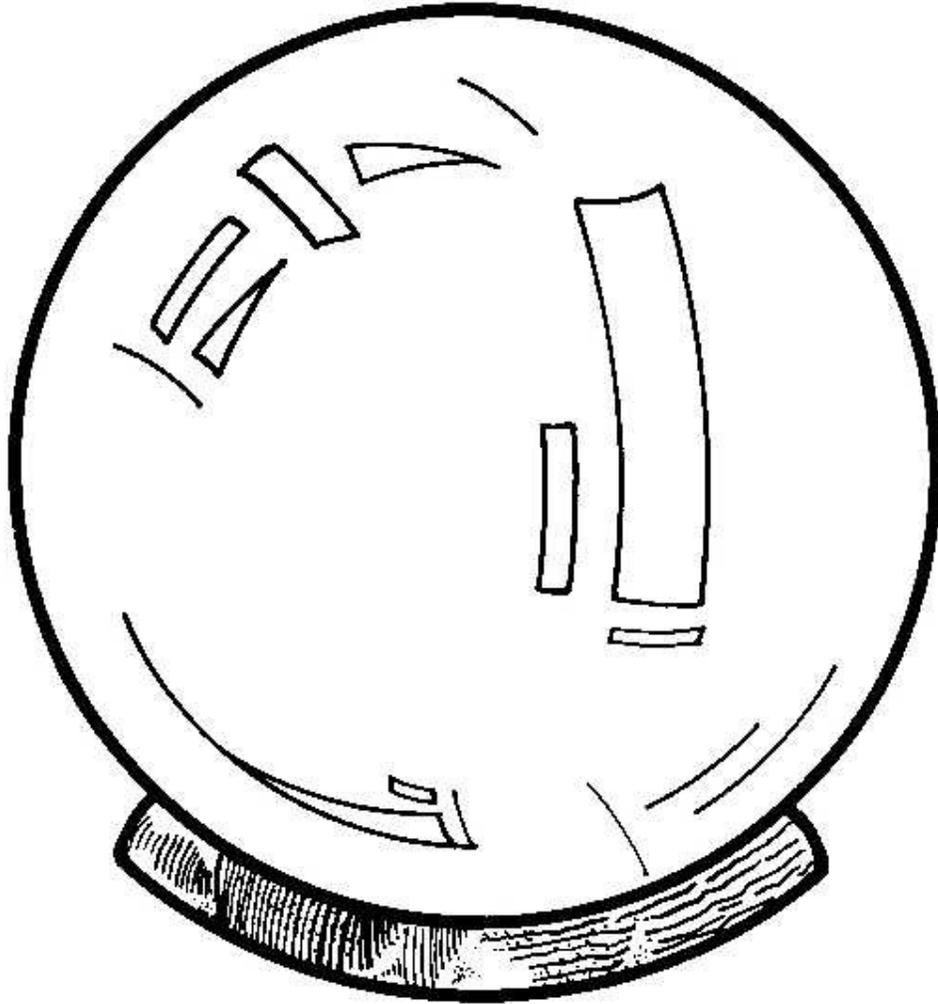
Exercise Six: THE CLOCK This is an object of common use. Almost everyone wears one. Take your watch. Observe closely the shape of the numbers. Are they luminous? What is the position of the second hand? Does it have a calendar? Brand name? Material? Is it automatic? Approximate size? Other signals? The importance of this exercise is in observing the details carefully: the less obvious the details, so much the better. After this, close your eyes. Picture the object; feel the result.



Exercise Seven: THE NEEDLE IN THE CLASS OF WATER This is a classical exercise for mental concentration recommended by Helena Blavatsky to her disciple Annie Besant. Take a glass of water. Now take a fine needle and dip it in thick oil. Then, immerse the needle horizontally in the glass of water. Watch that it does not touch the bottom of the glass, but that it floats freely on the water. Look at the needle carefully. Concentrate more. Much more. Profoundly, without letting any other foreign thought interfere and distract you. In that moment you are sending a mental wave that connects you to that needle. The more you concentrate on it, the more powerful it will be. If you are concentrating properly, whenever you want the needle to move in the direction you may want, it will obey you. Don't get discouraged if you don't get results at once. Repeat once, twice, until you get the result you desire. This test is to find out your level of mental concentration. This exercise works out best when practiced by a group of people. The mental energy of the group assures the result. The phenomena of movement of tables and other objects is based on this principle.

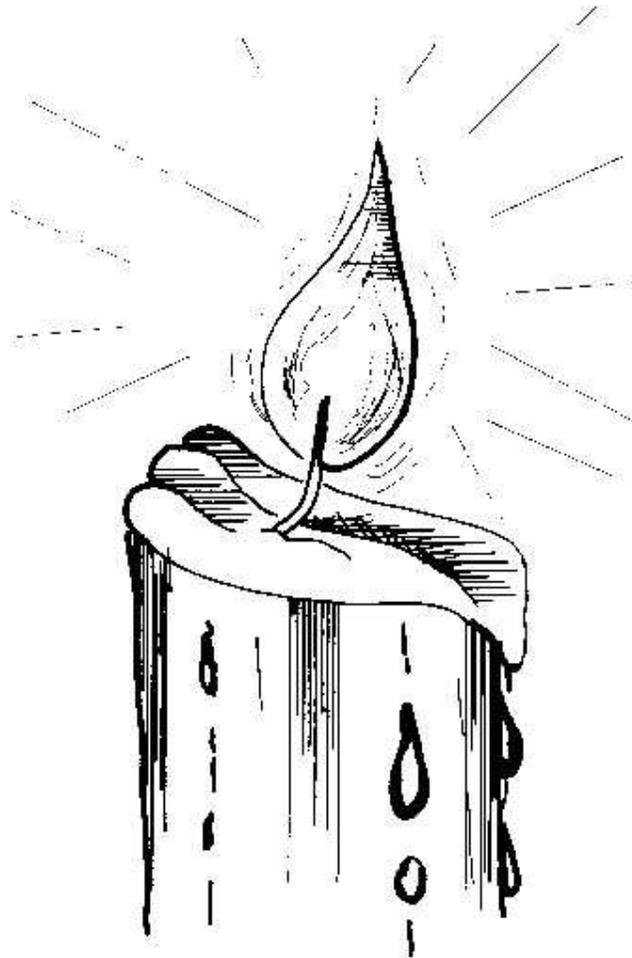


Exercise Eight: THE CRYSTAL BALL It is well known that this object is very much used by witches, fortune tellers, chiromantics, priestesses, etc. The reason is that its use greatly helps the power of concentration which they need for their divinatory practices. It has no other purpose. If you have a crystal ball, use it. This does not mean that you will become a fortune teller or anything of the like.



Exercise Nine: THE FLAME OF THE CANDLE This is a very interesting exercise. Light a candle. Put it thirty centimeters away from your eyes. Observe — very attentively — the burning flame. First observe the center, the yellow part. Then, look into the blue part, the smoke, the waving of the flame and its different tones

Once you have found pleasure in this practice, place yourself in front of a large mirror, at a distance of thirty centimeters. Place the lit candle at the same distance. Now look at the mirror where your face was reflected. This exercise does not consist in looking at one's face, but rather at the profile of one's head. Look closely at the contour. If, for a few minutes, you keep staring at the silhouette of your head in the mirror, you will discover something that will strongly catch your attention. If you do this exercise regularly, you will see the aura of your head surrounding that profile. These color tones correspond to your astral body, the body of the emotions which reveals what you are and the mood you are in. For this exercise, you may also use a light bulb, preferably a yellow or a blue one. But there is always a great difference compared to the candle. The candle has life, movement; — it burns away and has the tones of the rainbow which the light bulb lacks.



Other Exercises It would be impossible to enumerate all the different objects which may be used for concentration exercises. My object serves the purpose. The important thing is to know how to use it.

When we choose an object, let us bear in mind that the more details there are, the better it will be. Through concentration, we see things that do not appear to us at first sight. There is nothing like getting used to observing all objects carefully. This practice sharpens the sense of our mental concentration.

Visualization of colors

One of the exercises which contributes powerfully to expanding our consciousness, which develops intuition extraordinarily and facilitates mental concentration, is the visualization of colors. The most beautiful things in nature are related to light.

God Himself is LIGHT, INFINITE LIGHT, UNCREATED LIGHT, IMMANENT LIGHT.

Every color, physicists say, is a fraction of white light sent by the pigment, illumined by the integral light, also white. We could, in other words, say that colors are but light rays fractions of light, small places of condensed light.

Colors differ from each other due to saturation or due to the amount of white light they contain because of their intensity, that is, the strength and clarity they irradiate, and because of their tonality, or wave length.

Light is made up on electromagnetic waves similar to those of radio or TV, the only difference being that the former are measured in meters and submultiples, and the latter in millimicrons. The millimicron is a millionth of a millimeter. A ray of red violet light, for example, emits a wave of 390 millimicrons; a ray of red light oscillates in a wave of 770 millimicrons, and so do other colors.

The secrets of the different combinations of light and forms were known to all great painters. The museums of the world containing great art collections are the living witnesses of the culture of humanity throughout the ages. Painting is the technique of color and form. The greater the creative inspiration of the artist, the more refined the resulting painting will be. Besides the possibilities offered to painters, colors have great value in esoteric studies. Each color and its tonality has a hidden meaning only discoverable by he who has awakened to the transcendental world. The road to this awakening is concentration.

Concentration and intuition will lead us to discover the occult meaning of colors. What is this occult meaning? Let us examine the meaning of some colors.

White According to the theories of Young and Holmholtz, when red, yellow and blue are mixed in equal pans, white is obtained. White is the color of peace, tranquility, rest, serenity and silence.

For concentration, let us take a piece of white paper — a lily or any other white flower — or let us stand facing a white wall; look at any of our snow-capped mountains; or

simply visualize a large black background, and on it a big, all-white, rotating wheel. Let us center our attention on that white object. Quietly, keep looking at it for five minutes or more. Allow the undulating vibrations sent by this color to penetrate you, just as light rays penetrate a crystal. Allow the vibrations to impregnate us, saturate us, fill us. Let us simply be receivers.

After a while, we will feel peace, serenity, quiet — something we have never felt before.

How badly we need this communion with nature! Practice this exercise and gradually feel a change take place in your life and conduct.

Everyday chores create many tensions. And these can be completely relieved through the practice of this exercise.

These few reflections will help you understand, dear brother, why white is the symbol of peace in Universal Symbology. War is a cruel, fearful, dreadful challenge to life: when the white flag is raised in the middle of a battlefield, hatred stops, firearms are dropped and there are no longer winners and conquered. It is PEACE that crowns itself with laurels.

Blue With its different tones, it is the color of devotion, of God worship. It implies also renunciation to our ego. Love, coming from a loving heart, gives birth to a series of beautiful tones similar to the deep blue sky in our Andean mountains.

For men to dwell on celestial matters, God placed above us the blue dome of the skies.

Anyone who stops for a few minutes to look at the sky, especially on a sunny morning, internally feels the silent proclamation of the glory of the Lord, according to David, the prophet-King: “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.”¹³

Yellow When of a light shade, it is the color of intelligence. “The yellow of Spring, pale and luminous, is the sign of the highest intelligence, of pure reason, directed towards spiritual purposes.”¹⁴

It does not exactly mean wisdom. It means knowledge intellectuals acquire through reading, through dealing with people, traveling through everything external. It symbolizes the knowledge of the learned.

Vermilion When cinnabar, made up of sulphur and dark red mercury, is convened into dust, it takes on a very beautiful dark red color called vermilion. The use of this color is very common in the rites and the initiatic schools of the East. It is the color of Divinity, the expression of pure and unselfish love coming from God, which unites the divine figures and projects itself to man. This color is similar to that of blood which keeps man alive. But it is important to differentiate it from the brick red, spotted, which is the symbol of animal instincts and sensual desires.

¹³ Psalm 19,1

¹⁴ Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, “Formas del Pensamiento”, Ed. Kier, Buenos Aires, page 55.

Green When it is pure and shiny, it symbolizes sympathy, affinity, attraction. It also means hope, as traditionally believed. This last meaning has been taken from nature. When the fields are green, when the leaves of the trees take on that color, we look forward to the ripe fruit.

Orange It is the color of all swamis, gurus, sannyasins and teachers of the East. It derives from vermillion. This is the color Symbolizing proximity to God, through personal realization. It awakens noble feelings of abnegation, sacrifice, total renunciation, disinterest, selflessness.

It also means real wisdom, acquired through meditation and. perfect harmony with the source of all perfection: GOD. After white and vermilion, it is the most positive color. It inspires the purest feelings in the spirit of man.

It is necessary that we know and remember the occult meaning of these colors in our concentration exercises, remembering that each one will bring forth different moods in us, according to their symbolism.

In the different exercises of the visualization of colors, the most important thing is to feel what these colors express, and to live that experience.

That is, if we know that white calms us, and looking at it we feel peace, let us try to feel that peace which white symbolizes.

Whenever you experience confusion, anxiety, violence, uneasiness, try this exercise for a few minutes using any white object and the result will be immediate: peace, quiet, harmony, reflection. Concentrating on blue produces ecstasy, rapture, devotional feelings, and devotion to God.

Concentrating on yellow creates desire for intellectual improvement. This is very useful for students and for those who wish to improve their intellects.

Concentrating on vermilion brings us closer to God. When the shade is more brilliant and pure, it indicates divine wisdom. Wisdom is acquired by man not through books, but through the contemplation of divine attributes.

Concentrating on green is important for the one who has a tendency to be melancholic, discouraged or despairing.

We are not giving the occult meaning of other colors because for the practice of concentration exercises we have chosen the colors with the most highly positive meanings. It is unnecessary to learn the symbolic meanings of the negative colors.

Visualization of the chakras

Occultists know that, in the astral body, along the spinal cord, there are seven centers of energy called Chakras which correspond to the plexus of the physical body. Each one has colors which are essentially different, although they appear to blend with other

tones. It is important, when practicing concentration, to first locate and then to sense the colors. When dealing with sound concentration exercises, we shall also indicate the characteristic sound of each chakra.

The Muladhara Chakra Located at the end of the spine, called BASIC or ROOT CHAKRA, it has the shape of a cross with line of identical length. The line consists of two lights, one red and one orange, which cross each other in the middle.

The Swadisthana Chakra or Chakra of the Spleen It is also called SACRUM. It is located above the Muladhara, it contains the seven colors of the solar spectrum, and shines like the sun. Bright yellow predominates.

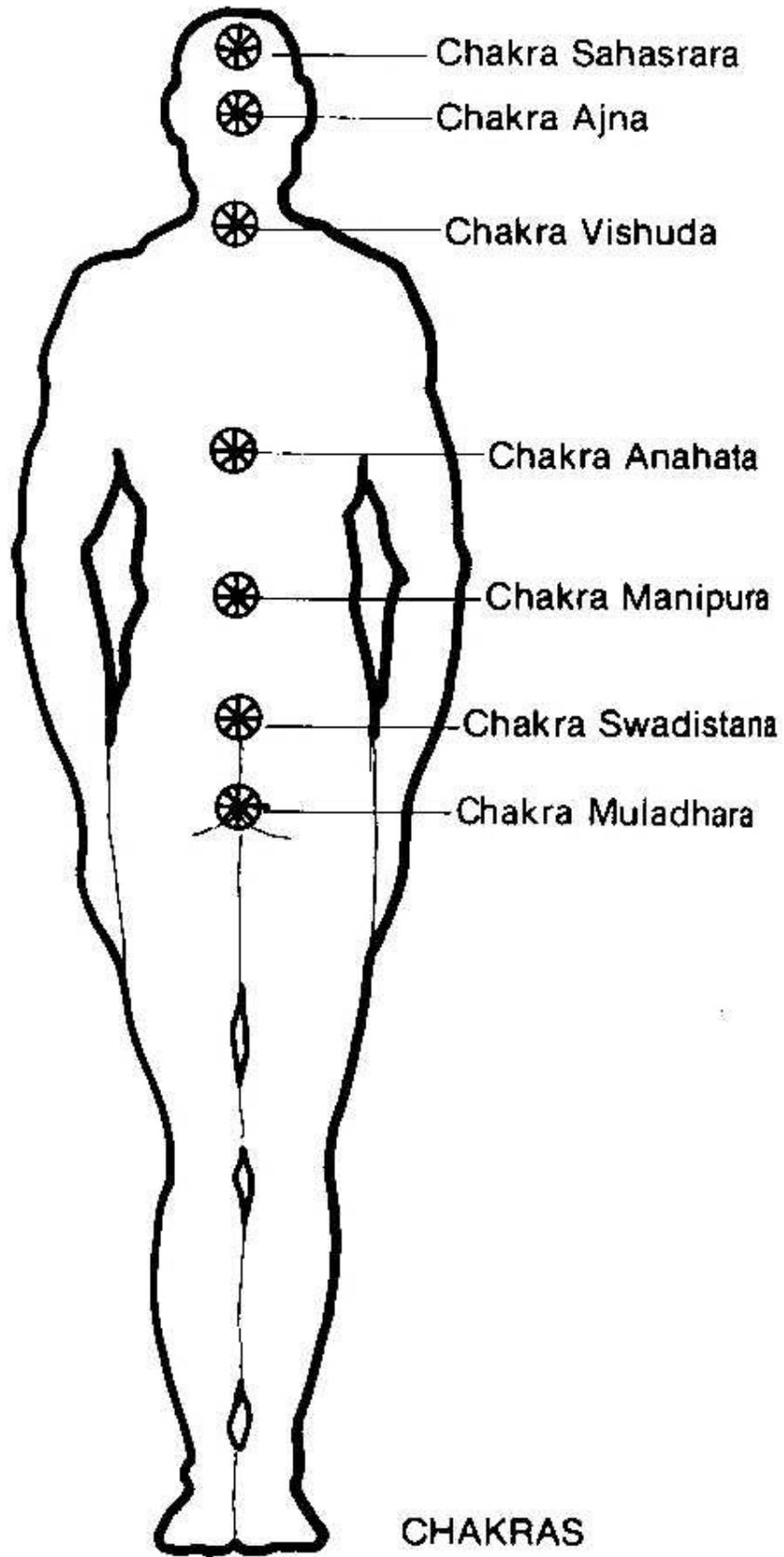
The Manipura Chakra or Chakra of the Navel It is located at the level of the solar plexus. Green and red predominate.

The Anahata Chakra or Chakra of the Heart it is located behind the heart and has a bright gold color.

The Vishudha or Chakra of the Larynx Located behind the throat, its color is like burnished silver — very bright, with a blue hue.

The Chakra Ajna or Chakra of the Forehead It corresponds to the pineal gland at the base of the cerebrum. It is also called the THIRD EYE CENTER or CHRIST CENTER. Its light is projected on the space between the eyebrows. Its predominant color is a soft but very bright purple. It is the most easily recognized chakra. During meditation one must fix the inner gaze upon this center and visualize the chakra.

The Sahasrara Chakra or Chakra of the Crown Also located at the base of the cerebrum, it corresponds to the hypophysis gland. Easterners call it the flower of a thousand petals because it is a mixture and a blend of all the colors, having purple as the outstanding color. When visualizing the chakras (energy centers), one must remember where they are located and their predominant color. Then we must fix attention and concentrate in order to discover location and color. Naturally, we must not begin practicing the most difficult exercises without having first mastery over the simple ones indicated earlier in this chapter. Patanjali explains the different results of meditation on certain chakras in his Yoga Sutras, Book 3, Numbers 29, 30, 31 and 32.



The sounds

Visualization of the colors and forms of nature helps us in practicing mental concentration, and so does listening to sounds. In the East, the different techniques of concentration and meditation are practiced with the accompaniment of music. Our soul perceives every sensation from the external world. Every musical note, every chord, every tone produce in us different kinds of emotions. It is said that music constitutes the essence of things. It may convey highly positive or highly negative vibrations, inspire noble or servile feelings, either enrapture the spirit or cause a deep, deep depression, be a means for praising God or causing a war, induce a healthy happiness or awaken a morbid passion.

According to Wagner, music is the language of the human heart. Hoffmann, Wackenroeder and Herder believed that music begins where words end. It liberates the soul from attachments to the physical world and transports it to an ideal world, free of daily and torturing worries.

The melody with which a person identifies reveals his state of consciousness. In other words, it is like the mirror of the soul — if he feels at one with sad music, the person listening to the music is sad; if he feels one with jolly music, he is jolly; if he feels one with exalted and soft music, he feels sweetness and harmony; if he vibrates with a strident and trivial music, it is definite proof that in the depth of the soul he is stirred by primitive passions.

Music is the universal language through which man has expressed himself on his long pilgrimage through time: no matter who listens to it — whether barbarian or cultured, learned or ignorant, sinner or saint, student or teacher, king or slave.... everyone understands its message, each according to the world in which he lives. The psychological depths explored by music in our spirit reveal its cosmic character, anchored in the very essence of man.

Music itself never expresses a definite idea, or a definite sentiment, as does a word: it only expresses general psychological aspects, indefinite, which are only individualized by each listener. Music conveys to us the heart of things — the substance, the essence of them.

Music is like a bridge between the finite and the infinite. This is the reason why, in Yoga, the sound has a special place. In Yoga you learn to appraise color, form, sound — the clearest expressions of the soul. This trilogy teaches one to discover the transcendental world.

Practices With Sound

We shall begin our concentration practices by first listening attentively to the sounds surrounding us. Choose a quiet place: otherwise, it would be completely impossible to do this exercise. Comfortably seated, close your eyes and listen to all sounds within hearing. You will no doubt hear many. Then, try to differentiate the sounds clearly. Devote at least 5 to 8 minutes to this exercise.

Now try to listen to the most distant sound, the farthest one, that one that is hardly audible. Listen to this one sound for a while.

Imperceptibly, this exercise will discipline the mind to concentrate upon the objects upon which you wish to focus. Practice this exercise regularly. Our success will be greater the more we practice.

Practices with Music

Before doing this exercise, choose the music. If used to listening to music of the great masters, so much the better. You are practically 80 percent ahead. If you are not used to this, you will have to make a greater effort, which will, of course, be rewarded with success.

Let us not forget that we are learning a technique of concentration on music. For this reason it is important to practice these simple instructions which, if followed, will produce immediate results.

This is the way to proceed:

Select the classical or semi-classical music you like most. As preparation prior to meditation, if you prefer, choose music made especially for meditation. All Yoga schools have it. Some have chosen music and special songs. Pay keen attention to what you are listening to. Concentrate more and more. Try not to hear anything else but that music. Reject any foreign idea or thought. Try to sense that which the composer wished to convey.

The music of great masters such as Beethoven, J. S. Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Händel, Vivaldi, Locatelli, Tarelli, and Manfredini, among others, serves wonderfully to discipline the mind and to oblige it to surrender to our will. If practiced daily, this exercise will soon prove its effects. You will feel much more disciplined, more rested, more efficient at work, more attentive to different activities. The reason is obvious: the attention paid to music is moved on to the rest of our occupations. When one identifies with something one likes, one identifies with everything else.

The positive vibrations we experience through music exalt our spirit, making it more subtle, more delicate, more tender, more comprehensive.

Psychologists have always recommended music as the best tonic for our soul. It is an especially healthy medicine for the sick, for it brings about happiness, peace and harmony. Thus the Latin proverb: “Musica juvat aegros” (“Music pleases the sick”)

Today, music in offices, factories, shops, hospitals, stores, bars, cafeterias, restaurants, planes, ships, etc., has been generalized. Why? Simply because we have come to understand the value of music to man’s life and to the efficiency of his work.

We know that poisonous snakes calm down, lose their aggressive instinct and become docile and obedient to the enchanter — flute player — bringing them sounds that please them so.

What to say about the effects of music in men’s soul, the divine sparkle emanated from the Great Spirit? Let us remember a biblical fact which demonstrates the effect produced by music in mentally unbalanced men.

A bad spirit was tormenting King Saul. His servants advised him to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, who could play for him when the evil spirit possessed him, and in this way he would find relief Saul followed the advise of his courtesans, and

called David, who played the harp. The King found peace; he was refreshed, and the evil spirit departed from him.¹⁵

Practice with the Sounds of the Chakras Each of the seven chakras has a specific color, and also emits a specific sound. After having practiced the concentration exercises with colors and Sounds, not before, practice listening to the different sounds Coming from the chakras.

- In Muladhara, you hear a sound similar to that of a big fly flying.
- In Swadisthana, you hear the classical sound of Krishna's flute. Iconography in India represents Krishna playing the flute, to indicate the sound of this chakra.
- In Manipura you hear the sound of the harp.
- In Anahata you hear the sound of the bells.
- In Vishudha, you hear the sound of the sea.
- In Ajna and Sahasrara, you sense a blend of all the different sounds. To perform this exercise, training and familiarization with the previous exercises is required. Otherwise, it will be impossible to hear these astral sounds.

The smells

In all religions, perfumes from the most fragrant woods have been burned in great censers or small incensories as a sign of recognition and worship of Divinity.

Among the vegetables used in the composition of perfumes — first by Europeans and then introduced in the West — are: aloes, saffron, balsam, cinnamon, fragrant cane, bead tree, storax officialis, galbanum incense, have all been used for Divine cult since ancient times.

Among the Egyptians, the use of perfumes was very common, and it was used profusely. It is said that Pharaoh Ramses III offered in the temple 62 boxes of white incense and 307,905 measures of incense and other fragrant species of soft balsam and red balsam.

In worshipping God, the Hebrew liturgies used perfumes which symbolized the omnipresent spirit. While the Israelites crossed the deserts of the promised land, Yahveh ordered Moses to make an altar to burn incense upon: "a cubit shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth; it shall be square, and two cubits shall be its height. And you shall overlay it with pure gold, its tops and its sides round about and its horns...And you shall put it before the veil that is the ark of testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with you." That is, where the Lord would manifest his glory, he ordered that Aaron burn incense every morning, upon preparing the lamps. he

¹⁵ 1 Samuel, XVII, 14-23

also ordered that incense be burned before Yahveh forever and that no unholy perfume could be offered, and clearly established that the altar of perfumes is most holy.¹⁶

Yahveh himself told Moses the composition of perfumes which was to be offered by the priests. he said: "Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, pure spices with frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part) and make an incense as blended by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy; and you shall beat some of it very small, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you; it shall be for you most holy. And the incense which you will make according to this composition, you shall not make for yourselves; it shall be for you holy to the LORD. Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from his people."¹⁷

Later on, when the temple was finished, heeding Yahveh's command, King Solomon had those perfumes burned before the altar.

In said temple there were people from the tribe of Levi who were in charge of the fine flower and wine and oil and incense and spices.¹⁸

The sons of the priests themselves made the aromatic spices. Remember that the three kings of the Orient offered the child in Bethlehem "incense and myrrh."¹⁹

"St. John saw the twenty-four elders round the throne, and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb each holding a harp and with the golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints."²⁰

The Catholic burns incense as homage to God in the most solemn acts of its liturgy: in benedictions, in processions, consecrations, eucharistic celebrations. It uses the sacred chrism which is a mixture of olive oil and balsam in the Latin liturgy; in the Greek one, other liquids and fragrant herbs are added to these ingredients. The sacred or holy chrism is part of the substance of confirmation. With it, churches, altars, holy vases, lamps and baptismal water are consecrated, and the hands of the priests and bishops are anointed upon their ordination. In antiquity, the four walls of the sanctuary were interiorly anointed with holy chrism, where the sacred Eucharist was kept.

In initiations, the initiatic schools always use fire in which they burn incense as an act of worship. They recommend the use of perfumes from fragrant wood in their meditations and other liturgical acts. The reason for this is that the incense and perfumes purify the aura of the persons and things, calm the spirit, and make it more apt to enter into communion with God.

The above is sufficient reason for us to specifically use incense in our liturgical acts and in our practices of concentration and meditation

¹⁶ Exodus, XXX, 1-11

¹⁷ Exodus, XXX, 34-36

¹⁸ 1 Chronicles, LX, 25

¹⁹ Matthew, 11,11

²⁰ Revelation V, 8

Chapter Four – Where to seek God

We are now approaching one of the most important questions directly related not to the physical plane where we are presently acquiring our own experiences, but to those other planes where we shall have to remain forever.

We Must Reflect First, it is necessary to ask ourselves: What am I living on the earth for? Why have I come here? Why must I leave? Why am I like the ocean wave which, after a brief life, dies on the shore? It is necessary that we question ourselves. A man who never questions himself is similar to a beast — a difficult comparison — who only lives to fulfill his biological needs: to eat, to sleep, to reproduce himself, to enjoy in his own world the pleasure derived from the corporal senses and nothing else.

Today's Man Unfortunately, the majority lives only this animal life. That's why they become incompetent for leading a better life. "The unspiritual man" — the expression of Paul, the initiate — "does not receive the gifts of the spirit of God."²¹

Today's man is a somnambulist who walks blind, stumbling upon every step. He is a sick man, drugged with the sweet poison of material enjoyment. He is the blind who believes that outside of him is the same gloomy darkness which enfolds him. He is the slave condemned to live like the rest of his mates, to make the great machine of material progress work. I ask myself... Will it be useful for this animal man, this somnambulist, drugged, blind slave...is it convenient, is it necessary to speak to him in a language which he cannot understand? Is that not a waste of time? Will that not be the breaking of solemn warning which the Lord makes in this phrase: "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you."²²

Man is Your Brother But this man with all his faults is your brother. Like you, he is a child of the same Father who is in heaven; like you, he was also baptized with that blood shed two thousand years ago by the martyr of Calvary; like you, he is also destined to live the real life, that endless life; like you, he is also heir to the inheritance of the Father, reserved not for a few predestined ones, but for all his children.

These thoughts strongly encourage me to continue writing the following pages.

Concentration — A Step for Meditation Concentration is the preamble, the introduction to the most important — to the transcendental, to that which has an immediate repercussion beyond time. Concentration is the door to meditation and it leads us into the Infinite.

²¹ 1 Corinthians 11, 14

²² Matthew, VII, 6

A Hidden Treasure My intention is to furnish my brothers with a better method, or rather, to show them an easy way to discover that hidden treasure of which Jesus Christ speaks so many times. Such a treasure — you are guessing at it already — is God. The God within. The God who does not live over there in the heavens, in the empyrean, surrounded by innumerable celestial hierarchies. Not that frightening God of the Sinai.

Jesus showed us the method, the way to find him. his immediate disciples as well as followers of all times have taught us. Our Christian mystics taught us. It was taught by the great masters of the East to their followers and disciples. We were taught by the saints of all religions.

Today, coming from the East, waves of ascets, gurus, sannyasins, renouncers, Paramahansas, spiritual instructors, reach the West like a blessing from God, bringing this mission: to unveil and discover the riches of that divine transcendental world.

The Goal of Religions All religions on this planet — and there are many — have one goal: lead to God, each in its own way.

Nowadays it is common to find in bookstores and libraries books and methods of prayer, concentration and meditation. Unfortunately, many of these books and methods are written by empirics, by compilers, and also by merchants. This is the reason why such writings are obscure, annoying, difficult to understand and impossible to practice.

It is impossible to teach a practical art without having practiced it personally. Concentration, prayer and meditation are practical arts. It is impossible for someone who has not practiced it to teach others this divine art efficiently.

The Goal of Authentic Yoga Authentic yoga schools teach several methods of meditation. Many only elicit curiosity in their disciples by teaching them how to acquire phenomenal powers. This is not the goal of true yoga. True yoga teaches how to realize God. A contemporary yogi, Sri Ramananda, makes this wise comment: “Do not let yourself be attracted by the exercise of psychic powers. They are very interesting, but not essential. On the contrary, keep your mind fixed on the goal of reaching realization of your divine nature and on the highest one which is your union with the Whole.”²³

The Godhead: Every Man’s Goal

Man — creature of God, formed in his image, after his likeness, loose sparkle of divine essence, ever active traveler — has a fixed goal: God. You, I, everyone are derived from Him and go toward Him. This is an undeniable truth — and self-evident. It is the reason for which John in the Apocalypse tells his vision: “And He, who sat upon the throne, said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ Also He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.’”²⁴

²³ “Astrología y Yoga” Ed. Ariel, Col. Esotérica, page 142

²⁴ Revelation, XXI, 5-6

We Live in God Not only do we have our origin in Him and go towards Him, but, according to the initiate Paul in Areopagus in Athens: “Yet, He (God) is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live, and move and have our being.”²⁵

In other words, and making use of the comparison, we live in God like a fish in the water we live within him and move in him like each plant in the Cosmos or like the atom moves within the molecule; we exist in him like the child in gestation inside his mother.

That is why Lord Jesus said many times that the kingdom of God, that is, the Godhead, is within ourselves.

Again, Paul — convinced of his entire, complete, absolute dependence upon God, and of his divine permanence in every man — reminds those who forgot this truth, saying: “Do you know not that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”²⁶

Only God Can Fulfill Us

We all feel the internal call, the cry, the unmistakable voice which invites us to happiness. Who doesn’t want to be happy? Who doesn’t want such happiness to be everlasting? But it is so that the common man finds this inner longing frustrated. The happiness he is looking for escapes him, dissolves, is lost and he remains empty. Why? Because the soul is not satisfied with only the creatures that surround it. None of these creatures — father, mother, husband, wife, children, friends- — can fulfill his infinite longing for happiness.

One of the greatest converts and a Great Father of the Church, the Bishop of Hipona, St. Augustine, felt this tremendous frustration of the spirit while he had not found the Godhead. Once he found it, he made the following confession: “Lord, you made us for you; the heart shall be restless until it may rest on You.”

Where to Seek the Godhead Where to seek God? In what place? A Spanish mystic of the sixteenth century commented on this. This man influenced almost all the spiritual authors of the West from 1527 to 1650 and was master of St. Teresa de Jesus for twenty years. Through his book “Third Spiritual Abecedary,” he taught that the hidden or mystical theology — Easterners would say esoteric — is not based upon, as the scholastic say, the reason enlightened by faith, but on the personal experience of God in the soul and in man’s union with God. This mystic, Francis Osuna, made the following statement: “Some look for the Lord with the shepherds in the crib for his humility and poverty; others, with the kings, ask the learned men following the studies of holy scriptures; others with our Lady (Virgin Mary) go to the temple and seek him in the cross of penitence, with the good thief; other seek him traveling in pilgrimage, like the disciple to whom Jesus showed himself as pilgrim.”²⁷

²⁵ Acts XVII, 28

²⁶ 1 Corinthians, III, 16

²⁷ “Tercer Abecedario Espiritual” Tratado 18. La BAC, page 520

An Experience of Ramakrishna In the spiritual tide whose waves traveled from India and, crossing half of the world, arrived at the coasts of America, came a man with teachings similar to those of Christ. This man was worshipped in all India as an ideal manifestation of divine glory. That man is Sri Ramakrishna.

Just like the great masters, he wrote nothing, but lived, experienced and realized everything he taught: “he did not believe in something because it was written in some book or because some important person had said it,” tells one of his disciples, Abhedananda, adding “he wanted to know the Truth first hand. Before accepting anything, he had to experience it personally; then he would tell others about his personal experience. During almost twelve years he experienced the methods and performed the rituals and religious ceremonies of the different religious sects. To his great surprise, he discovered that he had reached the state of Divine Consciousness through each one of the methods of all sects.”²⁸

There is an Infinite Number of Ways to Reach God This exceptional master, this great mystic, along with the Spanish mystic Francis of Osuna, tells that there is an infinite number of ways leading to God, the sea of immortality. With a simplicity typical of Christ himself, he says in his parables: “Suppose that there is a lake of such nectar that only one drop of it falling in our mouth would make us immortal. You could drink some of that nectar diving into the lake, or even descending slowly to its shore; the result will be the same, and it will be the same also if someone pushed you into the lake. Try a bit of that nectar and make yourself immortal.”²⁹

Where to Find God Where will we find God? I insist that you learn what the great Master of the East, Sri Ramakrishna, says:

“What a man needs is already with him; however, he is wandering from one place to another, looking...so long as God seems to be outside of us, in the external in several places, ignorance prevails. But when God is realized within, that is true knowledge.”³⁰

The author of “Third Spiritual Abecedary” says: “Even though all the manners already mentioned, and other similar ones, of seeking God are very good, the one which I consider best is to look for him, man, in your heart, within yourself, because it is written: ‘In myself I found much wisdom and took great advantage of it.’”³¹

Our Ideas Originate in Our Senses Our senses connect us with the surrounding world. At all times we are influenced by the sensations coming from the external world. Classical philosophy gave the following principle: “Nihil est in intellectu nisi prius fuerit in sensu.” Or, there is nothing in the intellect which has not been first in the senses.

²⁸ “Evangelio de Ramakrishna” Ed. Kier, page 17

²⁹ Ibid. page 172

³⁰ Ibid. page 179

³¹ Ibid. page 521

Ideas of the material world, which are the abstract concepts of the mind, originate in the senses.

That's why our mind, our will, our conscience project themselves outward; that is, towards the external world. There is the cause of the difficulty we feel for our inner journey, for our introspection; that is, to focus the eyes of our soul inwards, towards the internal depths of our Being.

Both mystical theology and Eastern philosophy teach us how to make this inner journey — that is, entering ourselves.

But there are ideas and concepts in man never acquired through the senses. These ideas come from another channel: intuition. These are also called inborn ideas.

Philosophy does not investigate this field. This other field concerns grace, studied by theology.

The Omnipresent Godhead is Not Perceived by Our Senses Those who look for God outside, as they look for other things through the senses, are very much mistaken. Sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, give us only limited ideas of objects, which are also limited. The search for God with the gaze of the spirit directed outwards will only give us an inaccurate, limited and distorted idea of Him.

The philosopher who formulates his principles based only on the light coming from reasoning, cannot have an exact idea of God. Remember God is omnipresent; that is, He fills everything, pervades everything, impregnates everything. His presence is not a material one, but a subtle one, like that of the cosmic energy. It is more profound, intimate, esoteric. It is to this omnipresence that Jeremiah refers when he reveals Jehova's world and asks: "Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the Lord."³²

None of the beings of creation, absolutely none of them escape this divine omnipresence. I, you, he, we all, are in Him, we live in Him, we move in Him. What we want, then, is to discover His presence in ourselves.

God is Within, Although We Are Not Aware Christ taught us that we were to seek God, not outside, not here or there, but within us. Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered: "The kingdom of God is coming not with signs to be observed, nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for Behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."³³

The answer to the Pharisees unveils the great mystery of the sphinx, and reveals to us that we have God within ourselves at every moment, always, day and night, asleep or awake, even when we are not aware of it.

As the only begotten Son of God, with whom He shares His own divine nature, He could truly say: You and I are ONE. And we are very far from understanding Him, loving Him, participating with Him, unless we realize our complete and absolute identification with Him. In order to feel warm, we must go near the fire; in order to know the sweetness of something, we must taste it. Likewise, in order to know what

³² Jeremiah XXIII, 24

³³ Luke, XVII, 21

divine fire is, you have to come near Him; to know His infinite sweetness, you must taste it. We can never know what the sea is like unless we dive into it; the one blind from birth never believes in light until he sees it. Likewise, dear brother, we shall never know what the divine ocean is like if we do not enter it; blind, we shall never discover how beautiful divine light is if we do not see it.

This fire, ocean and light are not far from us. They are within. But we are not aware of it

The Great Antithesis We are immensely rich, yet live like beggars. We are eternally happy and live miserably. We have everything and think we have nothing. For the great majority of men, God is unnoticed, nonexistent, and those who believe in his existence live without realizing it.

People think that in order to find Him, they must undertake a long, long journey: the journey into eternity. This is an illusion. He who does not find God within himself will not find Him anywhere else.

Chapter Five – The supreme law of prayer

Soul — Castles The great mystic St. Teresa of Jesus wrote, in order to comply with an obedience vow, her book “Interior Castle” or “The Residences.”

With deep humility and sincerity — typical of her — she confesses that she did not know what to say or how to begin her writings: “Like the birds, who do not know how to talk and don’t bow more than what they are taught or shown, or what they hear, and repeat it many times, so am I, exactly.”³⁴

But the Lord himself inspired her to compare the Soul with an inner castle “all made of a diamond or a very clear crystal, having many rooms, as there are residences in the sky. These residences are some above, some below, some on the sides; and in the middle and center of all of these is the most important one, where things of great secrecy take place between God and the Soul.”³⁵

But we have to enter the castle. Many souls are beside themselves, scattered, and look only for external things: “And there is no solution, and it seems that they will not be able to enter themselves, because they are already used to always being with the reptiles and beasts that surround the castle (worldly worries), and that she (the soul) is already almost complete (used to them).”³⁶

To Enter the Castle We Need to Pray The door to this castle is prayer and reflection. Further: I don’t say it should be more mental than oral, but if it is to be a prayer, it must be done “with reflection.”³⁷

To understand her last phrase, we must notice that the Saint is talking to nuns, and that among them were some who could only do oral prayers, but not meditation. She advises them that the oral prayer must be done “with reflection;” that is, paying attention to what they are praying. Attention plays an important role in oral Prayer. Without it, it would obviously not be a prayer. For the Conquest of our soul, and in order to enter that inner castle, and for the discovery of the kingdom within, the only way is, as said by Dr. Teresa of Avila and other mystic masters of the East and the West, prayer.

Man Always Searched for the Godhead Although it is true that the great majority of men believe, live and think as if they only had a temporary destiny, and though like the slaves in the time of the Roman Empire they desire nothing more than bread and feasts (that is, nothing but material pleasures), there are people who think differently. From the beginning of man’s life on Earth, this minority has believed in transcendental life, has expected an everlasting happiness, has been convinced that the goal is in God, has

³⁴ Works of St. Teresa de Jesús, Ed. Poblet, Buenos Aires, 1943. Castillo Interior, page 529

³⁵ Ibid. page 533

³⁶ Ibid. page 535

³⁷ Ibid. page 536

been on the path to Him. No matter what obstacles may be found along the way. No matter what difficulties one may have to solve.

From the beginning of the creation of mankind, there were men who looked for God, who realized Him in their lives and experienced that infinite joy.

These men — twenty, thirty, forty thousand years ago, it does not matter when — taught their brothers to discover God. The sacred works of ancient religions — Vedic hymns, Mahabharata, Puranas, Shastras, Dzian, Bhagavad Gita — before the Christian Bible are proof of this.

These ancient works already give us a very accurate idea about God. These books already speak about divine incarnations who descend to this Earth to show men the way to God.

For Christ, Prayer is the Way to God Two thousand years ago, in a small town on this planet, lost in the mountains of Judea, a child was born from a virgin, descended from the family of King David. This child would reestablish the real category of values — as opposed to a pharisaic casuistic that had distorted everything; as opposed to some pseudo theologians who gave the holy scriptures a literal and distorted interpretation. This child would teach the world that the way to the Father is not one of observance of an absolute law, nor the compliance with a hypocrite or an external ritual, nor the practice of circumcision, nor the presentation of offerings and animal sacrifices. The way to the Father, he taught, was the one of prayer.

He always prayed. The evangelists did nothing else but tell — though briefly — what they themselves or those that were with him witnessed. They present to us the great ascetic of Prayer.

He Taught Prayer Through His Example Mark tells that in Galilee the Lord cured many sick men from different diseases and exorcised many devils. In one of the towns, “and in the morning a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed.”³⁸

After he had multiplied the five loaves of bread and two fish and had fed more than five thousand people at the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he dismissed the crowds and went up into the hills by himself to “pray.” When evening came, he was there alone.³⁹

On the Eve of his Passion, he retired to an olive grove on the other side of the Kidron Valley to a place called Gethsemane, and called Peter, James and John, who accompanied him: “Remain and watch, while I go and pray.” Mark XIV, 32

The Evangelist St. Luke tells us that after being baptized he was praying, when the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove...⁴⁰

“Before choosing his assistants he went out to the hills to pray; all night he continued praying to God. And when the day arrived, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve who he named apostles.”⁴¹

³⁸ Mark I, 35

³⁹ Matthew XIV, 23

⁴⁰ Luke III, 22

Now it happened that as he was praying alone the disciples were with him, and he asked them: “Who do the people say that I am?” And Peter answered: “The Christ of God.”⁴²

Now, about eight days later, he went up to the mountain to pray, and as he was praying the appearance of his countenance was altered and his raiment turned dazzling white.⁴³

Upon finishing his prayer, one of his disciples was curious to know what he did every time he retired from them, and he said: “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples and he taught Our Father.”⁴⁴

He prayed especially for Peter so that he may not lose faith.⁴⁵

He never prayed before performing a miracle, but he advised his disciples to do it.⁴⁶

A witness of these happenings, John the Evangelist, tells that the Lord, before returning Lazarus to life, raised his eyes to heaven and said: “Father, I thank Thee, that Thou hast heard me. I knew that Thou hearest me always.”⁴⁷

In chapter seventeen of his gospel, he transcribes the most beautiful prayer Jesus made to his Father, in which he especially prays for his disciples.

Christ Commands Prayer Like all Masters, he first teaches with his example. Then advises those who are with him to do the same. He orders not only to love, but also to pray for the enemy:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of the Father who is in heaven, for he makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.”⁴⁸

When he saw the crowds who walked as if harrassed and helpless as sheep without a shepherd, he was very sad. Perhaps tears flowed out of his pure eyes, and he asked his disciples to “pray” to the Father, owner of those crowds, to send laborers into his harvest.⁴⁹

He recommends prayer so that God will deliver Justice: “And will God not vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily.”⁵⁰

We have to pray so that we will not be led into temptation:

⁴¹ Luke VI, 13

⁴² Luke IX, 18-29

⁴³ Luke IX, 28

⁴⁴ Luke XI, 1

⁴⁵ LukeXXII, 32

⁴⁶ Mark, 29

⁴⁷ John XI,41

⁴⁸ Matthew V, 43,44

⁴⁹ Matthew IX, 38

⁵⁰ Luke XVIII, 7

“Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation,” he tells Peter.⁵¹

Why Christ Commands Us to Pray Friar Antonio de Guevara, one of the most prominent Franciscan mystics from the sixteenth Century, when referring to the words of Christ that we ought to always pray and never lose heart⁵², makes the following reflection:

“Tell me, I pray you, what is the reason why Christ didn’t say to always give alms, always to fast, always to make pilgrimages and always discipline ourselves, and how is it that he said to pray always? Aren’t fasting, giving alms, peregrination, and discipline virtues as good as prayer, and to always be praised?”

He later explains why Christ orders us to pray always and not always do the other things: because to fast always we may adduce weakness; to give alms we may adduce poverty; to be pilgrims we may adduce that we are weak; and for abstinence we may adduce sickness. But to pray and contemplate we cannot give him any excuse. And emphasizing these words he concludes: “To pray and contemplate you need neither clothes nor shoes, nor money; only high and clean thoughts which you can provide in any time or place if you want to get away from the noise and the business of the world.”⁵³

Insistence on Prayer He advises us to ask, to search, to always call: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”⁵⁴

Before praying, it is important that we forgive if we want to be forgiven: “And when you are standing and praying, forgive anything you have against others, so that your Father in heaven may also forgive your faults.”⁵⁵

We have to pray with much faith: “Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believe that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.”⁵⁶

Finally, he promises to listen to as many things as you as for in his name. “Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in my name, I will do it.”⁵⁷

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be

⁵¹ Mark XIV, 38

⁵² Luke 18, 1

⁵³ Oratorio de Virtuosos y Ejercicios de Virtuosos, Chapter 37, pages 660-661. La BAC. Franciscan Mystics, Vol. II.

⁵⁴ Matthew VII, 7

⁵⁵ Mark XI, 25

⁵⁶ Mark XI, 23

⁵⁷ John XIV, 13-14

my disciples. These things I have spoken to you, that my Joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”⁵⁸

In order to teach the crowds that they had to pray always and not lose heart, he proposed to them the parable of the widow and the unjust judge.⁵⁹

Prayer in the Bible The pages of the Christian Bible are full of examples and invitations to prayer. I cite only some examples:

The Ecclesiastes tells us that “he who guards the law, multiplies prayer.”⁶⁰

It also tells us: “Don’t be hindered from praying always.”⁶¹ Tobias advised his son to always have God in his heart through prayer.⁶² The apostle Paul always prayed for the Christian communities he evangelized. To the Thessalonians he said: “To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfill every good resolve...”⁶³ To the Colossians: “We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when We pray for you...”⁶⁴ To the Thessalonians: “Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances.”⁶⁵ To Timothy: “I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.”⁶⁶ To the Romans: to pray and not lose heart.⁶⁷ To the Philipians: “Have no worries about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”⁶⁸ To the Ephesians: “Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.”⁶⁹

The Apostles with Virgin Mary, after the assumption of the Lord, persevered in Prayer.⁷⁰

One time Peter was kept in prison. But earnest prayer was made for him to God by the Church, until an angel of the Lord appeared and he was miraculously saved.⁷¹

Prayer: The Missing Link These citings give us a clear idea of what our beloved Jesus Christ and his disciples taught about prayer: he discovered what the missing link was in

⁵⁸ John XVI, 24

⁵⁹ Luke XVIII, I

⁶⁰ Ecclesiastes 35, 1

⁶¹ Ecclesiastes 18,22

⁶² Tobias 4, 5

⁶³ 1 Thessalonians V, 17-18

⁶⁴ Colossians I, 3-4

⁶⁵ Thessalonians V, 16-18

⁶⁶ 1 Timothy 2,8

⁶⁷ Romans XII, 12

⁶⁸ Philipians IV, 6

⁶⁹ Ephesians VI, 18

⁷⁰ Acts I, 14

⁷¹ Acts III, 5

the chain that unites us to God. This missing link is prayer. Through prayer the flow of God's life begins to circulate in our veins. Through prayer we attune ourselves to God, and God attunes himself to us. Through prayer we partake of divine omnipotence, and God takes possession of our smallness and raises it. Through prayer we become divine and God becomes human. All this you shall discover and feel, dear brother, you begin to really pray.

The Great Secret of the Existence of the Cosmos:

Divine Laws I want you to pay special attention, and allow me to ask the following: have you ever wondered about the secret plan that connects and holds creation, visible and invisible, together? Do you know how the beings of the great Cosmos evolve? Do you know why beings like you, endowed with liberty, act this way or another? The answer is very simple: God established certain laws. If they are respected, everything unfolds perfectly. The state where divine laws were completely and absolutely would be an ideal state. And do you know what that state is? It is what we in our language call heaven. But while heaven is a state of bliss for the individual, it is also a social state of bliss for all. That is, heaven is the personal enjoyment of each, and the enjoyment of all the blessed ones. God directs, controls, sees, feels, and governs absolutely everything through his divine laws.

The Supreme Law

Do you know which is the Supreme Law, the Ruling Law, the governing Law, the Law before which every other law bows and obeys? It is PRAYER.

PRAYER is THE SUPREME LAW. There is nothing, absolutely nothing above it. And it is not I who says this: it was he who said it, Christ himself, the Word of God. He said: "Anything you may ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will."⁷² He set no limitations to the infallibility of this law. He did not say that the Father will give the one who prays this or that only, but anything he may ask. Therefore, prayer is above all laws.

Why Prayer is the Supreme Law One of the main reasons why this law of prayer is always fulfilled is found in our relation to God. We, you, I are not strangers or solitary beings, without connection, without any relation to the One to whom we pray: we are children asking the Father; we are friends asking the great Friend; we are, so to speak, particles coming from his light which are trying to reintegrate into their origin. That's why an Eastern writer says:

"He who prays (I, you) is not a strange and separate part who is praying to some far away Lord of the World. No, it is a light ray from the Absolute himself that prays for his origin and not to any cruel deity, one who renders homage to the Central Infinite Light itself."⁷³

⁷² Mark XI, 24

⁷³ Mouni Sadbu, "Técnica de la Concentración" pages 29-30

Every Guru, Every Saint, Recommends Prayer

I do not know of any Eastern Master or any real instructor who has not recommended and taught his disciples some method of prayer. It is unnecessary to give examples. Dr. Teresa of Jesus said: “No matter what evil the one who has begun to pray may do, do not abandon prayer; for through it you may begin to heal, whereas without it, it will be very difficult to do so.”⁷⁴

Suarez, the great Jesuit theologian, stated that he preferred to lose all his science than to lose a half an hour of his prayer.

Bear in Mind Our ONENESS with the Father When we pray, let us not lose awareness of our Oneness with the Godhead. Let’s learn the lesson Christ taught us. Always bear in mind that there will be no prayer equal to his. When Christ prays, He prays to his Father who is in the most profound depths of His soul. He prays to his other self; He prays to God, being also God; to the Eternal Being, also being the Eternal; the Omniscient, also being omniscient; to the Omnipresent, also being omnipresent; to the Omnipotent, being also omnipotent.

Christ, in his prayer, gives us an example of His perfect, absolute, infinite identification with the Father.

When we pray, let’s not forget this teaching He gave to us. In reality, as already explained, God and we, we and God, are not strangers. No. We are the light of the same light, as is said in the scriptures: we are gods born from the same God.

To pray correctly, we must consider these premises. Otherwise our way of praying is too elementary, too imperfect.

Many, while praying, try to establish a dialogue with a very far away being, occult, glamourously hidden, to whom they tell how to act, how to proceed, what he should give, or what he should move away from the one who prays. And the saddest thing of all is to pray for revenge on the enemy. Would that be a prayer? Let us now see what prayer is and the different methods of prayer.

⁷⁴ St. Teresa of Ávila, Vida, Chapter VIII

Chapter Six – Prayer formulas

Every prayer must lead us to some kind of communication with God. There cannot be prayer where such communication does not take place.

Prayer is, therefore, a means of communication with him.

In order to understand this truth, let's use an objective comparison which even the most simple and ignorant among us may understand.

God — Transmitter; Man — Receiver Who doesn't have a transistor radio? Who isn't at least familiar with television? Radio and television are meant to reproduce sounds, and television additionally reproduces colors and images.

In order for this to take place, it is necessary that the machine — or whatever you want to call it — move, generate emit, spread, disseminate or produce waves carrying such sounds and images received by the radio receivers and television apparatus. In other words, for a radio receiver to receive the sounds (that is, the voice, music, etc.), a radio transmitter is needed to produce the waves which carry the sounds; for a television to receive the images and sounds, a radio sender is needed.

The All-Perfect Transmitter Furthermore, both must be in perfect working order. Without this, communication is impossible. Let's apply this analogy to prayer.

God is like a great transmitter who is sending his divine waves every moment. These waves are not limited to time and space; that is, these waves do not only reach beings such as us who live on this planet we call Earth and who can count every moment in time. Those waves are also not limited to beings that surely live in other physical worlds more perfect and evolved than our Earth.

The Divine Wave Reaches All Planes Those divine waves spread towards other planes other than the physical one. These planes are those in which more evolved creatures or beings dwell, much more perfect than us. The Bible talks about angels and archangels, and other celestial hierarchies, principdoms, seraphims~ cherubs. The Eastern scriptures speak of hierarchies, creative powers, devas, cosmic gods, holy sephirot, etc.

These waves spread in all directions on all planes, and are at the same time eternal, simple, perfect.

Every created being, whether endowed with reason or not, lives and moves in this infinite ocean of waves coming from God.

We intelligent beings can realize this. Furthermore, as small receivers, we can capture, or receive, these waves from the great sender — God.

Prayer is receiving those waves of Divine Presence.

Damaged Receivers: Causes Continuing with the analogy of the transmitter and receiver, while the Great Transmitter (God) is perfect and never goes out of order, and as such can never be damaged, we, on the contrary, very frequently go out of order. The initiate Paul of Tarsus, speaking about the struggle he experienced between his Spirit — always ready for spiritual things — and his body — always inclined towards the fulfillment of lower passions — wrote: “For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but! cannot do it. For I do not know the good I want; but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that does it, but sin which dwells within me. So I find it to be the rule that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my innermost self; but I see in my instincts another law at war with the law of my mind, and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells inside me.”⁷⁵

Here is the explanation of why we are frequently damaged and spoiled: our basic urges. Sex, drugs, alcohol, comforts, food, etc. — all this hurts our spirit, distorts it, enslaves it.

Most men are damaged receivers for this reason, unable to attract that divine wave. In reality, there are few alive that are attuned to God.

Prayer Attunes Us to God Prayer is the instrument with which we can attune ourselves to God. When we pray, as Dr. Teresa of Avila said, we are “reflecting upon what we say,”⁷⁶ we are tuning in to those Divine Waves coming from him.

There Are Many Ways of Praying There are many ways of praying; that is, attuning yourself to God. Jesus Christ, Buddha, Rama, Krishna, and all the great masters taught the different methods of prayer. We may choose any of them. We shall explain and analyze each one of them, discussing the advantages and disadvantages they present; for whom they are and are not recommended; which are the one which lead us most directly to God or which are the slowest and most difficult ones.

Milk and Solid Food in Prayer The great initiate Paul, addressing the Corinthians — who were still far from understanding and assimilating the spiritual truths — said: “But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it; and even now you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh.”⁷⁷

Just as for children, certain methods are advisable for some while different methods are best for others.

Prayer has different aspects, different forms, which are easily adapted to ourselves: some are unable to reflect or consider things for too long during prayer; other ones — the most advanced ones — may enter without any difficulty into a superior type of prayer. Others adapt themselves better and faster in order to remain in a state of peace and quiet.

⁷⁵ Romans VII, 18-25

⁷⁶ St. Teresa de Jesus, “Camino de Perfeccion,” Chapter 24, No. 2, page 451. Works. Ed. Probleta. Vol. I

⁷⁷ 1 Corinthians III, 1-2

As Paul says, the first ones are similar to children who can only digest milk. The other ones need solid food.

Christ Taught the Oral Prayer Christ had finished praying. One of his disciples, who had been observing him, said: “Father, teach us to pray like John taught his disciples,” and he taught them the Our Father.⁷⁸ Christ taught one way to pray: he taught an oral prayer, of course the most sublime, the most perfect one, the most complete prayer.

It is understood that when he recommended this way to pray, he wanted us to pay attention to what we are saying; not repeating mechanically, but thinking of whom we are addressing and what we are asking for.

This is what Dr. Teresa of Jesus reminded her nuns: “When I say, ‘I believe,’ it is important that I understand and know what I believe; and when I say ‘Our Father,’ love shall be to understand who this Father or ours is and who is the Master who taught us this prayer.”⁷⁹

The Most Beautiful Oral Prayer There are several translations of the Our Father from the original in Aramaic, which was the language spoken at that time in Palestine.

From the direct version, translated from the original tongues, we transcribe this Prayer: “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we also have forgiven our trespassers; And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”⁸⁰

I have seen this prayer written in all languages known in the world on the walls of the Assumption Church on the hill of the Garden of Olives, near Jerusalem. In the Jewish Cabbala, the Our Father is among the prayers that have no definite goal of realization, yet provides a liaison with the Supreme God, from whom we get better influences through all the phases of life. It is a prayer raised to the One-God, what in the Cabbalistic terminology is the AIN-SOPH Supreme. All the invocations contained therein are intimately connected with the nine holy Sephirots of the Sacred Cabbala.

Christ Also Prayed Orally Many times during his life, the Lord prayed orally, addressing his Father. Before raising Lazarus he prayed before the Jews who witnessed the miracle: “Father” he said, “I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me. I knew that Thou hearest me always, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that they may believe that Thou didst send me.”⁸¹

The entire seventeenth chapter of John’s Gospel is an open, vibrant, loving cry of confidence, an oral prayer, sublime, from Jesus Christ to the Father.

⁷⁸ Matthew VI, 5-15

⁷⁹ St. Teresa de Jesus, “Camino de Perfección,” Chapter 24, No. 2, page 451. Works. Ed. Poblet. Vol. I

⁸⁰ Matthew VI, 9-13

⁸¹ John XI, 41-42

Matthew the Evangelist tells that the Lord prayed in Gethsemane, saying: “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”⁸²

He repeated this prayer three more times. When he was dying on the cross, he also prayed aloud: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”⁸³ And at about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice: “Eli, Eli la’ma sabach-tha’ni?” That is, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”⁸⁴ The last prayer Jesus made was this: “Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.”⁸⁵

The True Oral Prayer The true oral prayer, as taught by Jesus, originates in the depths of the soul, passes through the lips, and becomes a cry to God. But let us keep in mind that the prayer spoken with the lips but not felt in the heart cannot be called a prayer. In the real oral prayer there is an inspiration, an unmistakable divine breath. It is that divine wave coming from God and reaching us that makes us feel his beloved presence and that returns to God. When this fails to happen, there is no prayer.

The Bible Contains Many Oral Prayers The Bible contains many beautiful oral prayers: the ones from the many psalms; the one from many important persons such as Tobias, Sidrac, Misael, Abdenagus, Joseph, Judith, Ester, the Maccabeans and their mother, Job, the prophets, and others.

Oral Prayer and Eastern Masters Eastern masters also taught this method of prayer. There are many examples.

The Prayer of Ramakrishna One of the most evolved beings that came to this planet at the end of the last century, Sri Ramakrishna, taught this prayer:

“Divine Mother (he addresses God as Mother), here is ignorance and here is wisdom: take them, for I do not want them. Grant me only the feeling of your pure love, here is cleanliness (of mind and body), here are the impurities. What shall I do with them? Let me have only pure love. Here is good; here is evil. Oh, take them, I do not want them. Let me have only pure love. Here are the good actions; here are the bad actions. Oh, place me above them, I do not want them. Grant me only pure love.”⁸⁶

The Prayer of Paramahansa Yogananda

Another great Eastern mystic from this century — Paramahansa Yogananda, founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship — is, in my opinion, the author of the greatest amount of oral prayers. These prayers are compiled in the book “Whispers From Eternity.”

⁸² Matthew XXVI, 39

⁸³ Luke XXII, 34

⁸⁴ Matthew XXVII, 46

⁸⁵ Luke XXIII, 46

⁸⁶ “Evangolio de Ramakrishna,” Ed. Kier, page 248

From this book I take the following: “Oh Father, I want to see you above, below, behind, around me, wherever my eyes turn.

Teach the children of my senses so that they will not go far from your home. Turn my eyes inward in order to contemplate your beauty; educate my ears to listen to your song. I will feel the breath of your fragrant presence. I will worship you in the Eastern way, setting five candles of my senses on the altar. I will get in touch with you at the first sunshine of dawn, on the first sunshine of noon, in the hidden light of dusk, in the moon’s light, always keeping lit before you, the mystic candle of my love.”⁸⁷

The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi A jewel of our Christian mysticism is this prayer of one of the greatest saints, very well known and worshipped in the East: St. Francis of Assisi...

Lord make me an instrument of thy peace
where there is hatred, let me sow love
where there is injury, pardon
where there is doubt, faith
where there is despair, hope
where there is darkness, light
and where there is sadness, joy.
Lord grant that I may not so much
seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

The Oral Prayer of the Children in Spirit The oral prayer is for those who are still in the state of spiritual infancy. It is there for everyone, even for the ignorant, for the children, for the illiterate. When spoken, if one is feeling and thinking about what is spoken, it always reaches God.

But this prayer alone cannot easily take us to a complete Communion with God. With it, the wave of the Divine Presence can be tuned into the radio receiver of our soul, but with difficulty. Why? Because that wave encounters too much interference, or, as radio specialists would say, too much static. It is the static or Interference of the word which prevents us from concentrating our attention on him.

The methods of prayer we will now explain are better, although a little more difficult.

⁸⁷ Paramahansa Yogananda, “Susurros de la Madre Eterna,” Ed. Kier, Buenos Aires, page 95.

How God Takes Part in Prayer Dr. Teresa of Avila offers a beautiful comparison to show how God takes part in the different degrees, or ways, of Prayer. “He who prays must think that he is starting a garden in a very arid land which has many wild herbs for the Lord to take pleasure in His Majesty takes away all the wild, and he shall plant the good herbs.”⁸⁸

Every Sinner Can and Must Pray Here we have the first operation taking place in the soul. It does not matter if it is covered with wildness; that is, with bad actions, bad habits, sins, imperfections. First is the cleansing of the soul. But this cleanliness of the soul is not an absolute and necessary condition for prayer. If it were, the sinner could not pray in order to convert himself. We have the example of Mary Magdalene, of the crucified thief who begged forgiveness from the Lord, of the publican of the parable, and of all the other sinners who pray.

For the sinner’s prayer to reach God — and who is not a sinner? Nobody, absolutely nobody is perfect, except God; we are all creatures with so many faults, so many imperfections! — it is enough that the sinner knows and accepts and be conscious that he needs God, and that is all.

The Sinner and the Just In the Our Father prayer, the Lord himself wanted us to remember that while we are praying to the Father, we should keep in mind that we are sinners. And the Our Father belongs to all of us: the assassin, criminal and saint, blasphemer, the innocent child, the whore and the virgin, the religious and the worldly man or woman, the Roman Pope and the poor worker, the Lord and the servant, the rich and the poor, the priest and any professional.

During prayer we must remember that we are sinners, but we must also remember that we are the sons of God; that is, gods, kings, heirs to a kingdom, partners in Christ’s heritage. Thinking of ourselves only as sinners would be frustrating and sad; thinking of ourselves as children of God, having an infinitely kind Father, could make us proud and insolent. During prayer, let’s not forget our two-fold quality: children of God, yet imperfect beings.

Prayer and Conversion in Life It is important to be ready, to have the will and intention of weeding out all that is suffocating the field of our consciousness. Then, the action by the owner of the field will be immediate.

Let us not forget this basic theological principle: “Initium fidei.” That is, the first step, the first call, the first enlightenment, is not ours but God’s. It comes from Him always. In other words, His light is always present in us, but we are not aware of it because we are in the shadows of sin.

Such divine light is called grace in theological terms; it is what helps us clear the field. This clearing, of course, is not at once, immediate, fast; it is slow. This takes place as we allow God’ slight to enter our soul.

⁸⁸ Life of St. Teresa de Jesús. Chapter XI, page 71, Vol.1, Ed. Poblet

Four Ways To Water the Field Let us hear Dr. of Avila again: “Let us pretend this clearing has already been done, and a soul is determined to pray and has begun to pray.”⁸⁹ Now, it is time to start watering the field. “It seems to be” she continues, “that you may water it in four ways. First, you can take water from the well, which is a big job. Second, you can use a drawn well, which is less work for more water than the first. Or you can get water from a river or a brook, which is even better, for water reaches and impregnates the soil; it is less work, and you do not need to do it as often as the previous methods. Lastly, you can use rain, which the Lord provides without any effort from us, and which is incomparably better than the methods I have mentioned before.”⁹⁰

The Castle of the Soul Dr. Teresa compares the soul to a diamond castle, or a castle made of a very clear crystal, with many compartments, “some in the high, some in the low, others on the sides, and in the center the most important one where the things of great secrecy between God and the soul take place.”⁹¹

The Climbing of Mt. Camel Both St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa de Jesus compare the slow, difficult and progressive ascension of the soul still enveloped in the obscure night (due to an absence of the Divine Light — a natural consequence of sin) to Climbing Mt. Carmel. The top of this mountain is the realized soul. The soul had to make a great effort to internalize and discover the light of God within.

Three Key Books in Eastern Mysticism Students of Eastern mysticism consider three books of great importance: the Bhagavad Gita, the New Testament, and Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras (aphorisms). These books contain the schedule of the entire process of the self’s discovery: the real Self.

According to Western scholars, Patanjali’s Yoga Aphorisms appeared between 830 and 300 B.C. Easterners go further back to 10,000 years before the Christian Era. Book Three, aphorisms 5 and 6, teaches that the nature of the soul (self) is light. Through constant practice of meditation, this light may be directed at any time and may illumine any object. This special enlightenment is gradual, step by step, just as when one climbs Mt. Cannel. Likewise, the discovery of the main residence of the Inner Castle (our self) is silent, calm, slow.

The Evolution of the Soul is a Natural Process This growth is a natural process. We must remember the following advice: perseverance, patience and achievement of a little bit every day are more valuable to a beginner than a violent step forward or the enthusiastic efforts of the temperamental and emotional person.⁹² This golden rule must

⁸⁹ Ibid. page 71

⁹⁰ Ibid. pages 7 1-72

⁹¹ St. Theresa de Jesus, “Castillo Interior o Moradas,” Chapter 1, No. 3, page 533

⁹² Alice Bailey, “La Luz del Alma,” Ed. Kier, Book III, Af. 6, p. 250

be remembered on the spiritual path. The objective is to discover the throne, the kingdom. As Christ said, “The kingdom of God.”

A Little Effort In order to discover the only real throne, and in order to enter this kingdom containing everyting, we must make an effort. Is it not worth it? The Lord stated: “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force.”⁹³

⁹³ Matthew XI, 12

Chapter Seven – Reflective prayer

The first way to obtain water from the well, according to St. Teresa de Jesus, is making use of a pail held by a cord. Hard, difficult and patient work.

But now it is the matter of another prayer. Not the oral prayer which we mentioned before, but the mental prayer, or Meditation.

Our mind may focus on many objects, as many as possible. Its capacity is really infinite. It may be directed to a fixed point for a short while or for a certain time. Let us suppose that we have a flashlight and that we are walking on a dark path. In that path there are many and varied objects. When we focus the flashlight on a certain object we discover it.

Our mind is like a powerful flashlight which discovers the objects. We may take a look, a glance, or stop to look at something more attentively.

This fast look, this brief focusing, is known as CONCENTRATION.

What is Meditation? Some Eastern mystics call the thorough focusing upon an object MEDITATION. “Meditation,” they say, “is only a prolongation of concentration,” and it results from the ability of the student to focus the mind at will upon a certain object.⁹⁴

Other Eastern mystics, like Paramahansa Yogananda, make the following differentiation: To direct or focus the mind on any object is CONCENTRATION. To direct or focus the mind on God is called MEDITATION.

According to this, you do not meditate on business, a plan, a strategic action, studies, and so on. Such activity of the mind is called CONCENTRATION. To think deeply for a while on God is MEDITATION.

From now on, the word MEDITATION shall be understood as “focusing the mind on God.”

Some mystics make a distinction between reflective prayer, affective prayer and MEDITATION.

Many authors of handbooks on spiritual life do not make this distinction which we consider necessary. Classical mysticism calls contemplative prayer or quiet prayer what we and the mystics call MEDITATION.

To Meditate is to Direct Your Mind to God Within God is omnipresent: this means that He is in everything. He is within ourselves, in the temple of our being. And for this reason the focusing of our mind, the direction of our mind must be towards where God is: in the intimate sanctuary of our being.

There are many ways of doing this.

⁹⁴ Luz del Alma, Alice Bailey. Book III, Aphorism 2, page 242.

The Reflective Prayer In Western mysticism there is the so-called REFLECTIVE PRAYER. This method of prayer consists of making all kinds of reflections, long and profound thoughts, mental discussions of principles, truths or teachings generally taken from the sacred books or from books by religious authors with the purpose of arriving at resolutions and conclusions on improving life.

In this prayer, according to St. John of the Cross, two inner senses are mainly at work: imagination and fantasy. “And so, meditation belongs to these two powers, and is a pensive act made through images, forms and pictures made up or imagined by our senses, such as to imagine Christ crucified or in another situation; or to imagine God with great majesty on a throne; or to consider or imagine the Glory as a beautiful Light; etc.”⁹⁵

A Reasoned Prayer A reasoned prayer is one seeking arguments to convince someone, or persuade someone about something of which he is not sure. It is the walking of the blind in a half-darkness, in a blurred shadow.

This prayer has been taught and recommended to disciples by all Western mystics: St. Pedro of Alcantara, St. Ignatius Loyola in his meditations of his spiritual exercises, Father Luis de Granada, St. Francis of Sales in his “Introduction to Devotional Life,” the School of St. Sulpice, and others.

Five Stages of This Method This method is the one recommended and practiced in all or in almost all Institutions or Religious Orders of the Church. It consists of five stages: Preparation, Body of Prayer. Considerations, Petition. Resolutions.

Preparation of Thoughts At this stage the soul must try to free itself from thoughts, preoccupations and sentiments which are foreign to God, in order to retreat into prayer. How?

St. Francis of Sales says: place yourself in the presence of God and request His Light.

There are four ways, he says, of placing oneself before God, in His presence:

- (a) To think that He is everywhere.
- (b) To think that He is within.
- (c) To think that the Son of God sees us from heaven.
- (d) To imagine that Jesus Christ is together with us, as if He were in front of us, as one of our best friends. To ask Him for His Light, we must go through three stages:
 - (1) To worship God, perform acts of humility and contrition.
 - (2) To feel unworthy of worshipping Him properly.
 - (3) To ask Him for His Light and for the help of the Holy Ghost.

⁹⁵ Subida al Monte Carmelo; Book II, Chapter 12, No. 3, page 126 Edit. Poblet 1944, Buenos Aires

The Body of Prayer: Exercising the Three Powers Our Western mystics call this stage the exercise of the three powers; that is, Memory, Understanding, and Will Power.

This step is especially mentioned by St. Ignatius Loyola. Imagination plays its role in presenting the place or object where the events take place and on which you wish to meditate: the sky, the throne of God, the cradle of Bethlehem, the Cross, Calvary, Gethsemane, Holy Sepulchre, etc.

The understanding or the intellect begins now to reason and to make all kinds of considerations.

In order to make these reflections and considerations easier, it is advised to read meditation books: read a paragraph and reflect upon it. Finally, the will power operates in the affection, acts of praise, thanksgiving, wishes, petitions, and resolutions of avoiding evil and intending to practice virtue.

Reflections The third stage consists in examining the conscience in order to discover the errors which one may feel inclined to make. In other words, it is the practical application of what is being meditated, applying it to life and personal attitude. Without this, meditation would have no value at all. It would remain in the air. A double personality would result: the one of the meditator, and the one of the man putting meditation into practice. The latter is the most important.

Great Mistake: Saying, Yet Not Doing The great mistake of one following this method of meditation is that he does not live what he meditates on, that he does not apply any of his meditations to his life, and thinks that such application is good for others but not for him.

This is the great sin of most preachers. They prepare their sermons, their speeches, their lectures, their addresses, and say many beautiful things about God, virtues, the lives of saints, and their truths — yet they exclude themselves from what they preach. Most of these preachers use the words of Christ as He explained when He addressed the crowds: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do, for they preach but do not practice. They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with their finger.”⁹⁶ It is a terrible remark, right? But it is the reproach and warning made by God incarnate

Petition The fourth stage is the one of petitions. At this stage it is recommended that we converse with God, remembering that whatever we ask him, He will grant us, considering that He has promised to grant us anything as long as we ask for it in Christ’s flame.

Resolutions The fifth stage of this prayer consists of expressly endeavoring to be good and serve the Lord in a better way, for a period of a month, a year, or a lifetime. These purposes must be Specific and updated. They must apply to specific circumstances of

⁹⁶ Matthew XXIII, 1-4

life. A man tending towards gluttony must resolve to become more sobrious; the enraged man must resolve to keep calm whenever he is offended and to let the first impulse be to calm down; the proud man will try to improve by not talking, or not allowing himself to be praised; and so on.

These resolutions must be made, no matter how many times they are not fulfilled. “If you do not have resolutions, you shall never correct yourselves,” said St. Francis of Sales. “Make resolutions often, after the downfall, and in the end you will find the reward to your efforts and will receive the prize of your consistency.”⁹⁷

Beginners’ Method This first method of mental prayer is only for “beginners,” as it has been accepted by Western mystics themselves. St. John of the Cross, in his book “Llama de Amor Viva,” writes: “Know that the state and exercise of beginners is to meditate and perform acts and reflective exercises using the imagination.”⁹⁸ He thoroughly noted all the disadvantages of this method for “beginners,” although “these considerations are necessary, and forms and styles of meditation needed, to gradually conquer and inflame the soul through the senses... It must be in such a way that they go beyond them, but not remain there forever, lest they never achieve...”⁹⁹

Transitory Method This method is only transitory, never permanent or definite. The great Spanish mystic himself compares this method with the steps leading to a second floor: he who remains in the stairway will never reach the second floor; that is, he will never reach his goal: God. Likewise, he severely criticizes those who, having chosen the spiritual path and having practiced reaching God through images, forms and beginner’s meditations, do not dare to go beyond these methods — elementary methods — which they are used to; those who would rather remain the same, believing things will always be that way. Even worse, they tell others that this is the only method.

Difficult Method This method makes meditation hard, difficult, unpleasant. It takes a lot of effort and achieves very little on the path towards God: it is the source of that which the mystics call the “barrenness, aridity, dryness of the soul.”

Friar Juan de los Angeles makes the following comments about this method of prayer: “A self-questioning (in prayer) tires, creates hardness, dryness, and the desire to finish promptly”¹⁰⁰ The followers of this method misinterpret the words of the Lord: “That the Kingdom of God suffers violence and the one who work take it over,” and then make great effort to form communion with God. “Sometimes,” says Francis of Osuna, “some make such efforts that they get terrible headaches, and then they feel their eyes get misty because their head is exhausted or because they must restrict their vital spirits.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Los Grados de la Vida Espiritual, Sandreau, Barcelona, Imprenta Subirana Hnos. 1906. Vol. I, pages 154-168

⁹⁸ Llama de Amor Viva, San Juan de la Cruz. Canción III No. 32, page 361

⁹⁹ Subida al Monte Carmelo, Book II, chapter 12, No.5, page 127.

¹⁰⁰ Mysticos Franciscanos. Vol. III, Manual de Vida Perpetua, page 530.

¹⁰¹ Vida, Chapter VIII.

Inadequate Method for Spiritual Progress This method is tedious and tiresome; it discourages the soul, and finally results in the abandonment of meditation.

My long experience in dealing with people who have practiced prayer, especially clergymen and nuns and other naturally pious souls, has proven that most of them have practiced this kind of meditation, yet were very far from their goal: GOD. Instead of attaining peace, the spiritual peace they longed for, they attained anguish and failure. Instead of feeling encouraged, they became discouraged. Instead of rest and inner peace, they attained frustration and tiredness.

A Method Leading to Failure This method of prayer is the explanation of today's great crisis in the spiritual life of most Christians, and especially in the lives of the members of religious orders.

I and my fellow clergymen remember very well that we were taught this way of prayer in our Seminars and had to practice it.

And what was the final result? The abandonment of meditation or spiritual life.

Our seminar directors, our teachers, our spiritual leaders could not guide us correctly in the selection of adequate methods of prayer or meditation. Why? Did they ignore them? Did they think that contemplative prayer was only for privileged souls?

My Experience Our beloved Father knows the paths trodden by all mortals. Over thirty years ago I met a monk, an Eastern *pundit*: Bhekpati Sinha. He revealed something to me. Following the method of reflective prayer in the seminar, I had never found the inner spiritual peace I had always sought. When I began to practice the method of prayer or meditation he taught me, everything, absolutely everything changed in my life. From then on I experienced the blessing of God within myself, in my brothers and in all things. This discovery cannot only be for privileged souls. It is nobody's privilege. It is the gift of our loving Father to the true seeker.

Meditation, as practiced in the Eastern monasteries where this monk came from, is the easiest way to reach God. We shall explain this later in this book.

Do Not Lose Heart To all those who felt attracted to a method of Prayer that did not lead them to God because it was only the prayer for "beginners," I say: do not lose heart. Let me cite an example.

Dr. Teresa de Jesus spent about twenty years in a personal conflict: "I went through this rough sea for twenty years, having these falls and then recovering badly because I would fall again; my life was so imperfect that I paid attention to neither the small nor the mortal sins — and though I feared the latter, I remained in close range of danger."

St. Teresa herself, before having a Spiritual Guide, had only the book "Third Abecedary" by Francis of Osuna. She confesses that for eighteen years she struggled against the dryness of the spirit "trying to follow this method of reflective prayer." "It seems to me" she says, "that I spent eighteen years in this work and in this great dryness for not being able, as I say, to reflect."¹⁰²

¹⁰² Vida, Chapter IV, No. 9, page 22.

This is a Method Ignored in the East This method of reflective prayer — at least the way it is practiced in the West — is unknown among the masters and instructors of the East. Prayer, as taught to their students and followers, is very simple: it is the quiet prayer, the pure prayer. It has nothing to do with fantasy, imagination, making up scenes, images, or theatrical scenes of deities on shining thrones approached by poor, trembling sinners asking for mercy. In such meditation, there is no superhuman effort to keep the mind, fantasy, imagination — which fly from one object to another — within a certain topic. This effort is represented in the example given by Teresa de Jesus: it is obtaining the water from the well using raw power, without any method, without any instrument to help us do the work.

Meditation is Pleasant Such meditation is not as tiring and difficult as climbing Mt. Carmel, with the falling and rising, struggling and failing, full of sorrows and thorns. The meditation I learned requires only the effort of taking the key and opening the door for Our Beloved Father to enter us; He who said, through John: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me.”¹⁰³

Meditation, as I learned it, is only opening the windows of the soul for Divine Light to enter.

To meditate is to do like Mary, the sister of diligent and tireless Martha: “To sit at the feet of the Master and to listen to His word.”¹⁰⁴ To meditate does not mean feeling obliged to do what is unpleasant to you, or doing something which one feels is tiring, tedious, or for which one feels an aversion. None of this. If we know and realize that approaching our Lord is reaching the Source of Joy, Peace, Abundance, Bliss ... how could we feel unpleasantness? To even think of it that way is absurd.

Will we not be with him always, eternally? Could being with him for a half an hour, an hour, two, three, forever, cause us annoyance?

Do Not Try the Reflective Prayer Do not try this method of reflective prayer. It does not lead us anywhere. It is inadequate even for the one who has never practiced meditation, because He may get stuck and never improve. The great mystics of the East, such as St. Teresa de Jesus, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis of Sales, Father Baltazar Alvarez, the Franciscan mystics, and others, recommend that this pensive method of reflection and reasoning in prayer be slowly discarded, and that contemplative prayer, or quiet prayer, be begun. Eastern mystics go directly into contemplative prayer.

A Message for Souls of Good Will It is possible that these arguments do not please the pseudomystics, who could be called “traditional.” But this is unimportant. These words are not directed towards them. These words are directed to all those many souls who got stuck or turned back, or, what is even worse, abandoned the path of the search for God because they lacked an adequate method.

¹⁰³ Revelation III, 20.

¹⁰⁴ Luke X, 39.

These words are directed to those who, in the midst of daily tasks, want to make a halt in the first hours of the day in order to find themselves.

These words are directed especially to Christian laymen and Catholics who were never told that to lead a true Christian life we must “meditate.” To those who were never taught an easy and pleasant method for attaining infinite pleasure. A re-christianization of society, that is man’s return to the Godhead, individually or collectively, will only succeed through an understanding of divine consciousness in the soul through meditation. Without God, there is nothing stable. “Unless the Lord builds the house,” tells the prophet, “those who build it labor in vain.”¹⁰⁵

Affective prayer

Some pious Western mystics differentiate between reflective prayer and the one they call “affective” prayer. In the affective prayer, will, and especially preparation, play important roles, although reasoning and consideration are not excluded.

The acts of our will powers are: sentiments of adoration, worshipping, recognition of and compassion towards the sufferings of our Lord, desire for virtue, contrition of sins, humility, patience, etc.¹⁰⁶

The Great Western Mystics Ignore This Method Great Mystics like St. Teresa of Jesus, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis of Sales and others ignore this affective prayer. The reason is obvious: if this method includes reasoning and the same steps as reflective prayer, then there is no reason to differentiate between these two methods. This affective prayer, mentioned by some pious mystics, may be compared to what St. Teresa calls prayers of “retreat,” and about which she writes specifically in chapters 28 and 29 of her book “Camino de Perfección,” where she explains the second petition of the Our Father “Who art in heaven.”

It is Equivalent to the Prayer of “Retreat” She calls it the prayer of “retreat” because the soul gathers all its powers and unites with God, and the Divine Master comes sooner to teach and impart the quiet prayer.¹⁰⁷

This prayer does not exclude reasoning. If God is omnipresent, He is also within: His temple is there. He has established His kingdom there. We must seek Him there, yet we still have to reason; we have to make an effort to understand this truth.

“You think” she says, “that it is of little importance that a scattered soul understand this Truth, or to see that to talk with the eternal Father or to receive him we need not go to heaven or speak out loud? However little we speak, He is near us, and shall hear

¹⁰⁵ Psalm 126, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Sandreau. Los Grados de la Vida Espiritual. Vol. I, Parte III — page 337.

¹⁰⁷ Camino de Perfección. Cap. XXVIII, No. 4, page 469.

us, and we do not need wings to seek him. We only need to isolate ourselves and see Him within, and not fear this grand guest. Rather, we must, with great humility, talk to Him as to a father, as Him as we would a Father, tell Him our worries and ask Him to remediate them, aware that we are unworthy of Him.¹⁰⁸

Recommended for People Unable to Reason This prayer of “retreat” was recommended by this great Spanish mystic to her sisters in the order and to all the souls unable to reason much without getting tired, or those unable to concentrate. She encouraged them to look to the Lord, since He always keeps an eye on his creatures, even if they are guilty of many wrongs. If you are happy, see Him resurrected, since only to imagine how He left the sepulchre will make you happy... if you are sad, see Him walking toward Gethsemane, what a great sorrow He had in his soul... see Him tied to the pole in pain, His flesh torn because He loves you so; persecuted by some, spat on by others, denied by His friends, abandoned by them, without anyone to look out for him, frozen in such solitude.”¹⁰⁹

She also recommended carrying some image or picture of the Lord, talking to Him just as we talk to other people, knowing that we will never lack the words to talk to Him.

The pious mystics recommended this method for those who have difficulty making considerations but more or less long for reflections on the fundamental truths, and who would rather experiment with their attraction towards impressions and emotions.

A Method Ignored in the East Like the reflective prayer, this “affective” prayer is unknown in the East. Masters, Gurus, Sannyasins, spiritual instructors go directly towards Supreme Reality: God. They reach him directly through meditation, and this is how they teach their disciples.

Ramakrishna told the following parable: “Suppose you go to a garden to eat mangoes. Is it necessary that you first count the trees in the garden, which may be in the thousands, and then the number of the branches, which may number in the hundreds of thousands? Of course not. On the contrary, you start eating right away.”¹¹⁰

In order to discover divine presence in us, you need not look outside to the meditation books by pious authors, or boring reflections and reasonings which distract us and make prayer difficult. In order to taste it and feel it, we do not need to make great, roundabout efforts, or get lost in the endless debates, which are like the trees and branches in Ramakrishna’s parable. We must go directly to him to taste him immediately. We must do what the prophet David advised: “O taste and see, the Lord is good! Happy is the man who takes refuge in him.”¹¹¹

We believed it necessary to write this chapter so that those who follow this method of prayer may discover its disadvantages and change to MEDITATION or Contemplative Prayer — the real prayer — which we shall present in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁸ Camino de Perfección. Cap. XXVIII, No. 2, page 463.

¹⁰⁹ Camino de Perfección. Cap. XVI, Nos. 4-5, page 454

¹¹⁰ El Evangelio de Raniakrishna, page 454.

¹¹¹ Psalm XXXIV, 8.

Chapter Eight – Meditation – contemplative prayer

The Franciscan mystic Friar Bernardine of Laredo, using the words of a father of the Church, St. Hieronimus, states that the contemplative prayer is not one of men but one of gods: “Those who contemplate the inaccessible divinity are not to be called men, but gods, because the quiet contemplators who are perfected in the sublime calmness of pure contemplation do not understand or perceive through anything created.”¹¹²

A Prayer for Men If we understand these words to mean that meditation or contemplative prayer is not for men, but for angels or some other kind of more evolved creatures, this would be inaccurate. This prayer is for men with all their faults, defects, imperfections, and other limitations. If this were not so, the Divine Plan would be frustrated. The Lord invites us all, without any exceptions, to be perfect: “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is Perfect.”¹¹³ Without meditation we cannot achieve this goal which the Lord gives us.

The Eternal Logos, the Word of God, the uncreated Wisdom, descended to this plane, came to this Earth to remind us that we are gods, that we are children of God. This message is not only for pure, saintly, immaculate, impeccable creatures: it is, without exception, for all men. If it were directed to anyone specifically, it would be directed to sinners, who are far away, on the negative side where sin reigns.

When Christ recommended prayer, He wanted us to find God in and through it. And by finding Him we attain peace, love, abundance, and all that is good.

This prayer is one which really attunes us with God, and makes us discover this hidden throne in the bottom of our Soul.

Mystics St. Teresa de Jesus, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis of Sales, and others consider it as a natural coronation of spiritual life. We only need to look at their writings.

As mentioned before, Eastern mysticism recommends meditation for all those who wish to enter the path of God-realization.

What it is to Meditate To meditate is to contemplate. And what

is it to contemplate? To see, to register, to consider something profoundly and attentively. This prayer makes us look deeply, attentively. But at whom? Him, God, infinite kindness, infinite love, infinite power, infinite happiness, infinite perfection, infinite bliss, infinite calm.

This prayer, which Eastern mysticism calls MEDITATION, means seeing, looking, observing, fixing your eyes upon ... All this is performed — obviously — not by our natural sight, but by the soul, the spirit, which, just as our body, has some kind of

¹¹² *Misticos Franciscanos*. Vol. II. Subida al Monte Carmelo, Chapter 5. page 316

¹¹³ Matthew V, 48

spiritual senses. In reality, we can see with the soul, hear with it, taste with it, touch with it, and enrapture ourselves with the perfume of the Divine Being who is with us.

To Meditate is to Enter Another World Let us note that in order to or meditate” we do not need to make much effort. It is enough to look out the window of our soul and do something very simple: instead of letting the soul direct its eyes towards the material things surrounding it, the things that the soul loves but which fascinate and worry man so, it must turn around and look but to another horizon, another landscape, another world.. .So different! So different! An incomparably big, strange, beautiful world of which he never dreamed. An exotic world about which he perhaps never even heard, or whose method of entering he had never heard. A world impossible to describe because neither the human eye nor human ear nor human mind can possibly describe it. This world can only be perceived, felt. Only felt. But it is indescribable. This world is felt by the one who loves him, that blessed God who, through an act of supreme weakness, allowed himself to be loved by such a small and insignificant creature... by a drop of water lost in the vastness of the unfathomable ocean... by a small atom, swimming in the infinite ocean of cosmic power... by a small particle of insignificant light held in that infinite ocean of cosmic light. Yes! He reveals himself to the devotee, and only to such a lover... the condition to find him is to love Him. He who loves Him little knows little about Him. He who does not love Him at all knows nothing about Him. He who loves Him much knows much about Him, even though he may never be able to express it with human language... how right was St. Teresa of Jesus when she said: “To reach perfection it is necessary not to think much but to love much!”¹¹⁴ And who is not capable of loving? The savage loves his clan buried in the depths of the jungle; the beast loves its offspring, the bird loves its sweet nest; the shipwrecked person loves the beach. We all have within ourselves what is called the “desire to love”... and who is more worthy to receive that love than He?

To Meditate is to Attune with God Thus, to meditate is to “see,” but to see with the eyes of the soul, through the windows of the soul. To meditate is to attune oneself with God. He who meditates must take his turn and focus the eyes of the spirit, directing them to God. The things which distract us, the things with which we play, those for which we often get annoyed and fight, are so tiny! So insignificant! This is why we search for one thing after another. Our spirit is like a funnel... Often what we place in it to fill it leaks out like water, so this funnel is always empty. We are always pouring things in, but we can never fill it.

It is Easy to Meditate This contemplative prayer is very easy. He who never tried to do it might think it difficult. This is not true. The first thing that the baby develops is the sense of sight. The baby smiles — he smiles at his mother. He smiles at those who caress him. He does not need to make any effort to smile at his mother: his smile is natural and spontaneous.

We too, dear brother, you, I, we all, are children of God, of the Divine Mother who placed two eyes in the forehead of our soul with which to see her, to contemplate her, to

¹¹⁴ Moradas IV, page 573

smile at her. We turn our sight away from the blessed face of the Divine Mother. We turn our eyes away from her when we start to reason and to entertain ourselves with the toys with which others amuse themselves.

To Meditate is to Rediscover a Kingdom Meditation makes you discover your original, primitive state, your original kingdom. Direct your eyes to God and discover the smile of your Divine Mother. For this you don't need to wrack your brain, you don't need to reflect over and over again; you don't need to read books, you are the book itself; you have all the instruments to discover him yourself, not far from you but within you. Don't you think so? Try it. Try it yourself

To Rediscover the Godhead is a Personal Task Nobody can do for you what you are obliged to perform alone. No one can see for you — it is you who must feel the delight of the beauty of creation. No one can do the job of feeling in the bottom of your soul the sublime sensation of living a happy hour. You must do it yourself.

The same thing happens with the blessing of experiencing Divine Presence deep in your soul.

The act of seeing, feeling, experiencing God within your soul, is a divine-human operation. I refer to the example of the light in the room of many windows or to the Interior Castle mentioned by St. Teresa de Jesus.

He, God, is light, infinite light, eternal light, light over all light. This first light ignited a second light, which John called the Word. This Word contained the whole, full and absolute infinite life of that first light, called the Father: such life is also light.

In other words, the Father, the first light, created another light: His Son.

What can create Light but Light itself?

What can create Love but Love itself?

What can create Life but Life itself?

What can create Power but Power itself?

What can create Joy but Joy itself?

This second aspect of God — his Son — is the one who reveals Him in the form of light, love, life, power, joy. He performs everything through his Son: he is his other I, his perfect image.

Each one of us must personally open wide the doors of the soul for that divine light to enter. If our spirit remains closed, his light will never shine in it.

Divine Omnipresence and Human Action Divine omnipresence is that divine power God has to be present everywhere, to pervade the relative or absolute space, to live in every life, to act in every action, to illumine every light, to love in every love, to enjoy in every joy ... That divine omnipresence is total and completely independent of every living creature. Every creature, evolved or not, belonging or not to the highest level, infinitely Small or infinitely big, is immersed, sunk in divine essence. It lives in it; it acts in it, it feels in it; it enjoys in it. It also fails in it; it gets frustrated in it; it suffers in

it — but not because the divine essence is the cause or reason of every wrong done by the creature, but because this creature misuses his free will.

God is always present, and is always revealing himself like the sun illumines its own planetary system, independently from the rest of the heavenly bodies that gravitate in its orbit. Such is divine action.

But to see, to feel divine action, human cooperation is needed. In other words, for that light to brighten our soul, our soul must have open doors and windows. Otherwise, even though the light may shine outdoors, the room with closed doors and windows will remain dark.

Active Contemplation Meditation is the act of opening the doors and windows of the soul so that the divine light may penetrate it. This is neither difficult nor impossible.

Classical mysticism calls this penetration of divine light in the soul, the kind in which one merely opens the doors and windows and nothing else, “passive contemplation.” This is the counterpart of the so-called active contemplation, which is a greater activity, requiring a greater effort by the soul so that divine light may penetrate it.

During meditation, the soul doesn’t reason, doesn’t argue, doesn’t measure pros and cons, doesn’t reply, doesn’t analyze: it simply sees, simply hears. It is like going out onto a balcony on a sunny morning and examining the horizon as far as the eye can see, and drinking in long sips of the falls of light coming from its fountain: God.

To Meditate is to Approach the Holy Mount Ramakrishna, the enlightened saint of the East, tells a beautiful parable. An ant went to a sugar mountain and, not realizing how high it was, ate a small amount, and was satisfied... .Then she took a small piece home in her mouth, and on the way home thought to herself: “Next time I’ll take the whole mountain.”¹¹⁵

To meditate is to approach the holy mount — God — and to taste it only a little bit at a time.

Our ambitious heart, full of endless desires and unsatisfied with the ownership of apparent goods, will taste God’s sweetness and will now desire the whole mountain. A good desire, but impossible to fulfill! It will have to content itself with going to the mountain as many times as it wants to taste him, and when nothing pleases him but God, then he will remain with him for eternity.

Meditation is Silence Meditation is silence. Silence expands his kingdom to the depths of the soul. When a sick man is in a hospital bed, the mother, the son, the wife, the daughter next to him ... they all want to comply with the doctor’s order to be silent.

Why? What healing power does silence have? It makes the soul turn inward, deeply inward. Silence is a tonic, more powerful than the bottled tonics of the pharmacies. These flavored, sweet, perfumed tonics contain some milligrams of mild poison which temporarily soothes the pain but which, in the long run, shortens the life of the person.... Instead, the tonic of silence does not affect the body at all ... It is like the blown breath of a mother in the open sore of a child’s arm burnt by fire. Blow of a mother, blessed

¹¹⁵ El Evangelio de Ramakrishna, page 76

blow, blow of love, of relief. Silence is a tonic, a real tonic. Do you know why? Because He is in silence.

God Dwells in Silence He remained in silence, the Bible says. According to the Bible, in the silence of NOT BEING, in the abyss, before the chaos, nothingness — that which did not yet exist — was incubated in HIM in silence, in absolute silence when silence was not yet disturbed by the vibrations of the electrons of the world, cyclones, winds and tornadoes; by the sounds of the waters; by the creation of the outer spaces with all their planetary systems; by the sound of fire, the light of the ray, the roar of the tempest. He dwells in that silence. He is in that silence.

God Reveals Himself in Silence To meditate is to make silence. The deeper the silence, the better it is, and the more he will reveal himself to us. If we can only adore him in the altar of silence, in the great cathedral of cosmic silence in which all beings and all things dwell ... When the noises of the created things decrease... When the noise of men — crowds of merchants in the great markets of the ... When nothing else is heard but the distant echo of that flock of human parrots speaking about their problems, anxieties, triumphs, failures... When the stars of souls that are shining in the immeasurable abysses of eternity begin to brighten the horizon ... then, the great celestial music of the spheres begins to be heard... To meditate is to make silence, to enter the great silence of God.

“If you need fat (butter)” Ramakrishna said to his disciples, “you must place the milk where nobody will move it; otherwise, the cream will not separate. Afterwards, beat it and you shall have butter. Likewise, the beginner must sit alone and not be disturbed by people of a worldly mentality; then, by beating a calm mind through the practice of meditation, the butter of divine love will be attained. If you devote your mind to God in solitude, you shall have the spirit of real renunciation and absolute devotion.”¹¹⁶

There is no true meditation or true realization without this internal silence, this solitude, this disconnecting of the soul from the things that disturb it.

Meditation is Not Reasoning Meditation is a prayer of calm, peace and joy. It is not the result of reasoning. Reasoning makes the mind work, study, investigate a problem or some matter; then the mind acquires a certain knowledge of the object. During meditation there is no reasoning at all. Reasoning can only give us an idea, but a very imperfect and distorted idea of HIM. The idea the philosopher has about God is very different from that of the mystic.

Likewise, the idea of a theologian about God through the books of theology is very far from the one that the mystic has. This I know from experience.

Philosophy and Theology — Dead and Alive Philosophers, theologians, study God from the outside, with the mind, which can only give a very obscure, distorted and out-of-focus picture of him.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. page 53

It is a great mistake to think and believe that with this kind of philosophy or theology you may help people reach God.

Philosophy or theology acquired through the exercise of the intellect remains external in the intellect of the philosopher and the theologian, and also remains external to the one receiving the teaching... I would call these dead philosophy and dead theology — LIFELESS. That which reaches the inside, the depths of the soul, is the message, the “live” or “living theology,” efficient, sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thought and intentions of the heart.¹¹⁷

This theology is the theology of the soul which can only be obtained through meditation; that is, through the divine personal experience. This theology is the living theology which Christ taught the apostles, which is taught by the saints of all religions.

You Must Find the Godhead Yourself to Be Able to Teach Others to Find It He who holds a honeycomb and never tastes it cannot say to others how sweet and good the honey is. Likewise, he who has never tasted God through meditation or divine contemplation cannot say what he is like. To teach others the way, one must be on that path oneself. To teach others to find God, one must have already found him. This is self-evident.

When one returns from there, from afar, from very deep inside him; when one has dived into the depths of that Infinite Ocean one comes back fulfilled, happy, transformed, turned into a new creature... Only one flame of the infinite fire is enough to melt all the bitterness of human imperfections and to perform the miracle of the conversion of Paul of Tarsus.

God With Form and Without Form Meditation is a divine vision, a contemplation of him; not detailed, particular, diminished, but general, universal, cosmic. Eastern schools discuss two ways of worshipping God: with form, or without form. You reach God with both ways. The ordinary way is to look for him and worship him in whatever way. Our Western saints took the person of the Christ-child, Christ-crucified, Christ-suffering, Christ-resurrected as direct object of their meditations.

Some Eastern schools recommend the search for God in the form of Vishnu, Krishna, Rama, Ramakrishna — who are, according to the Easterners, forms or divine incarnations of the second aspect of God.

The art, temples, images and sculptures of India are the most appropriate means of representation of the spiritual, the sacred, the transcendental. They represent God in their abstract qualities: their love, power, wisdom, generosity, glory, immanence, omnipresence.

This art is not the product of the imagination of the artist as it is in Western art, but the result of abstraction in deep meditation, the knowledge of universal rules and laws.

This art tends to always give a universal, cosmic concept of God.

¹¹⁷ Hebrews IV, 12

Metamorphosis of the Spirit When the soul has begun to discover God, when it has approached the shores of the sea of infinite perfection, when it suddenly feels showered with the beams of uncreated light, it experiences the metamorphosis Paul experienced when he had the vision of Christ and the Lord talked to him sweetly yet severely: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” This same metamorphosis was experienced by St. Augustine after thirty years of forsaking God, and then he was enlightened by that infinite light. The same metamorphosis has been experienced by all saints of every religion. The same thing is experienced by the soul who sincerely, patiently, lovingly looks for his father-God in meditation.

Unlimited Divine Conception This divine experience necessarily expands and universalizes the soul. It conceives of God not like a being sitting on a throne of glory, surrounded by celestial courts, judging, decreeing and punishing, for that concept limits divine essence... God is no longer seen in any shape — human, geometrical, or any other shape of a limited nature.”Those who think of God in any of these forms or like a great fire, or a reflection, or other forms, and think of that as something like him, are very far away from him,”says St. John of the Cross wisely.¹¹⁸ The concept of God held by the soul already attuned to the Divine Spirit is a new and unlimited one. He likes to see God, but only without a form; to feel Him, but in a limitless way; to love God without finding out what He is. This concept is the result of meditation.

Christian Mystics Agree Our Western mystics have different ways of describing this contemplative prayer which we, according to Eastern terminology, call MEDITATION.

St. Francis de Sales conceives of it as a loving, simple and permanent attention to divine things, not in a fragmented way, but simply, as a whole. “Everything is seen in general, and nothing in particular.”¹¹⁹ In this prayer, the soul ceases to act under its own powers. The intellect, will and imagination enter into a quiet state, and look to God in a general and pure way. St. John of the Cross explains: “The more the soul enters the Spirit, the less its powers work on particular acts, because it takes a purer and more general view. And so, the powers that worked for the soul’s accomplished goal no longer function, just as the feet stop moving once one has completed a journey. For if they continued walking, one would never arrive; and if everything were a means, where and when would the goals be enjoyed?”¹²⁰

Meditation or Secret Wisdom Meditation is also called the Secret Wisdom. Why? Because it leads us to the enlightenment from the holy Ghost without the soul knowing it, without understanding how or why, without finding any image with which to compare the joy, peace and bliss experienced as a result of an intimate communion with God. The soul only feels quiet, satisfied and content. But with a special contentment which is superior to anything else. In meditation, the soul leaves behind all worries and enters more and more into the supreme enjoyment of Divine Bliss. When that silence of solitude takes place within, the soul experiences such a rest that the whole body enters

¹¹⁸ Subida al Monte Carmelo, Book II, Chapter XII, No. 5, page 127

¹¹⁹ Amor de Dios, XI, page 345

¹²⁰ Subida del Monte Carmelo, Book II, Chapter 12, No. 6, page 129

into the same state. In deep meditation, the spirit does not sense any disturbances from the external world.

The Impact of Meditation on the Physical Body The body is very calm. Breathing, which is the delicate thread connecting us to this world, is scarcely perceptible. At times it even ceases, and the soul begins to live the real life, free from the bodily jail which imprisons it.

Meditation, Prayer of Solitude St. John of the Cross explains this prayer further: “It is called secret, because beside the ordinary, it sometimes absorbs the soul so completely it throws it into a secret abyss, and the soul must struggle to see how far away it is from other beings. It seems as though it is being placed in a very profound and broad solitude where no human creature can reach, as in an immense desert which has no end; it is more enjoyable, more delicious more loving when it is more profound, broad and alone, where the soul sees itself so secretly over all other temporal Creatures.”¹²¹

For the soul, material things are only means by which to make this terrestrial life more tolerable. But above these means it intuitively knows of things which are infinitely greater. These things Paul refers to when, quoting Isaiah, he mentions “what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived of, what God has prepared for those that love him.”¹²²

Meditation, or Mystical Prayer Meditation is also called mystical prayer. Why? The Greek word “mystikos” means “secret,” “mysterious,” “hidden.” In the East we would say “esoteric.” This prayer takes place in the deepest, the most hidden pan of our soul. In this prayer, the soul is expecting something which the soul itself does not know about. It can only intuit at the distance that something will come to pass.

Role of the Guru in God’s Work The masters, the Gurus, prepare their disciples carefully and patiently for what they call “initiation.” When they believe it is time to initiate the disciple, they invoke the presence of God, masters, the angels and other protective souls so that they will takeover the task that does not belong to the guru anymore. The guru’s role is therefore not what many students of certain mystical schools believe or think it to be: to grant the disciple the Realization they have themselves (when they are real masters, of course). The mission of the guru is only to prepare the disciple so that God’s action may find no obstacle, so that God may take him under his guidance and permanently guide him through meditation. No guru has the power to make God act in the disciple. This is God’s task only.

The guru who ignores this is simply a filibuster and a liar.

¹²¹ Noche Obscura, Book II, Chapter XVII, No. 6, page 535

¹²² 1 Corinthians 11, 9

The Guru is Only God's Collaborator In other words, a guru is only a collaborator in God's work, a minister of his, an instrument in his hands. This is sincerely felt by the real "guru."

The Initiate Paul, referring to this mission of the guru, expresses the following: "For when one says, 'I belong to Paul' and another, 'I belong to Apollos,' are you not merely men? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned you to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters are equal to God, and each shall receive his wages according to his labor. For we are fellow workers for God: you are God's field, God's building."¹²³

He who meditates must wait patiently for God to manifest himself to him, to take him over, to guide him. He must not merely remain in a state of passive inactivity, he must try to make an effort to open the eyes of the spirit. Only then will the promise of the Lord become effective: "For every one who asks, receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened."¹²⁴

The meditator reaches God, and it is from Him that he receives the proper "initiation" into His mysteries. And it is logical that this will only happen when the soul is willing.

Sublime Ignorance in Finding God For this encounter, for this intimate communion with Him, Dionysius, the pseudo-Areopagite and the first to use the word "mystic" in the West, says the spirit must find itself in sublime ignorance. This means that the soul must set aside all knowledge of him that has been accumulated through merely human efforts.

This happy and absolute ignorance is a "transcending of science," and why? Because God's wisdom in which the soul shares infinitely surpasses any knowledge acquired through personal effort.

When the Messiah appeared, John the Baptist announced: "He must increase, but I must decrease."¹²⁵

This is the secret for our beloved God to manifest himself unto us: allow Him to grow. That is, we must give way, remove all obstacles so that His action will not be disturbed.

Everybody Can Meditate It is time to ask ourselves: is it difficult to meditate? Is it only for certain privileged spirits? Can everybody meditate? Yes, everyone can. Meditation or contemplative prayer is not only for a few privileged souls, as many may think and may have written, without having any experience with it.

All Eastern mystics, absolutely all of them, teach their disciples this prayer. They all train them in meditation. Our Western mystics also agree that a reflective prayer is only a means for reaching a contemplative prayer.

Contemplative prayer is the goal: all good-willing souls reach it.

¹²³ 1 Corinthians III, 4-9

¹²⁴ Matthew VII, 8

¹²⁵ John III, 30

We shall explain a clear and easy method of meditation, so that the sincere seeker may find God.

The only requirement is to be willing, and to make a small effort. This will be amply rewarded.

Chapter Nine – How to meditate

The goal of Meditation is to reach God, to attune to him. For this we must follow certain rules: very simple, but very effective rules. Dear reader, we are here summarizing some of the topics already explained, and we are adding explanations about the immediate preparation for meditation.

We must be careful about:

1. the appropriate place
2. the body posture
3. control of respiration
4. the appropriate time for meditation
5. the duration of meditation
6. attitude of the mind
7. body relaxation
8. attitude of the soul
9. repetition of the MANTRA
10. AUM MEDITATION
11. Kriya Yoga Initiation

* * * * *

The appropriate place for meditation

The most important thing for successful meditation is to choose an appropriate place.

When Lord Jesus meditated, He did not do it in the midst of noise, near the crowd of followers. He even left His own disciples to be alone, completely alone. It was He and His Father, His Father and He. His prayer was one of complete, absolute, perfect identification with the Father. This is why from the depth of his soul He said:

“I and the Father are one.”¹²⁶ “All mine are thine and thine are mine.”¹²⁷ “I pray you Father, that they may be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee.”¹²⁸ His

¹²⁶ John X, 30

prayer and fast of forty days also took place in an isolated place, in a desert, where nothing or no one could disturb him.¹²⁹

After His miraculous multiplication of the bread and fish, He dismissed the people and went up into the hills to pray alone.¹³⁰

In the garden of Gethsemane, which is far from the city of Jerusalem, He used to pray frequently. When He suffered the intense agony hours before being betrayed, He retired to that same place with His closest disciples. Then He left them and prayed.

Some Other Examples Before his enlightenment, Buddha also went to the desert. There, together with the yogis, brahmacharyas and chiksus, Buddha, with great devotion and decisiveness, underwent sacrifices of the body and profound meditation on the abstract truths.

St. Francis of Assisi, a Western Saint very well-known, loved and worshipped in India, also used to retire to isolated places to pray. Once, during Lent, he asked to be taken to an isolated island, totally uninhabited, next to the lake of Perugia. In that place he fasted like Christ did, eating nothing but half a loaf of bread in forty days.

If we analyze the lives of other ascetics and saints, we can confirm this fact: they always had a calm and isolated place for meditation. The great Eastern yogis retire to the most confined places, where no human noise can be heard, or reach them, to the inaccessible heights of the Himalayas, to devote themselves to meditation and contemplation. Furthermore, many of them lived in small caves with only a small window through which they received food from the outside.

These facts clearly demonstrate that those who want to meditate choose the most appropriate place.

Our Temples Are Not Suitable for Meditation And what about our Temples? Unfortunately, very few of them are suitable for meditation. All the ones open to devotees have become merely places for celebrating different acts of Liturgy, such as Masses, rosary prayers, sacramental ceremonies, and so on. Thus, they are not suitable for devotees to retreat into profound, silent meditation. In addition, our temples are built in the hearts of towns. Obviously, the noise of human business surrounds them.

Choosing the Appropriate Place What next? It would be advisable to have special places far from worldly noise, and to dedicate them exclusively for meditation. One of the major concerns of our fellowship is finding hidden, quiet places and rooms used exclusively for meditation.

Our temples should have a chapel or special meditation room available, if possible, exclusively to meditators. We should start a campaign for this. As a rule, our students

¹²⁷ John XVII, 10

¹²⁸ John XVII, 21

¹²⁹ Matthew IV, 1-2

¹³⁰ Matthew XIV, 23

have their own special rooms for meditation, just as they have a dining room, a bedroom, a living room, a study, and so on.

Dear friend, if you really want to attain all the blessings of transcendental life, the real and changeless life which will open doors of true happiness for you ... then you must begin by choosing the correct place to meditate. Without this, your desire to improve will remain false and illusory. You will never be able to soar and elevate your soul into the eternal castles.

Body posture

Traditionally, we kneel when we pray in the West. In the East, meditation is done in the lotus posture. In this posture, you cross your legs and your insteps are placed on the thighs at the level of the groin. The soles of the feet face upward. The arms must be kept relaxed. Hands rest on the legs. The thumbs and index fingers must remain with the fingertips touching.

Here are some practical rules:

- a. Adopt the posture that is best for you. Westerners usually sit.
- b. Choose a bench or a chair without a back.
- c. The spine must be completely straight.
- d. The eyes must be closed, always looking towards the midpoint between the eyebrows.
- e. Once the most convenient meditation posture has been adopted, be quiet during the entire time you are meditating.
- f. If you are doing group meditation, whatever movement you make will disturb others.
- g. Always stay relaxed. Tension distracts the mind and makes meditation more difficult.

The second book of the Yoga aphorisms of Patanjali insists upon the need to maintain a stable, immobile position with the physical body while meditating, so that the astral body, or emotional body, remains under complete control. Stability and comfort must be achieved with effort, and by concentrating the mind on the Infinite.

Many students, especially elderly women, have asked me if they can meditate lying down. I have answered them that it is very difficult to make good progress in meditation in this posture.

Every student of Yoga knows that along the spinal cord are located the chakras or nadhis. According to the Easterners, there are more than thirty thousand nadhis, having three main currents. Obviously, if they are not free, or if the vertebrae are under pressure, it may disturb and distract you. Meditating lying down is not the best thing to do, but it is better than not meditating at all.

Control of respiration

Now that you have adopted the best posture, you must control respiration. How? Follow these practical rules:

- a. Observe your respiration. Observe how the air flows in and out of your nostrils and how it circulates through your respiratory system. Breathe deeply three times and see how your chest expands and how the diaphragm is raised.
- b. Observe the two modes of your breathing: inhalation (absorbtion of air) and exhalation (expulsion of air).
- c. When inhaling, mentally repeat the word HONG; when exhaling, mentally repeat the word SOO.
- d. Coordinate inhalation and exhalation with these two key words.
- e. Repeat HONG-SOO each time you inhale and exhale.
- f. Do this for ten or fifteen minutes. Every time you repeat these two words, you will feel satisfied and will want to continue the technique.
- g. Now you may continue with the next step in meditation (which will be explained later in this book). Hong-Soo are two Sanskrit words meaning “We are one.” We say this when addressing God. When we are meditating, let’s think that we are trying to identify with him.

These words are taught in the meditation method of Self-Realization Fellowship founded by Paramahansa Yogananda, a yogi saint of our times.

Some Tibetan Schools use HUM-SAA instead of HONG-SOO.

The Name of Jesus Westerners who are not familiar with Eastern techniques or Eastern Sanskrit terms may, coordinating with inhalation and exhalation, say the holy name of JE-SUS, or simply the Latin name, JE-SU. Upon hearing the name Jesus, every knee in heaven, on Earth, and below Earth should fall on the ground.¹³¹ According to Peter before the Sanhedrin, “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we may be saved.”¹³²

St. Yves d’Alveydre studies this name in his book “L’Archeometre,” and explains the meaning of the first letter Y, I, J: “This letter is the first one in the Land of the Living. It commands the Trigone of the Northern Solstice, the Word and the Incarnation of the living. It is the royal letter of the archeometric system of the ancient patriarchs and of its solar and solar-lunar alphabets.”

¹³¹ Philipians II, 10

¹³² Acts IV, 12

It is the first letter of the name of the Father and the Son. They are both substantial. Their note is the basic “Sol”, whereon the whole Sonometry is built as well as the whole musical system of the Archeometer. Its number is ten, its color blue, its zodiacal sign Virgo, its planet Mercury; its Archangel is Raphael Trismegist, also called Hamaliel by the Chaldeans.

In the Old Liturgy, it corresponds to the time of the Assumption between the 15th and 21st of August.¹³³ In Sanskrit, this same zodiacal letter means the Spiritual Master, the Holy Sacrifice, the Sacrificial Action, the cry of prayer and adoration.

In Hebrew, it is equivalent to the divine power manifested. God in action by His Word — the Divine Statement, the Uniting Power, the Gift, the Glorification, the Messenger who departs, the one destined to return.

The combination of the letters Y-S-H-O (JESU-JESUS) means, in Hebrew, the God-Man, the God-Savior, the God of Mankind, Jesus. In Vedic and Sanskrit, it means “Universal Soul Offered in Sacrifice.” In Egyptian and Ethiopian: the God-Man.¹³⁴

These citations clearly reveal that this holy name has formidable power. For this reason, he who repeats it during meditation is attuning himself to a vibration of Infinite Power. This is why many of our saints repeated this name many times.

If you choose to repeat this holy name during meditation, repeat the syllable **JE** when inhaling, and the syllable **SU** when exhaling, thus speaking the complete name. Continue this with each inhalation and exhalation.

Appropriate time of day for meditation

Choose the most appropriate hour. It may be in the morning before you go to work, or at night before going to bed. Discipline yourself; otherwise, you are heading for failure. If you leave it for tomorrow, tomorrow may never come.

Everything is difficult at the beginning. By and by, acquiring a good habit and remaining faithful to practicing it will strengthen your will, and you will attain your desired results.

The duration of meditation

Meditation should last at least thirty minutes. If we want immediate results, we must meditate at least an hour a day, because, since we are trying to form a new habit and catch up for lost time. Let’s bear this rule in mind: the longer we meditate, the faster our spiritual progress will be. Less time, less progress; more time, more progress.

¹³³ Confert. L’Archeometre. St. Yves D’Alveydre, pages 187,188.

¹³⁴ Confert. page 193

The attitude of the mind

During meditation, the mind does not need to be engaged in any thought or particular idea. Neither does it need to reflect or make decisions, as when preparing for a speech or meeting.

Many people believe that meditation is thinking, and relating ideas around a previously chosen central topic.

Let's remember what St. Teresa de Jesus tells us in that beautiful analogy of the water taken from the well.

He who meditates does not need to take the trouble — wrenching and exhausting — of trying to squeeze the mind as you would squeeze a lemon (if the comparison fits) to obtain a result.

One must leave the mind calm, very calm. Imagine that we are a planted field. The field needs sunshine, lots of sunshine, and also a lot of rain. He, our Beloved Father, is the sun and the rain. Let Him act in us and through us, like the sun and the rain on the field. Let us be happy being God's field. That is enough. In time, it will bear much fruit. And what is that result? He shall reveal himself unto us. He shall reveal himself more and more, as long as we remove all obstacles.

The tendency of the mind is to wander around. It is restless day and night, since it does not need the rest the body needs. During meditation, as during any other activity, the mind will roam from one subject to another. To keep it calm, quiet and under control, mentally repeat HONG-SOO or JE-SU.

The mind must be focused on these words. Whenever it becomes distracted, repeat these words paying even more attention. This is the most scientific and easy way of meditating. This method has been proven by the Eastern mystics for thousands of years.

Body relaxation

As we have said, relaxing the body means eliminating tensions created by modern life. An agitated life alters the nervous system. When the meditator sets out to meditate before first removing those tensions, he does not obtain the immediate result that meditation can produce. Because of this, many schools of Eastern Mysticism advise their students to practice relaxation of different parts of the body immediately before practicing meditation. We recommend that you study the illustration and that you practice the relaxation techniques in the order in which we present them.

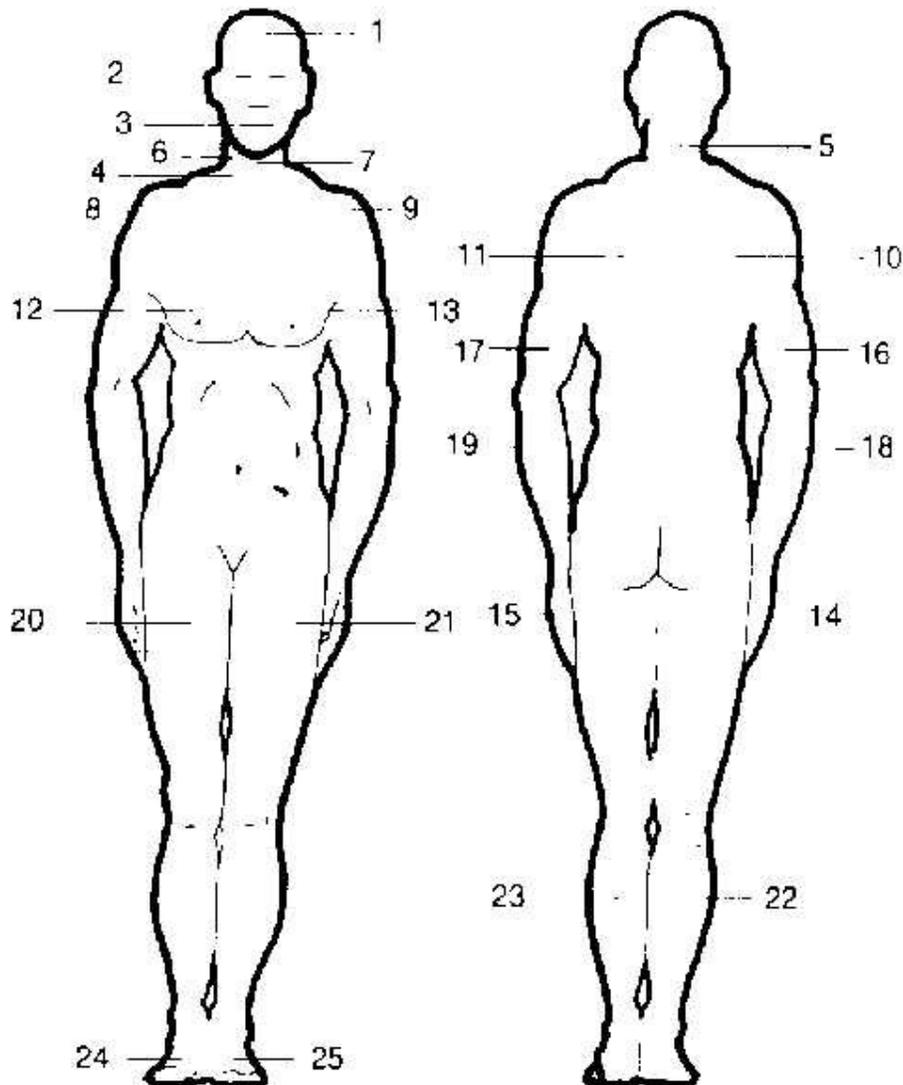
This technique must be done the following way:

Relax your forehead (1), eyes (2), mouth (3), throat (4), neck (5), right side of neck (6), left side of neck (7), right shoulder (8), left shoulder (9), right back (10), left back (11), right chest (12), left chest (13), right hand (14), left hand (15), right arm (16), left arm (17), right forearm (18), left forearm (19), right thigh (20), left thigh (21), right calf (22), left calf (23), right foot (24), left foot (25).

When you have finished relaxing your left foot, start relaxing all the other parts again in the opposite sequence, ending with your forehead.

Control your breathing with HONG -SOO. Then repeat the OM or the “mantram” you have chosen for your meditation, as indicated in numbers III and IX of this chapter.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE



Attitude of the soul

We do not refer to the mind and spirit as different or antagonistic faculties. The mind is the instrument of the soul. We make this distinction for a better understanding of the technique of meditation.

The spirit is the whole. The mind is a part of it. The soul that is, everything that constitutes our spiritual Being — must try to remain calm during meditation.

The first step is to repeat the two words given earlier, and to synchronize it with your breathing.

The next step is to repeat the word or phrase which constitutes the “core” of meditation.

Repetition of the mantra

What is a mantram? Originally, the mantram was one of the Vedic hymns of the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries before Christ.

In the common Eastern language, it is a word or sacred formula that, when repeated during meditation, attunes us to God.

During meditation, Easterners repeat only this word, this same sacred formula, throughout meditation. This is the secret of meditation, since through it they know they will sooner or later approach the Divine Source, and then take all the water they want. They know that attuning to God — Source of Existence, happiness and Power — by a kind of osmosis, becoming pervaded by him, they may say like Paul of Tarsus, speaking of Christ’s presence in him: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives within me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”¹³⁵

Easterners call the Lord, by always repeating the same call. They do not need to tell God that they are missing this or that, about this or that problem, or about this or that state of mind: he knows all that. That’s why the Lord, referring to the gentiles of yesterday and today, says: “For the gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But first seek his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”¹³⁶

All Eastern mystic schools advise their disciples to repeat a mantram.

Mantram and Guru Realization There are gurus who teach a different mantram to each student. Beware of the pseudo-gurus, or pseudo-instructors, who take advantage of the disciple’s candor or the sincerity of many God-seekers, and who, using the excuse of giving them the Sacred Word — teaching them any exotic word, generally in an Eastern language, but preferably in Sanskrit — get, in return, a considerable amount of

¹³⁵ Galatians II, 20

¹³⁶ Matthew VI, 32-33

money. Even today these frauds are committed. We must be alert to people who commercialize the sacred.

For our readers to have an idea of the above, we give here some Mantrams used in meditation by several Eastern schools.

Because of some “covenant of loyalty”, some of them are not revealed to the public. But we must note that there is no mantram on this planet Earth that can give realization to anyone. In other words, no mantram will perform the miracle of leading us to God unless we live our lives following God’s blessed Divine Laws. I know many people who avidly learned the mantram as if it were something that could change them between morning and night. What a disillusionment. They remain as empty as before — even more so: disappointed and frustrated. Many people go from school to school on a mantram hunt, to try to see if one is better than the other one. Absurd! This is naive and ignorant. For three years Judas, the traitor, shared with Christ. It was not because he had been with the Infinite holiness, Love and Kindness that he ceased to be what he was.

Hare Krishna Mantram

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness, founded by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, prescribes the following mantram:

HARE KRISHNA, HARE KRISHNA,
KRISHNA KRISHNA, HARE HARE
HARE RAMA, HARE RAMA,
RAMA RAMA, HARE HARE

This mantram is a devotional invocation to Lord Krishna, considered a divine incarnation in the Orient.

Mantram of Ogamisama Some time ago, I personally met — and attended the lectures of — a woman saint who made a tour of good will throughout almost all the countries of the world, as a leader of peace. She taught her followers a mantram for world peace. The mantram, in Japanese, is as follows:

NA-MYO-HO-REN-GE-KYIO

The instructions given by her for the repetition of this prayer are as follows:

1. Clap hands twice; close your eyes slowly; and raise hands together to the level of the eyes.
2. Sing the prayer out loud — not very loud, but clearly.
3. Repeat it for ten minutes.
4. To finish, clap hands twice again.

This prayer is especially known in Japan, the homeland of Ogamisama.

Sri Ramakrishna's Mantram Ramakrishna, one of the most famous nineteenth century saints of the East, who we have quoted many times in this book, had seven mantrams:

1. BRAHMA-ATMA-BHAGAVAN (The real I and the Personal God are Three in One and One in Three)
2. BHAGAVATA-BHAKTA-BHAGAVAN (Word, Devotee and Personal God are Three in One and One in Three)
3. BRAHMA-SHAKTI-TANTRA-GITA-GAYATRI (God, the Absolute and the Creative Energy are One and the same)
4. VEDE-PURANA-TANTRA-GITA-GAYATRI (God of the Scriptures and of the holy Texts)
5. SARANAGATA-SARANAGATA (I am sheltered in you. I am yours. I am yours)
6. NAHAM-NAHAM, TUHU-TUHU (Not I, not I, only You, only You)
7. AMI-YANTRA, TUMI-YANTRA (I am the machine, You direct me)

The Mantram of Certain Tibetan Schools Some Tibetan schools use this mantram: OM, MANI, PADME, HUM. The literal translation would be: "I am the lotus jewel and in him I will remain."

The lotus flower is the most perfect devotional symbol chosen by the Eastern mystics to signify the total, absolute, complete dependence of the whole cosmos upon God. It also represents man's dependence and his intimate relationship with the whole.

There is a central part in the lotus that the common man does not know about, a cosmic, priceless point. It is here where the secret union between God and man, between Infinite and finite, between Divine Greatness and human smallness, takes place. The mantric formula expresses the desire to always remain there, in that essential spot where the human and the Divine meet.

Word for word, it would mean:

OM The supreme Power

MANI Corresponds to the word or Second Logos, which we invoke with all its meaning.

PADME The archetypes and the germinal ideas; the primary patterns where all beings are printed in the Divine Mind.

HUM Omnipresent Cosmic Consciousness

Cherenz Lind, in his book "AUM or Formula of Power" speaks of this mantram: "This allegory must be placed in a preferred place among the most beautiful produced by mythology. Furthermore, it contains a true essence worth studying, since it envelops a

deep spiritual, magical and physical meaning. It is no exaggeration when it is said that it contains a whole cosmology course in mystical terms. It refers to the power of sound, color and number, which are the three matrix mold of the manifested Universe.

Its number is 214, which is the sum of the functional possibilities in the planes of manifestation, in psychological terms.”¹³⁷

The Mantram of the Hindu Schools Some Hindu schools use this Mantram: OM, TAT, SAT.

This mantric formula means: “I am the one I am.” Similar sacred words were spoken by Jehovah on Mt. Sinai when Moses asked him: “What is your name?” And God said to him: “I am who I am. And he said: “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.”¹³⁸

This is the formula which expresses the DIVINE ABSOLUTE ESSENCE and evokes the Undefinable, the Undemonstrable, the one that exists in himself and for himself, the Beginning without beginning, the Source and Origin of every being, the Father from whom the word of God originates, the holy Ghost, the Immanent, Absolute Existence, who needed no one to be, nor of himself, for he never needed to be, because HE IS ALWAYS. For him there is no past. For him there is no future, he is in himself and in everything, actually Absolute, without any lapse before or after.

Word by word, it means:

OM Supreme power

TAT The supreme essence, absolute reality, full intelligence, sptnt in immortal reality, the nectar and ambrosia, the celestial matrix wherein life germinated.

SAT Eternal rest, immanent calmness, paradise, motionless motor.

There are other schools which use this mantram:

OM, MUNI MUNI

MAHA MUNI

SWAHA

This formula is an invocation of the Divine Power reflected in its Word which is built into man, and joins man in order to raise him and communicate to him what he is and what he possesses.

Cabbalistic Mantram The Jewish Cabbala teaches the invocation of this mantram, which explains the purest divine essence:

¹³⁷ Confert L'Archeometre. St. Yves D'Alveydre, pages 76 and 71

¹³⁸ Exodus III, 14

AIM, SOPH, AUR. **AIM** means Absolute Purity; **SOPH** the Unlimited, the Infinite; and **AUR** the Light in its Unlimited Power. These words designate Divine Essence, Indivisible and Inaccessible to created intelligence: the Great Mystery of God which is unimaginable.

The Tetragrammaton This is the sacred name composed of the following Hebrew letters: **Iod, He, Vau, He** — the whole is **JHVH**. Primitive Hebrew has no vowels. The mazoete monks added dots to the square letters of this right-to-left writing in order to indicate vowels. Thus, they dotted the four letters of the Sacred Name resulting in: **Je Ho Va H** or **Ja H Ve H** — or simply **YaHVe(H)**.

The Bible repeats this sacred Name more than six thousand times, meaning: “I am the one I am.” The pronunciation of the holy Tetragrammaton was forbidden to the Israelites. They feared it. It was used in theurgy, in exorcism and in conjurings as an extraordinary power.

The real pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, according to Jewish Cabbalists, is one of the arcana of the mysteries. Only the high priest knew it. He pronounced the Sacred Name when he entered the Sancta Sanctorum alone once a year. In reality, it is difficult to know what the real pronunciation was, not only of the Tetragrammaton, but also of the whole Hebrew Bible, because of the absence of vowels. The mazoetic punctuation is only a guide.

Meditating on AUM or OM

Now let us examine meditation on the Sacred Word AUM or OM. It is called the Lost Word, the word that only high Initiates could speak, or the hierophants when celebrating the sacred rites in their temples. Until not long ago this word was not known outside of certain spiritual circles, and was not written — only passed on orally by Masters to their disciples when they were duly prepared. Today, those who have some knowledge of Eastern meditation techniques use this mantram.

Certain esoteric schools — due either to a profound reverence to this mantram or because of a certain vanity or independence of their Masters and founders — have deleted it from their mantric invocations and substituted it with another one. But most of the schools preserve this mantram as a unique meditation formula. Our fellowship practices this mantram for individual or group meditations.

Origin and Meaning Let’s briefly explain its origin and meaning. OM, or AUM, is a Sanskrit work known long before the Brahmanic Trinity: Brahma-Shiva-Vishnu. Analyzed in its primitive letters, A-U-M means the following:

“**A**”, morphologically adamic, designates the light beam which contains all ideas, and all the facts and subject matter of science. This letter corresponds to number one in the Hebrew alphabet. It is the first letter in “Adam” and the second letter in the name “Mana

For the alchemists, the letter “A” was the synonym for the philosophers’ stone. Since the Council of Nicea (325 A. D.), the letter “A” appears as the symbol of Christ’s Divinity. The Apocalypse tells about Him three times: “I am the A and the Omega” (Alpha and Omega) as the symbol of Christ’s Divinity. The Mozarabian liturgy also uses this symbol: Alpha and Omega.

When the letter “A” is pronounced with the letter “U”, they blend into an “O”. This is the reason why this sacred hierogram is pronounced **OM**.

The letter “A” means Unity and Universality in Greek, Sanskrit and Vedic: it’s like the axis, the moving circle, the brilliant wheel where all things turn.

The letters “O” and “U” mean divine sensitivity, the Light invisible to the eyes of the flesh, the sound inaudible to the ears of the body: the Primary principle of sight, hearing and taste.

The letter “O” is the third letter in the name of Jesus the Word — **ISHO, IPHO** — and the second in the name of the Holy Ghost — **ROuH ALaHIM**.

It is the key letter unifying all of the solar languages. It corresponds to the number 6, which the ancient esoteric schools say means binder, or the one that unifies. It is the musical note FA. Its zodiacal sign is TAURUS. Its planet VENUS Divine, whose Angel is Hamiel; Intelligence is Hagiël, its Spirit Nogael.

Letter “M” is the royal letter in the lunar alphabets. Even though it corresponds to neither Divine Principle nor Divine Biology, origin of all life, it expresses the natural origin of the embriogenic physiology of the World, whence all existence emanates in time. It does not correspond to the wisdom of God in whom every thought is an Eternal Reality; however, it relates to the human mentality, where every conception is abstract.

Its number is 40; its color ocean green. Its zodiacal sign is Scorpio. Its day planet is Mars, which has two angels: Kamael the physical love of the specie ruling generation; and Samael, leader of Death. Graphiel is its Intelligence; Mochimel its planetary spirit.

In Sanskrit this letter expresses the following: Time, Measurement, Reflected Light, Reflection, Water.

In Hebrew: Embriogenic Power, Evolution in time and in space, and Possibility and Question.¹³⁹

AUM and AMEN Aum corresponds to the Hebrew word A ‘MN, or Amen, which means to “keep, to be safe, to be firm, to support.” It is constantly found in the Old Testament. It is repeated in the Gospels about seventy-three times. Mysterious word; epilogue and summary of life through the centuries and of all the cosmic sounds which arise from the boundaries of eternity; affirmation of all the preaching, life and redeeming work of Jesus Christ, Absolute witness of Truth.

It also has the following meanings:

- a) Seal of a document, a covenant or sacred alliance¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Confert L’Archeometre. St. Yves D’Alveydre, pages 189, 206

- b) Testimony, affirmation or confession of Truth¹⁴¹
- c) Fervent desire that something may come true¹⁴²
- d) The respect of Divine Will¹⁴³
- e) Final word of prayer or doxology to express the desire that whatever is expressed be fulfilled¹⁴⁴

In the Jewish liturgy of the synagogue, and in the different Christian liturgies (Eastern, Greek, and Latin), it is used as an optional final confirmation. In the Jewish rite it is sung or recited to conclude the prayers said by the rabbi, as response or affirmation to the blessings of the priest. When people answer Amen in the great synagogue of Alexandria, a flag is waved as a signal of Jehovah's covenant with his people and his protection of them.

The Moslem liturgy translates AUM into AMIN and uses it in liturgical acts. In the Apostles' letters, this word is used in the liturgical sense of praising and blessing God.¹⁴⁵

Other times it expresses desire, omen, congratulations.¹⁴⁶ St. Paul attributes a special strength to this word. As it means the "Yes" spoken by God to all his promises.¹⁴⁷ It is the word of faith in the true God.

The OM or AUM in Isaiah and in the Book of Revelation There are two passages where this word is given special value, one in Isaiah and one in the book of Revelation. Isaiah says: "So that he that blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of truth, and he that takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of truth, because the former troubles are forgotten and hidden from my eyes."¹⁴⁸

Here, AMEN is equivalent to God-Truth, God who cannot deceive or shut his eyes from the Truth, he who is knows everything, and he alone may bless, according to the Absolute Knowledge. When John was sent by God's spirit to give his message and testimony to Jesus, he wrote to the Laodicean Church: "And to the angel of the Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.'"¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁰ Deuteronomy XXVII, 14,15

¹⁴¹ Numbers V,16

¹⁴² Judith V, 5

¹⁴³ Jeremiah XI, 5

¹⁴⁴ II Esdras VIII, 6

¹⁴⁵ Romans I, 25

¹⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians

¹⁴⁷ 2 Corinthians I, 20

¹⁴⁸ Isaiah LXV, 16

¹⁴⁹ Revelation III, 14

In this text of the book of Revelation, the word AMEN is a noun, meaning WITNESS, that is, the person who witnesses or gives testimony of what he has witnessed.

And what does the AMEN witness? It gives testimony of the Great Cosmic Drama of Creation.

The AMEN is the omnipotent God, acting in the events not only in time and space, but in eternity.

It exists always, lives always, works always.

This faithful and true witness is, according to the words of the Initiate Paul, “the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities — all things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things and in Him all things hold together.”¹⁵⁰

This same AMEN, or Faithful and True Witness, beginning of everything created, is described in one of the books of the Old Testament as Wisdom: “Ages ago I became, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs flowing with water. Before the mountains had been formed, before the hills, I was brought forth; before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the world’s dust. When he established the heavens I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he assigned limits to the sea so that the waters may not transgress his command; when he marked out the fountains of the earth, then I was beside him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the sons of men.”¹⁵¹

This witness is described by John in the foreword of his Gospel as the Word who was in God at the beginning. And the Word was God. All things were made through him, and nothing that was made without him existed.¹⁵²

He is the beginning of all life because life was in Him. He is the beginning of all mental and spiritual light because He is the Light that shines in the darkness.¹⁵³

OM or AMEN: The Cosmic Call OM or AMEN is the inner call from the lover to the beloved one. It is the trembling of eternity that beats in time and space; it is the interpenetrating vibration in all things; it is the cosmic force that keeps everything in existence that exists. It is the glory of God manifested in all creation.

When this name is repeated during meditation, this repetition is the call. It is the constant heartbeat of the ever-present God here in time and space where the great Cosmic Drama of our short existence unfolds. And beyond, in the unexplorable abysses of Eternity which we tiny creatures can hardly see, there God lives His own life.

The repetition of the sacred word is like converting our internal receiver to pick up the Divine Wave.

¹⁵⁰ Colossians I, 15-17

¹⁵¹ Proverbs VIII, 23-31

¹⁵² John I, 3

¹⁵³ John I, 5

Repeating the Sacred Word is like a blood transfusion to a very sick man. You, I, we all are this very sick man fighting in the state of spiritual coma when divine life does not circulate within us. Repeating the sacred word during meditation is like connecting the electric switch to turn on the light at the beginning of all Light, so that this Divine Light will enlighten our life.

The Sacred Word is like a radar that is showing the safe route to airplanes traveling day and night. Radar, with its blinking signal, connects the airplane with the flight station on earth. God is the station, firmly anchored in His own essence, who, in order to guide us on this physical plane, is constantly sending us His divine signal for us to capture with the radar of our spirit.

This is why Eastern mysticism requires that only OM be repeated during meditation. The purpose of repeating this Sacred Word is to attune ourselves to God.

And here alone lies the secret of our progress along the spiritual path. It is my, your, our task to make this effort, to search for God. In turn, He opens the doors to His kingdom that is, to Himself. Christ says: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks shall find, and to him who knocks it will be opened."¹⁵⁴

By repeating the same mantric formula during meditation, we are trying to identify ourselves, to become One with the One whom we invoke.

Buddhists and Moslems also practice mantric prayer, using rosary beads as they repeat: "Oh you, jewel in the lotus flower." In this prayer the jewel is God. The lotus flower is realization, and is equivalent to saying: "You, of God in me... You, Oh God, in me!"

AUM in the Bhagavad Gita The Bhagavad Gita, the Eastern Bible, requires that the mystical word AUM be repeated silently during Meditation. But first it is important to close the doors and windows of the body, so that one may leave the external world and concentrate internally.

"He who closes all doors of his senses, imprisons his mind in his heart, fixes his vital powers in his head, standing firm in meditation, repeating the monosyllable OM, and continues thus when he is leaving the body, goes to the supreme goal. he who, with heart not distracted toward any other object, meditates through the whole of life, constantly on me, shall surely reach me."¹⁵⁵

Eastern philosophy speaks of days and nights of Brahma. When Brahmas day breaks, all things originate from the Uncreated to Creation. God then turns into the Alpha of the Bible, the Creator, the Beginning. When the night of Brahma falls, all things return from Creation to the Uncreated. God then becomes the Omega of the Bible; that is, the end of all things. The Universe dissolves, but a new Universe comes into existence out of the hands of the Creator.

¹⁵⁴ Matthew VII, 7-8

¹⁵⁵ Bhagavad Gita, United Lodge of Theosophists, Los Angeles. 1920, page 60.

Kriya Yoga initiation

Paramahansa Yogananda deals with the science of Kriya Yoga in his book, "Autobiography of A Yogi," in Chapter XXVI. Kriya Yoga is a very ancient technique taught by Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya's guru, who in turn imparted it to Sri Yukteswar, his disciple, and he in turn initiated Paramahansa Yogananda. Through this technique a Kriya Yogi accelerates his evolution a few years, obtaining the same results that he would otherwise obtain only after hundreds of years of continued effort.

According to Paramahansa Yogananda (Chapter XXVI of "Autobiography of a Yogi"), "the technique must be learned by a Kriyaban or Kriya Yogi; that is, one having learned this technique personally."

Our students know this technique and practice it. This technique is a part of the Initiation, and only those who are really sincere seekers intending to continue in the path of Realization may receive it.

Notice that neither this technique nor any other technique, no matter how advanced it may be, is a substitute for Meditation, which is the technique through which we can contact God.

Chapter Ten – Mantric meditation in Christian mysticism

Repeating the same word or formula during meditation — which Eastern mysticism calls MANTRAM¹⁵⁶ — is a common method of meditation among the greatest mystics of non-Christian schools of the Asian Orient. Still, this practice is not foreign — as one might think — to Christianity.

This mantric prayer was practiced by Christ himself, the Virgin Mary and others in the Bible, as well as by saints. This meditation was common in early Christianity and is currently practiced by the Greek Orthodox Church. The convergence of the mysticism of the great Eastern, non-Christian schools mentioned in this book and the mysticism of the early Fathers of the Christian Church is something over which there can be no possible argument today.

Mantric meditation in the Gospels

As a Master of prayer, Jesus did not neglect man's most important means of reaching God. "And in praying do not pile up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your father knows what you need before you ask him."¹⁵⁷ This is the Golden Rule we must remember if we want to commune with our Father through prayer. The real prayer is the exchange of vibrations between the Divine "I" and the human "I". When the Divine finds no obstacles in attuning to our I, and when our own I (Self) opens to the Divine Light like a flower to daybreak, communion is effective. A meditator reaching that state of mind may very truly say: "it is not I who lives in me, but God." If prayer does not lead us to obtain such a result, then it is proof that the Golden Rule of Christ is not being followed. "Wording" in prayer is superfluous. Reasoning during meditation does not lead one to an experience with God.

Christ taught us through his example to pray without reasoning. To Him, prayer was a matter of opening the heart to God so He may take over and do His work.

The Mantric Prayer of Christ Matthew recounts the prayer offered by Christ in Gethsemane: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."¹⁵⁸ He repeated this prayer from the moment he left his disciples (Peter, James and John) from a distance of a stone's throw, up to the betrayal

¹⁵⁶ MANTRAM: Sanskrit word meaning a sacred word or short phrase repeated during Meditation or Contemplative prayer.

¹⁵⁷ Matthew, 6, 7

¹⁵⁸ Matthew, 26, 39

of Judas. In this prayer, he expresses two fundamental ideas in a two-fold manner: His immanent death, and His total surrender to the Father's saving will.

The Mantric Prayer of Mary The shepherds visiting the newborn Christ Child in the grotto of Bethlehem told Mary of the wonders they had witnessed. She "kept all things, pondering over them in her heart."¹⁵⁹

On what was the mother of Jesus meditating? Simply on that which was being said about her Divine Child. Her mind, her consciousness, her heart, her entire being identified with what the people said about that Child. She centered her joy in the repetition of those same thoughts.

The Mantric Prayer and the Blind Beggar of Jericho There was a blind beggar on the road, in the proximity of Jericho. He heard the crowd and asked who was passing by. They told him it was Jesus of Nazareth. Then he started crying: "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me." And those in front of him rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he just cried out all the more. The same cry, the same invocation, the same prayer. "Son of David, have mercy on me."¹⁶⁰ It is another example of mantric prayer uttered by a soul in need. It consisted of a total identification of the sick man's faith to Christ's power. And that repetitive prayer obtained the miracle.

The Mantric Prayer of the Canaanite Woman The Canaanite woman asked the Lord to free her daughter from a demon. Desperate, she cried: "Have mercy on me, Oh Lord, Son of David."¹⁶¹

The Lord did not answer her at all. He was testing her faith. His disciples approached Him, saying: "Send her away, for she is crying after us." According to the Gospels, that woman did not stop repeating that same invocation until the Lord told her: "Oh woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Some Other Mantric Prayers Mantric prayer is also practiced by the priest and audience at the beginning of Mass, when he prays: "Lord, have mercy on us; Christ, have mercy on us." This is repeated six times.

Since ancient times, in the so-called litanies, the priest makes an invocation and the chorus answers several times to the same prayer. This prayer varies according to whom it is directed to. If it is directed to God or one of the divine persons, the chorus says:

"Have mercy on us If it is directed to a saint, the chorus says: "Pray for us."

Like Moslems and Buddhists, Catholics maintain the Rosary as a favorite prayer. In this prayer you repeat the Ave Maria many times, and sometimes the doxology, to the Holy

¹⁵⁹ Luke, 2,19

¹⁶⁰ Luke 18, 35-39

¹⁶¹ Matthew 15, 22

Trinity: Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Holy Rosary is also a mantric prayer.

Christian Mysticism also advises us to use a short, fervent prayer (Jaculatoria). This is a repetition of an invocation to God or to saints.

Our Catholic saints used and recommended this prayer. St. Margarita Maria de Alacoque asked the Lord to teach her what He wanted her to express in prayer, and the Lord answered her: “Say only these words: My God, my only, my everything. You are everything to me, and I am all for you.”

St. Juana Francisca Fremiot de Chantal consulted her spiritual director, St. Francis de Sales, on whether it was appropriate to abandon all reasoning during prayer to contemplate God and devote herself entirely to His Will. He answered: “I advise you only to remain in Him or by His side, doing nothing and requiring Him to do nothing, unless he demands it from you. Don’t retreat back to yourself; rather, remain there, next to Him.”

She then practiced her mantric prayer: “My God and my Everything.” Then she admitted: “If we would only repeat these words while praying, we would never become bored.”

Let us recall Christ’s advice: “And in Prayer do not pile up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words.”

Mantric prayer was a common practice not only among the fathers of the early church, but also among the monks and congregation as we learn from many documents of that time.¹⁶² St. Macarius the Great, St. Basil, St. Gregory Naciancense, St. Gregory of Nice and many others practiced it and advised others to practice it, as we shall see later in this book.

The above shows the constant use of mantric prayer in the East and in the West. For all these reasons, if you closely follow this method, you shall conclude that meditation is not a difficult — much less an impossible — task. With a little effort and the natural enthusiasm with which you perform an important task, we easily learn to meditate. This will help you solve the most important problem in your life: finding yourself.

Mantric prayer in the Early Church

The Boom of Eastern Meditation The fact that gurus, sannyasins, renunciants, masters — or however one may prefer to call them — come from the East, and especially from India, is indeed an extraordinary phenomenon. They come along to teach methods which have been forgotten or ignored by the very people who ought to know all about how early Christian mystics practiced these very methods of prayer. Day by day, followers or friends of the teachings of Yoga and Zen meditation grow in numbers, for seekers avidly demand the teaching of such methods. This fact is so revealing that many researchers of the West believe that they have gone too far and that Christianity —

¹⁶² See Philocalia, Prayer of the Heart, Advice To Ascetics, Yogi and Hesychasm of Flavio Poli. Editrice missinaria Italiana

especially the Church — is risking the loss of its own identity on the path of the search for God to these methods.

The Longing for God in Our Youth Youths are notorious for their fascination and eagerness in knowing and practicing these methods of Eastern Meditation. One can no longer ignore the fact that today's youth — I refer particularly to Western youths — are saturated at all levels with the pressure of technical advances and pressure to pursue the accumulation of physical comforts. Without a religious praxis that would help them to overcome problems, they are heirs to a very intellectual religion which has reduced its faith in God to an acquisition of several dogmatic principles totally divorced from practical life.. . Youths search anxiously for something substantial to serve a profound quest and to solve the frustrations of their inner lives. I believe that a major cause for suicide and drug abuse by youths is this lack of an inner life. This is why great numbers of youths — especially European and American — move to India in search of masters who will show them how to experience God. Furthermore, the very serious crisis which the Church itself is undergoing in the world is due to the lack of prayer and the superficiality of Christian life⁷

Undoubtedly, today's youth is profoundly religious, having a natural and spontaneously open disposition toward God's affairs. It is true that long ago the monks used to retire to the deserts in solitude in order to have communion with God. Yet today these monks are represented by the crowds of young men and women vibrating on the same religious wave length as these monks of long ago. When they play chords on their musical instruments in a theater, field, church or stadium; while they sing their songs to the Christ of the centuries the only One to understand them in their own way — they are performing a prayer as these monks did when they went to the desert. Our youth do not question. Rather, they insistently seek the techniques of yoga and zen meditation as a solution to their spiritual needs.

Hesychasm, a Christian Counterpart to Yoga A monk in the Creek Orthodox Church wrote: "Hesychasm is the Christian counterpart of Yoga which relocates man for a personal reencounter, very properly biblical and graceful, for an exploration of internalization most probably practiced also by Asiatic spiritualities. And this is due to the structure of man himself, created in God's image... Because only Christ may recapitulate everything and place everything in its real place, Hesychasm appears fundamentally Christian-like, as an ascesis having as its goal the acting realization of the Church."¹⁶³

We do not agree with this concept. Hesychasm — as we shall see later — cannot be taken at all as a challenge to the millenary methods of the mysticism of the great non-Christian schools of the East. Likewise, the methods of meditation taught by yoga and zen cannot be considered a challenge to Christianity. The meditation methods of yoga, zen and Christianity pursue the same goal: the search and encounter with God. These methods are essentially the same.

¹⁶³ The Prayer of the Heart by a monk of the Eastern Church and Olivier Clement. Ed. Lumen, 1981 — Buenos Aires, Argentina, page 93

To Acknowledge, Observe and Promote the Spiritual and Moral Values of Other Religions One of the most important documents of the Second Vatican Council related to the ecumenical movement is the Declaration of “Nostra Aetate,” which concerns the relationships between the Church and non-Christian religions. The Fathers of the Concilium firmly state that this declaration is the work of the Holy Spirit and the Council. It was born from unforeseen circumstances, and superbly summarizes the attitude regarding the non-Christian religions, particularly Hinduism, Buddhism and Mohammedanism: “The Catholic Church does not reject anything sacred and true existing in these (non-Christian) religions. It respects the styles of acting and living, their tenets and doctrines, which, although they differ much from what it teaches and professes, often reflect the same sparks of Truth which enlighten all men.” It continues: “It therefore admonishes its children to cautiously and charitably — through dialogue and collaboration with the adepts of other religions, giving testimony of Christian faith and life — ACKNOWLEDGE, OBSERVE AND PROMOTE the spiritual, moral, social and cultural values found in other religions.”¹⁶⁴

This vision of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council recalls the most important documents regarding the non-Christian religious traditions. Such documents claim that the religions contain:

1. **“true and good things”**¹⁶⁵
2. **“precious, religious and saintly things”**¹⁶⁶
3. **“germs of contemplation”**¹⁶⁷
4. **“elements of truth and grace”**¹⁶⁸
5. **“Seeds of the Word”**¹⁶⁹
6. **“Sparks of the Truth which enlighten all men”**¹⁷⁰

These quotations from the conciliar documents speak for themselves. The rapprochement which, for the first time in almost two millennia, is taking place between the Church and other religions, deprecated and rejected as pagan in the past is an irrefutable fact.

Convergence of East and West From a religious, mystical point of view, as well as a cultural and philosophical one, the interrelationship between the early Eastern Christianity and the peoples of the far East (especially from India) is an unquestionable fact.

¹⁶⁴ Second Vatican Council, Declaration “Nostra Aetate” No.2

¹⁶⁵ Optatum Totius, 16

¹⁶⁶ Gaudium Et Spes, 92

¹⁶⁷ Ad Gentes, 18

¹⁶⁸ Ad Gentes, 9

¹⁶⁹ Ad Gentes, 11, 15

¹⁷⁰ Declaration “Nostra Aetate” No. 2

Plotinus was a Greek philosopher whom we would call a great mystic. He is quoted several times by St. Augustine. The similarity between the ideas of Shankara — one of the greatest Hindu masters — and Plotinus is very clear.¹⁷¹

Porfirius, his disciple who remained with Ammonio Saccas for eleven years, acquired his philosophical knowledge from Persians and Hindus.¹⁷² According to the testimony given by the great Christian historian Eusebius, the father of the Church — St. Pantenus — visited India for a long time.¹⁷³ Origen, one of the great historians of the early Greek Church, was familiar with Indian philosophy.

Pythagoras, a contemporary of Buddha, went to the far East in rebellion against the tyranny of the government of his island Samos, and remained in the East for many years. Upon returning to Greece, he founded his first academy, modeled after the Ashrams of India. Socrates' philosophy has many similarities to that taught by the Upanishads, especially regarding the concept of the imperfection of the senses in acquiring an experience of the Ultimate reality. Alexander the Great himself, who conquered the northwest of India, was a disciple of Aristotle, who in turn had Socrates for a master. While he was in India he contacted the Hindu philosophers, as is recorded by Plutarch and Plinius. Furthermore, he brought back a few of these sages with him to Greece.

Convergence Between Meditational Methods of Early Christianity and Yoga Meditation If one studies the biblical texts of the Old Testament and the sacred books of other religions, several points of convergence can be discovered. Several passages in the Old Testament are identical to those in the Upanishads. For example, God reveals Himself unto Moses as the "I AM" or "I AM THE ONE I AM", according to the account in Exodus. In the year 3,000 B.C. the sacred book of the Vedas adopts the same formula with which the Bible defines God for yogic meditation, the formula being "SOHAM" (HONG-SOO), equivalent to Moses' "I AM."

These and several other similarities are discussed and studied in Pandit Usharbudh Arya's (D. Litt.) book entitled "Meditation in Christianity." ["Meditation in Christianity" is a book by several authors published by the Himalayan Publishers, Honesdale, Pennsylvania.] Dr. Arya is a disciple of Swami Rama of the Himalayas, who is one of the great contemporary masters of India living in the Himalayas.

As to the meditation methods which have unfortunately been lost in the West, Dr. Arya points out:

"The unfortunate part about the story of the spread of meditative philosophy in the West, however, is that it has, without fail, lost touch with its sources of grace and the original teachings, and each time a teacher comes he has to break new ground. It is for this reason that the West has never produced worthy successors to the masters of the

¹⁷¹ Neoplatonismo y Vedanta. Francisco Garcia Bazan Ed. Depalma Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1982, page 227

¹⁷² Porfirio V. P.11, 13, 17

¹⁷³ Ecclesiastic History V, 10, 2-3

Himalayas (except when some highly developed Westerners make the Himalayas their home.)¹⁷⁴

When he compares the meditative tradition of Yoga to the one practiced in our Christian monasteries, he also remarks: “The paths of an inward journey through the mazes of the mind into the deepest sanctum sanctorum of the divine heart have been forgotten.... Meditation as taught to the average Catholic monk is what a yogi would call an act of contemplation. It is more in the nature of jnana yoga, the yoga of knowledge... . But beyond such contemplation are the higher states of meditation, the levels of samadhi, in which such discursive thought and the words that are the vehicle of such thought are transcended...”¹⁷⁵

At the level of the scholars and other specialists, it is evident that there is a very clear convergence between Yoga and Hesychasm, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Flavio Poli exemplified this when he wrote his thesis entitled “YOGA AND HESYCHASM” prior to becoming a laureate in Philosophy.

Hesychasm and Contemplative Prayer The Apostle Paul advised the Christian community in Thessalonica to “pray ceaselessly.” In order to practice this, in the late fourth century of the Christian era, within the Eastern Church, a mystical-religious movement originated under the name of HESYCHASM, whose methods of prayer are similar to the ones practiced at present by the non-Christian Eastern mystics. The Greek term HESYCHIA — meaning solitude, silence, peace, spiritual retreat, getting rid of all thoughts and renouncing all worries whether reasonable or not — was the origin of the word HESYCHASM, which gathered the lovers of silence, spiritual peace of internal life based on the continuous prayer. The Fathers of the Church — St. Basil, St. Gregory Naciancense, St. Gregory of Nice, and St. John Climacus — were the first ones to recommend Hesychia during prayer. They are the pioneers of Hesychasm. Within this mystical school, a series of rules for meditating with the “Prayer of Jesus” was slowly being expanded. No less important were the works of another set of very well known fathers of the Church — Macanus the Great, his disciple Evagrius Ponticus, Isaac of Ninive, Hesychius of Bates, Maxim the Confessor, Nicephorus the Solitary, and others. All of them initiated and perpetuated in the early church the practice of contemplative prayer using the prayer of Jesus.

The Philocalia One of the most important books of Russian spirituality from the mid-nineteenth century is the work “STRANNIK,” or “THE WAY OF A PILGRIM”, whose author is unknown. It was most likely written by a monk of Mt. Athos, or perhaps by one from the Monastery of Optina. From a literary standpoint its style is fluid and pleasant, and could very well compete with any one of Dostoyevsky’s or Leo Tolstoy’s works. The reader is kept in constant suspense until the Russian pilgrim — the main character — finally discovers the Philocalia.

“What was the name of the book you read? Perhaps ‘Philocalia’?” the pilgrim was asked.

¹⁷⁴ Meditation in Christianity. Swami Rama, Pandit Usharbudh Arya and others. Himalayan Publishers, Honesdale, Pennsylvania. 1983, page 123

¹⁷⁵ Ibid page 125

“I don’t know. I didn’t read the title,” he answered.

When he opened the book again, he realized he had the Philocalia in his hands, the book he had so ceaselessly searched for.¹⁷⁶ Two great saints of Russian spirituality, St. Macarius of Corinth and Nicodemus the Hagionite, published that book jointly in 1782. By writing it they wanted to create a kind of Hesychasm anthology in a way which was called “The Prayer of Jesus” by the Eastern Christian tradition. “Philo-kalia” means the love of spiritual beauty. Under this title, Origen wrote his book. The Philocalia was considered to be the Summa of the Prayer of Jesus.¹⁷⁷ It contains teachings and recommendations for its use by more than thirty Fathers of the Eastern Church. Its history begins with Evagrius Ponticus (died 399) and ends in 1809 with Nicodemus the Hagiorite (1749-1809).

The Prayer of Jesus This is one of the shortest and simplest forms of prayer: the one invocation of the Holy Name of Jesus.

The formula given by the Philocalia is the following: “LORD JESUS, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME.”¹⁷⁸ Seven words in Greek or Russian, nine in Spanish or English. They are the keys to the spirituality of many Fathers of the Eastern Church. This may have been the secret of sanctity, of the experience of God and the presence of Jesus Christ, sought for by those who have followed St. Paul’s advise to “pray ceaselessly.”¹⁷⁹

This is the continuous, incessant and uninterrupted call of the Divine Name, “with the lips, in the spirit and in the heart.”¹⁸⁰ The Philocalia is a detailed description by twenty-five Fathers of the Church regarding the results obtained by devotion to such a prayer. We would say that this is the highest expression of mantric prayer in Christianity; in Eastern mysticism, it is the word OM. This formula has several forms depending upon the number of words spoken. Sometimes one may say only: “LORD JESUS HAVE MERCY ON ME.” The prayer recommended by St. Gregory of Mt. Sinai for beginners is: “SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME.” This prayer could be repeated either orally, or within the soul. Some judged it sufficient to repeat only “JESUS, JESUS,” during the entire prayer. Each one felt free to choose from among these formulas.

Monologic Prayer The Greek Fathers of the Byzantine Middle Age — St. Gregory Palamas, Nicephorus the Solitary, Simeon the New Theologian, St. Gregory of Mt. Sinai, St. John Climacus, and others — as well as the Fathers of the Desert — Evagrius Ponticus, Marc the Hermit — all agree that prayer done in the retreat and solitude of the desert, born in the intimacy of the being, in which no long discourses are made and where no detailed arguments are given, is the best one. St. John Climacus writes: “May your prayer ignore all multiplicity: one word only was sufficient to the Publican as well as to the Prodigal Son in order to obtain God’s forgiveness... Do not look for words in

¹⁷⁶ Strannik. *The Way of a Pilgrim*. Anonymous. Fifth Edition. Editorial de Espiritualidad Triana, 9, Madrid-16. page 143.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Prayer of the Heart, page 48

¹⁷⁸ *La Filocalia en la Oración de Jesus*. Ed. Lumen 1979, Buenos Aires, Argentina, page 12.

¹⁷⁹ 1 Thessalonians V, 16

¹⁸⁰ *The Way of a Pilgrim*, page 41

your prayer. How often the simple and monotonous babbling of children moves their parents! Do not try long discourses which delude your spirit in the search for words. One word alone from the Publican moved God's mercy; one word of faith alone saved the thief. Thoroughness in prayer often deludes the spirit by filling it with images, whereas one word only (monology) results in withdrawal. "Feel consoled and embraced by one word of prayer and remain there, because your guardian angel is then praying with you."¹⁸¹

As all the Fathers of the Greek Orthodox Church, Evagrius Pontus insists not only on the "quantity of prayers" directed to God, but also on the "quality": "The excellence of prayer does not reside simply in the quantity but in the quality. Witnesses of this are the two who went up to the temple (the Pharisee and the Publican),¹⁸² as well as the expression, "In your prayers do not multiply your words."¹⁸³

These quotations clearly translate the thoughts of the Fathers of the Greek Church, as well as of the Gospel, wherein the Lord recommends that our prayers be not filled with words.

Breathing the Name of Jesus

Prayer and Breathing If we bear in mind all the indications given by Hesychasts as to the method we should follow in the Prayer of Jesus, we conclude that breathing and heartbeats play a decisive role.

In the *Philocalia*, the following is stated: "Adapting prayer to the respiratory rhythm, the spirit becomes calm, attains quiet (*Hesychia*), is freed from the outside world's agitation; it abandons multiplicity and dispersion, and the disorderly movement of thought becomes purified, as do images, representations and ideas. It is withdrawn and unified as it prays together with the body. In the depths of the heart, the spirit and the body reencounter their original unity, and the human being recovers its original simplicity."¹⁸⁴

The Russian pilgrim, following the teachings of Saints Gregory, Calixtus and Ignatius, tried to learn how to attune his breathing to the Prayer of Jesus. When inhaling, he directed his spiritual gaze towards the heart and said: "My Lord Jesus," and upon exhaling added, "have mercy on me." He followed this technique. He first repeated the Prayer of Jesus for a half hour, then for an hour, and finally, almost uninterruptedly.

In the book of the "Centuries" by Calixtus and Ignatius — monks of the Athonite monastery of Xantopoulos, it is taught that the center of a prayer is the Prayer of Jesus. There is a very clear rule given for the synchronization of breathing. There must be a twofold movement: one impulse toward Jesus Christ in the first half of the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God" and a return toward himself in the second half of the prayer

¹⁸¹ *Philocalia*, page 96

¹⁸² Luke 18, 10

¹⁸³ Matthew 6, 7

¹⁸⁴ *Philocalia*, page 12

“have mercy upon me. The respiratory rhythm must correspond to this two-fold movement.”¹⁸⁵

St. Gregory of Mt. Sinai taught that man is called to blend his breath with the “Divine Breath”. St. John Damascene taught the same thing: if the meditator is able to match his breathing to the name of Jesus, he adheres to the Holy Ghost, announcer of the Verb.

In non-Christian Eastern mysticism, breathing plays a prime role: no spiritual treatise, no master, no writer about meditation can do without breathing techniques for meditational practices. In preparation for attaining tranquility of the mind; as a technique for keeping the attention fixed on God; as a gateway to samadhi (ecstasy), calming the breath is absolutely indispensable.

These same rules were followed by the Hesychasts, and they used them successfully. Of course, we cannot think or suppose that these breathing exercises and techniques would have ever been used as or taken to be the essence of prayer. The breathing techniques were recommended and practiced only as aides in correct meditation.

The Prayer of the Heart The Prayer of Jesus is also known as the Prayer of the Heart. We must remember that. Eastern spirituality never allowed itself to be carried by the Greco-Latin philosophical currents that were the foundation of the establishment of Christian mysticism and philosophy within the framework of Scholasticism. Eastern mysticism always remained near the source of Eastern thought and the Bible. Biblical anthropology in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament teaches a theology of the heart, which is the opposite of the teaching of the Greek philosophers. The word “heart” has a totally different meaning in Eastern mysticism. Whereas the heart is considered by classical philosophy to be the seat of emotions and affections, Eastern mysticism sees it as the main organ of the human being, physically and spiritually. It is the center of life, the decisive principle of all his activities and aspirations: it is everything which constitutes the person. When referring to the heart in one of his homilies, St. Macarius the Great says: “Its profundity is unfathomable; there we can find lobbies and rooms, doors and gates, numerous offices and passages. It is the meeting place of the workshop of justice, as well as that of evil, and death and life are in it... The heart is Christ’s palace, our King who comes to rest with the angels and the spirits of the saints; He remains there. He travels through it and establishes his Kingdom... The Light and the Apostles, the celestial city and the treasures of grace — everything is in there.”¹⁸⁶

Theophanus the Recluse sees an intimate relation between the spirit and the heart: “The heart is the deep man, the spirit. It is in the spirit that the consciousness dwells, the idea of God and our total dependence upon Him and all the eternal treasures of spiritual life. The word heart must be understood at times not in its ordinary way, but rather in the sense of the inner man, according to St. Paul, or according to St. Peter, the hidden man of the heart. It is the spirit on the image of God in the first man which remains on us even after the fall.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Cf. The Prayer of the Heart, page 42

¹⁸⁶ The Art of Prayer. Texts of Theophanus the Recluse On The Practice of Prayers and Others. 1982. Ed. Lumen, Buenos Aires, Argentina, page 11.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. page 12

The above fully explains why the Eastern Church calls the Prayer of Jesus the Prayer of the Heart. The heart does not represent a bodily organ that keeps biological human life going, but something rather more profound and elevated: the inner man who realizes through the action of the Holy Spirit a personal and immediate encounter with God. It is that same human spirit that was insuflated by the Almighty as it was done with the first man. It is the best symbol of man wherein God has established His Kingdom.

Intellectual Prayer and the Prayer of the Heart According to the Fathers of the Eastern Church, there is a substantial difference between intellectual prayer and prayer that emanates from the heart. The former is born in the intellect and remains at this level — it will never lead to an immediate encounter with God. One may know something about God by means of the brain in which the intellect acts, but one may never know God this way. Without an intense love for God, one cannot attain direct knowledge of Him. Such love does not come from the brain where intellectual action comes from. It comes from the heart; that is, it comes from the inner man. This is why the mysticism of the early Church requires that our intellect descends into the heart during prayer. In this way, the ascetic begins by visualizing his natural heart, then his profound heart, which stops being a “fleshly reality.”¹⁸⁸

How to Synchronize the Heart with the Prayer of Jesus In order to “pray with the heart”, according to the Hesychasts, one must observe the following rules:

1. Sit silently in a private, quiet place away from noise and activity.
2. Bow your head so it points to the heart.
3. Turn your mind away from delusion, away from a multiplicity of images, ideas and memones.
4. Breathe the Holy Name of Jesus calmly and deeply.
5. Fix your inner gaze on the “place of the heart”, and synchronize it with the rhythm of the breathing.¹⁸⁹

“The Way of a Pilgrim” describes the way to synchronize the heart with the Prayer of Jesus in these terms: Let your inner gaze penetrate your chest and picture your heart in the most vivid way possible; at the same time let your inner ear listen to its beating. Once you have achieved this, link each word to a heartbeat. With the first heartbeat think within, “My Jesus”; with the second one, “Have mercy”; with the third one, “on me.” Repeat it many times.

Practice this as frequently as possible. After a while you will feel a spiritual joy that fills your heart with fervor and tenderness. In this way, and with God’s help, you shall obtain the fruit of the sweet Inner Prayer of the Heart.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, page 13

¹⁸⁹ Philocalia, page 15

¹⁹⁰ The Way of a Pilgrim, 145-146

The Prayer of the Profound Man This technique may seem extremely difficult and detailed to practice. But as a result, the deep man will be heard by God through this prayer. If you bear in mind the reasons given by the Fathers of the Greek Orthodox Church who recommended this technique in order to obtain so many benefits, it is clear that they were right to go into such detail. Let us bear in mind that for them the heart is the center of life. It is the human person himself, the deep man, the spirit itself. In this case they insist that the communion taking place between the meditator and God is absolutely spiritual: it is born in God, it spreads to the meditator, and it returns to God. This is true prayer. Therefore, any effort to do this will be fully rewarded.

At the end of this chapter we shall offer a few practical hints on this subject.

Motivation of the Psycho-Physiological Techniques The techniques recommended by the Mt. Athos Hesychasts for the Prayer of Jesus — that is, to hold the breath, fix the inner gaze on one particular part of the body, closing the eyes and remaining still, among others — to prepare us for meditation. The sole purpose of these psycho-physiological techniques is to create an appropriate disposition that will facilitate prayer. The meditator is free to follow them or not to. These techniques were not unknown to saints, and founders of religious orders of all kinds. St. Ignatius Loyola, for example, advises in his “Spiritual Exercises” to meditate “as if measuring between one breath and another.”

Hesychasts have been accused of prescribing to their followers something known as “ONPHALOSCOPY” (fixing the gaze on the navel). The anonymous monk of the Eastern Church, author of the prayer of the heart, categorically denies that such a practice is prescribed and asserts that neither the name nor the act itself correspond to anything taught by Hesychasm. It has never been a matter of contemplation of the navel... It has been said that, while seated, the gaze should be fixed on the center of the body.¹⁹¹ The only thing this calls for is concentrating the gaze toward the heart. St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359), in the *Philocalia*, refuted those who called Hesychasts “onphalopsites” (those who locate their soul in the navel), calling them liars. He adds that they are detractors of practices that deserve praise, instead of clarifying misunderstandings. What compels them to write is neither the cause of Hesychastic life nor the search for truth. It is their vanity. St. Gregory Palamas recommends avoiding such people.

Does the Prayer of Jesus Cause Perdition? Good and saintly men — every act done with a pure intention, virtues and, in sum, all good belonging to the Kingdom of God — have their counterpart: the power of darkness, enemy of Light. As Paul the Initiate said, the two posers, Light and Darkness, are irreconcilable: “For what has justice in common with iniquity? Or what fellowship has Light with darkness?”¹⁹² The Prayer of Jesus has always had terrible enemies who have quickly denounced the prayer as “a cause of devilish illusion and perdition of the soul”¹⁹³ a prayer which nearly always

¹⁹¹ The Prayer of the Heart, page 83

¹⁹² 2 Corinthians 6,14

¹⁹³ The Art of Prayer, page 187

creates illusions or hallucinations. These people claim that this is a reason to prohibit such practice.

According to Bishop Ignacio Brianchaninov, to admit to and defend such an idea constitutes a terrible blasphemy, an illusion of a very deplorable nature... a sad, nonsensical, blasphemous detraction. Those who follow this logic are clearly influenced by evil abuse of false dialectics coming from Satan. Examine the Holy Scriptures... Study the writings of the Holy Fathers and you shall see that all of them, without exception, propose and advise the practice of the Prayer of Jesus. They consider it a gift from God, one of the most precious and elevated legacies of the God-Man, an inalienable inheritance, a very sweet comfort of love and security.¹⁹⁴

To this we could add that nothing is healthier than invoking the Holy Name of Jesus because “there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we may be saved.”¹⁹⁵

Masters of prayer

Gurus and Starets A universal practice among the non-Christian seekers of Eastern Asia is to seek the help of a guru, or spiritual master. These seekers of God almost always had to undergo a long search, full of trials, before finding their guides. Sincere followers observe all the instructions of the guru to the letter, or those of the saint or any other person experienced in the path. Many of them spend many years in a kind of apprenticeship until they master the techniques they receive, not so much through the word but through the example of life. The word of the master is the expression of what God wants. This custom existed and exists today among the mystics of the Eastern Orthodox Church. In other words, if they were to practice certain physical exercises, they would not do it until they had the help of a Starets or experienced instructor.

Nicetus Stethatos made the following statement: “Not submitting to a starets or spiritual father, on imitation of the One who obeyed His Father until His death on the cross, is not having been born spiritually.”¹⁹⁶ The directive given by the masters, according to Theophanus the Recluse, “must be followed under the direction of a master, who knows the correct way of practicing a prayer.” He then added: “But should someone want to practice on his own, only following written descriptions, then he cannot escape illusion. These descriptions only provide the external aspects of practice; they cannot provide the detailed advice that a starets can. The starets know the inner state that must accompany prayer, and because of this they can take care of the beginner and give the complementary advice he needs.”¹⁹⁷

This reflects the universally accepted custom of the assistance of a starets or master on the path to God realization. This custom subsists to this day.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. page 188

¹⁹⁵ Acts 4, 12

¹⁹⁶ The Prayer of the Heart, page 54

¹⁹⁷ Consejos a los Ascetas. Theophanus the Recluse. Ed. Lumen 1979, Buenos Aires, Argentina, page 131

The Experience of God in the Starets: Better Than Any Book Having acquired great personal experience and knowledge through the daily practice of meditation or contemplative prayer, I must here frankly state what I believe. It is not easy to tread these paths. Let us remember, for instance, that St. Teresa de Jesus found a spiritual master only after a twenty-year search.

The books that have been written on this subject — many of them lacking methodology in shedding light on the paths of seekers — are not at all practical. Those who have followed such methodology have had to face a very hard ascesis, an extremely difficult one and, I would even say, heroic, in order to bring about the least result. I firmly believe that no author writing about meditation is really able to teach meditation by merely presenting methods from other books. He who is not a man of prayer himself, he who has not reached the goal through prayer, who has not communed with God, is not able to convey experiences he has never had. Prayer is learned through praying. Prayer conveyed in a book must also be the fruit of praying.

For example, no one today — unless he feels a special call from God — is going to read the works of our mystics in order to discern which way he should personally follow. On the other hand, there is nothing better than the experience of feeling God through a starets or guru, who can, better than any book, help the disciple overcome any obstacles found along the way.

I could add another reason. The true master absolutely lives in permanent communion with God if he wants to become an efficient instrument of divine action. Only under this condition will the word of the master be the vehicle incarnating the Holy Ghost. This word shall have an infinite transcendence, and its impact on the disciple shall also become infinite.

Letter and Spirit of the Book This does not happen with a book, especially when it has not been written under the influence of a direct experience with God, of an internalization of His life — in sum, when the book is only a product of learning or simple intellectual reasoning.

He who wishes to progress in the path of prayer must get advice about which books to read, and should always search for an experienced guide, an authentic man, a sage and a man of God.

For this reason the monk Nicephorus used to say: “In the exercise of the inner activity of the heart, it is necessary to have an authentic and wise guide. If he does exist, one must search diligently to find him. If he cannot be found, we must invoke the help of God with a contrite heart and take advantage of the teachings and guidance provided by the Holy Fathers, verifying it with the Word of God as revealed in the Scriptures..., the Holy Fathers assure that even a pagan, if you approach him with faith and the right intentions, may give you a precious word.”¹⁹⁸

Prayer Engenders Good Works and Virtues Much has been preached, taught and written about prayer, but unfortunately all of that has been a product of human wisdom

¹⁹⁸ Philocalia, Nicephorus page 147

and human experience. All of the books speak of the need to pray, its benefits, its power and the qualities that must be included in it: humility, ardent devotion, inner fervor, purity of thought, reconciliation with enemies, repentance ... Many think that good deeds and preparatory exercises suffice to practice contemplative prayer. On the contrary, it is contemplative prayer that engenders all good deeds and enhances virtue. Every Christian must practice good virtues and perform good deeds, but all this is only the fruit of prayer. The first and most important position is that of prayer, because without it nothing good in us may exist. If we do not want the sacraments — especially the Divine Eucharist — to be effective, we must first pray, and then pray some more. If we want the word of God in the Sacred Scriptures to come alive, we must first pray. If we want to follow Christ's command to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect"¹⁹⁹, we must begin by praying. Here lies the secret of holiness, success and victory in the Christian life, now and forever.

Praising God from the Godhead All that has been written by the fathers of the Eastern Church regarding the advantages of the Prayer of Jesus and the action of the Holy Ghost as an antidote to sin, etc., is extra ordinarily valuable. One of the basic principles they insist upon is the one expressed by Evagrius Pontus, disciple of St. Gregory Naciancene: "He who prays in spirit and truth does not take the praise he offers the Creator and creatures, but from the Godhead itself he praises God."²⁰⁰ "In The Way of a Pilgrim," it is also said: "Any impulse, any thought about prayer, is a work of the Holy Ghost."²⁰¹

Human wisdom — or, as the Apostle Paul would say, "the wisdom of this age"²⁰² — does not transcend the limits of this world, for it is only useful when man builds the Terrestrial City. This City has been built by men, its foundations, walls, streets, plazas and avenues made of perishable materials. If we wanted to use these materials for prayer, this would, unfortunately, be impossible. It is impossible to attune ourselves with God in our prayers without His help. In order to look for Him, to find Him, to bless Him, to glorify Him here and eternally, we need Him. This is certain. Christ's words "Apart from me you can do nothing"²⁰³ apply perfectly here. Philosophical reasoning, scientific analysis, psychological, psychic and anthropological analyses — and even the initiatives of a theology that does not transcend the mere intellectualism of religion — are inadequate approaches to the problem of finding God, which is the most crucial and important task of our time.

The Health of the Body Depends Upon God's Peace Those who do not know the benefits of prayer have never practiced prayer. Both the writings of the non-Christian Easterns and the writings of the early Eastern Church agree that not only do these methods of prayer benefit man in his ascent to God, but that they are also good for the

¹⁹⁹ Matthew 5, 48

²⁰⁰ Philocalia, page 63

²⁰¹ The Way of a Pilgrim, page 241

²⁰² 1 Corinthians 2, 6

²⁰³ John 15, 5

physical body. This must be understood from the perspective that man is a whole, wherein the body, mind and soul influence one another.

Theophanus the Recluse used to tell the meditators: “Do not forget that your health does not only depend on nourishment, but mainly on your inner peace. Living in God, withdrawing ourselves from the turmoil of the world, gives peace to the heart, and this maintains the body in good health. Our activities are not everything in our lives. What is most important is to keep the heart directed toward God and united with Him.”²⁰⁴

The Prayer of Jesus Yields Many Good Deeds The Eastern Christian tradition, from Evagrius Pontus to Simeon of Thessalonike, unanimously ponders the efficacy of the Prayer of Jesus in the soul. We cite only one example. St. Isaiah the Hermit (died 488) says that through secret meditation “man becomes a firm fortress, a strong and invincible place, a haven of peace which remains undisturbed and does not fade, a mirror for the soul, a light for the conscience; it destroys lust, calms rages, dissipates cholera, expels bitterness, dispels irritability and banishes injustice... illuminates the soul and rejects laziness... dispels bad thoughts, sanctifies the body... preserves the intellect free from distractions, is full of all kinds of good deeds, adorned by all virtues and separated from all bad actions.”²⁰⁵

“The Way of a Pilgrim” summarizes the fruits borne from inner prayer in the following words: “Sincere love of God, inner peace, rapture of the soul, purity of thought, enlivening and vigor in the limbs, a general comfort enduring sicknesses and pains, new strength in reasoning and new understanding of the Sacred Scriptures, comprehension of the language of all creatures, repulsion of all vanity, new concept of holiness and of inner life, and, finally, the certainty that God is present, that His love embraces everything.”²⁰⁶

Very seldom do we find passages like the one above that give a complete description of the fruits attained by he who is consistent, decisive and pure, having a great desire to find God; that is, the one who decides to start treading the path of Contemplative Prayer.

It is up to us whether or not we are going to follow the advice given by Jesus Christ in His message and through His followers, in order for us to benefit from these and other good things.

The Prayer of Jesus leads to ecstasy

Samadhi (Ecstasy) Through the Prayer of Jesus The man who has placed his heart on material things believes that he will find the happiness he searches for only in them. This keeps him from even suspecting that above all those joys, there are some others which are infinitely greater: those of the soul. These are the only pleasure, the only real

²⁰⁴ Consejos a los Ascetas, page 91

²⁰⁵ The Art of Prayer, page 197

²⁰⁶ The Way of a Pilgrim, page 86

ones, because they never change or perish, and cause neither frustration nor unhappiness. In the lives of Christian as well as non-Christian saints, there are several accounts of the mystical phenomenon called ecstasy in the Christian mystical lexicon, and which is known as “samadhi” in Eastern mysticism.

The Prayer of Jesus leads to ecstasy. Let us look at an example. The following fact is given from the life of St. Simeon the New Theologian. One afternoon St. Simeon was praying, saying in his soul: “Lord Jesus, have mercy on me.” All at once, a powerful divine Light shone above him. The whole room was illuminated by that light. The young man did not know whether he was over the house or on the roof. He only saw lights all around. He even forgot whether or not he was on Earth. No fear of falling; no worry in this world. He formed a Oneness with that divine light. It seemed as if he himself had become the light. He became totally withdrawn from the world, overflowing with tears and by an inexpressable joy... Later, having passed through contemplation, the young man returned to himself full of happiness and admiration ... and ended by falling back on his bed. Then the rooster cried announcing midnight. Soon after, he heard the churches announcing matins.²⁰⁷

This kind of experience is neither strange nor exclusive to the saints as we might think or imagine. They are also had by hundreds of thousands of simple and humble believers, old people, women and children who appear transformed by that same inner light that spontaneously flows from contemplative prayer and from partaking of the Divine Eucharist. According to the Philocalia, “After partaking of the Divine Liturgy, all men and women of our town were like Theophorus; that is, carriers of God. They all had taken communion... they were children of God and were deified; certainly, such peoples are the rude peasants, miserable and poor ... Yes, they were Theophoruses (Carriers of God).”²⁰⁸

In such experiences the veils that cover God’s mysteries are removed and the mysteries are disclosed: His indescribable beauty, infinite peace, eternal joy, bliss... In this way we may imagine somewhat “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him.”²⁰⁹

Practical advice

Silence Within In order to assure oneself of these fruits, Hesychasts gave these practical hints. Silence within oneself

Before uttering the name of Jesus, it is important to place oneself in a state of peace and retreat; after that, ask for help from the Holy Ghost, the only way to “say that Jesus is the Lord.” One must become bound to that name, repeating it slowly, sweetly, calmly, “It would be a mistake to try to force” this prayer, to inflate the voice internally, to look for intensity and emotion. When God manifested Himself to Elijah, it was not in the

²⁰⁷ Philocalia, page 132

²⁰⁸ Ibid. page 19

²⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians 2, 9

midst of a tempest or earthquake or fire, but in a quiet whispering.²¹⁰ This invocation of the Holy Name must silently pervade our whole being. The name may resound during moments of rest, silence and inner attention.

Avoid All Hurry We must avoid all rush, all tension. We must simply wait to be “taught by God,”²¹¹ so that in Him and through Him we may learn and know everything we need. If we do not become children at the moment of our second creation done by the water and the Holy Ghost during baptism, we will not be able to renounce ourselves so God’s work may begin. If, after having been renewed in the spirit, we have only dormant or inactive faith, if we do not live in Christ or are not moved by Him, we will be unable to become children of the Light to walk in the Light.²¹²

Do Not Interrupt Your Meditation Among the advices given by Evagrius Pontus to meditators is the following: “Ignore the needs of your body during the practice of prayer; do not allow any louse, flea, mosquito or fly to interfere with your progress in meditation. We have read of another spiritual brother who was bitten by a viper during prayer and, not having moved his arms until the end of the prayer, was saved from illness because he loved God more than he loved himself.”²¹³

He also tells of a saint who, full of the love of God and prayer, and found that two angels were accompanying him in the desert. But he continued, and paid no attention to them, remembering the words of the Apostle: “Nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate ourselves from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”²¹⁴

Do Not Try to See the Image of God During contemplative prayer, it is necessary to empty the mind of all images, since these cause distractions; the mind is easily distracted by the forms perceived. Evagrius Ponticus himself tells the following:

“Do not imagine Divinity in yourself when praying; do not allow your intelligence to accept the imprints of any form; always remain immaterial and you shall understand... it may happen that while you are praying purely and undisturbed a form will appear, strange and unknown, and will try to make you perceive it as divine so you will think God is located there. But Divinity has no form, nor can it be counted.”²¹⁵ He adds: “You want to see the face of the Father who is in heaven; do not by any means try to see a form or a figure during prayer.”²¹⁶

The purpose is to create in the meditator’s mind the concept of pure prayer, a prayer totally devoid of any external form, even human, for prayer has an immediate objective:

²¹⁰ The Prayer of the Heart, page 71

²¹¹ Philocalia, St. Gregory of Mt. Sinai, page 170

²¹² Ibid. page 170

²¹³ Philocalia page 65, Nos. 105-109

²¹⁴ Romans 8, 38

²¹⁵ Philocalia, page 63. Nos. 66 and 67

²¹⁶ Ibid. page 65, No. 114

God. But it is obvious that when the purpose of prayer is Christ Man-God, then the meditator may think of the human form of Christ or a scene from the Gospels.

Perseverance in Prayer Prayer is not learned from anybody. God is the true master who grants the gift of prayer to the one who prays. The stars may give useful advice and practical hints based on their own methods of prayer, but it is God who is in charge of dispelling, with His Light, all the darkness in our soul. It is He who penetrates our being and takes possession of what belongs to Him. Human action is reduced to not hindering God's work.

Prayer and Action Reconciled Action and contemplation must go hand in hand. We must unite them. When they are bound together we are able to advance rapidly. Not only the Hesychasts, but also the saints of intense spiritual life have recommended both ways for the communion with God: the path of action and the path of contemplation. The first one, called "Karma Yoga" by the Easterners, is for those who live in the world. The second one, called "Bhakti Yoga" by the Easterners, is for those who have renounced all mundane worries. The path of action is much more complex and requires more effort.

When we realize that the Godhead we keep in mind when we pray is near us and within, and when we realize that the Godhead is present in all our activities, then we will have no problem in constantly evoking His Presence and feeling that He is with us at every moment. Whether we are resting, amusing ourselves, or working, He will easily be our eternal companion if we have already discovered God within. The important thing is to keep the body working, while the mind is focused on God: this should be the conduct of a true Christian. This was said in different words by the great saint of contemporary India, Sri Ramakrishna: We must work with one hand well tied to the Divine Mother (God) and with the other one firmly at work. In this way, any person who sincerely wishes to discover the Godhead in his daily life will easily attain that goal.

Suggestions to pray with the Prayer of Jesus

Up to now we have tried to give a general idea of the teachings of the Fathers of the Eastern Church, which agree with those imparted by the great masters of the non-Christian Eastern mysticism and their ancestral ascetic and contemplative traditions. About these, the Second Vatican Council tells the Catholics:

"Consider carefully in what way the ascetic and contemplative traditions may be applied to a religious Christian life, whose seeds have frequently been placed by God in the ancient cultures, before the preachings of the Gospels."²¹⁷ The convergence of these traditions, and the early Christian tradition, particularly the Greek Orthodox Church, is indubitable. The methods they follow for the practice of meditation or contemplative prayer are identical.

²¹⁷ Ad Gentes, 18

Here is a summary of a practical method of meditating with the Prayer of Jesus.

Practical Rules I would like to offer a few hints in addition to those given in Chapter Nine, especially for those who would like to use the Prayer of Jesus as their personal method of meditation.

1. Enter a peaceful state, which is absolutely necessary for meditation. Realizing that the Godhead is within yourself and is ready to help you, close your eyes.
2. Breathe slowly, placing all your attention on inhalation and exhalation and nothing else. Do this for two or three minutes.
3. Invoke the Lord with the Prayer of Jesus.
4. When inhaling, say only the first part: "Lord Jesus, Son of God" when exhaling: "Have Mercy on Me." Repeat this several times for eight to ten minutes, always synchronizing these words with your breath.
5. Now withdraw your attention from your respiratory rhythm. Do not concentrate any more on your breathing. Simply repeat the prayer mentally. As your meditation develops, you must repeat the prayer more slowly.
6. While you synchronize your breath, visualize your heart, or even better, the Christ center (spiritual eye or third eye) which is located in the space between the eyebrows.
7. End your prayer with a spontaneous prayer of thanks to the Lord.

Meditation on the Name of Jesus Meditators agree that using a shorter mantram enables an easier, more efficient meditation. (A Mantram is a word that is continuously repeated during meditation). According to this principle, the breathing may be synchronized simply to the word JESUS.

The technique is as follows:

1. When inhaling, pronounce the syllable "JE".
2. When exhaling, pronounce the syllable "SUS".
3. Synchronize your breath to the Holy Name for eight to ten minutes.
4. Forget about your breathing at this time.
5. Continue invoking the Blessed Name. Try to feel the peace, sweetness, bliss and joy contained in this name. Taste it. Whenever you start to become distracted, begin repeating the name of Jesus more often. End your prayer with a thanksgiving.

This chapter is meant to provide the Christian meditators who might be reluctant to use a "mantram" of Eastern mysticism, whether due to ignorance or a lack of understanding about them, with a method of meditation practiced in the early Church. This method of prayer is especially meant for clergymen who have overcome prejudices and want to have a permanent communion with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. This communion will transform their lives.

Chapter Eleven – Distractions during meditation

Ernest Wood, in chapter seven of his Practical Course of Mental Concentration, talks about the “intruding visitors” that is, the thoughts and images that come to our minds without being invited, and distract us during meditation.²¹⁸

A Blank Mind Several Eastern schools advise us to “have a blank mind” before meditation in order to avoid distractions. What does this mean? First, try to erase every thought, every idea, every image your mind may have. After this, and not before, you may begin to meditate.

We don’t recommend that you “make your mind blank” before meditation. Firstly, from a practical point of view, it is quite impossible. Our mind can only stop thinking or remembering for a very few moments. It is always busy. Just as the eyes are meant to see, the mind is meant to remember, or create ideas, or project images. While the sense of sight rests with sleep, the mind never rests: it is constantly active. What is important is to direct it so it will obey us.

Secondly, this would give the meditator an additional task:

trying to “turn his mind blank” as well as trying to focus it on Cod. It is more advisable to immediately start meditating.

Here we offer some ways to avoid distractions during meditation.

We must expect distractions

The “intruders” will bother us not only when we are meditating, but when we are performing any activity. Jesus himself was bothered with three kinds of temptations by the intruding temptor when he was in the desert.

Buddha was also tempted before his enlightenment. From the deep abysses came demons — enemies of Wisdom and Light with their passions, horrors, ignorance and lust, with all that pertains to darkness and fear, and all who hated Buddha. Sometimes they tempted him by offering him Power; others disguised themselves with vain mockery as Truth. Then came the capital sins: selfish-

j

ness, doubt, superstition, sensuality and greed.

However, these intruders could make neither Christ — the Son of Cod — nor Buddha — the greatest of the Enlightened — succumb. So the first thing we must know and be sure of is that distractions will come to us during meditation.

²¹⁸ Ernest Wood, Curso Práctico de Concentración Mental; Ed. Kier, 1972, Chapter Seven, pages 81-89

We must not lose our poise

Many people begin to meditate with great enthusiasm. But as soon as they have to face their first obstacles — which arise from lack of practice in these exercises, or from a lack of perseverance, or because they are unable to avoid distractions — they become restless, lose their poise and stop meditation.

Anxiety and restlessness ruin prayer. Remember again Christ's example when he was tempted in the desert. Three times the temptor asked him to give up his fast for forty days and forty nights, and three times the Divine Hermit of the desert rejected him without losing his poise, each time quoting a paragraph from the Holy Scriptures that related to each one of the demon's suggestions. The temptor now defeated, angels came to serve Jesus. Buddha did the same thing when he was tempted, until in the midst of the forest's silence a cry was heard, and the multitude of tempting infernal spirits vanished with their flaming banner that waved in the night under the stars.

We seek inner peace during meditation. A peace that will make us happy forever. This peace has its price: the effort we must make to remain quiet. When distractions disturb us during meditation, we must not force the mind to control them. As soon as we feel our mind turn to business, family problems, plans, domestic affairs, professional matters, and so forth, we must return to meditation. Repeat the MANTRAM you have chosen.

We must continue meditating

The "intruding visitors" cannot, must not make us discontinue meditation. When we receive an inopportune visitor, we wish that the visitor would leave, and then we continue the work that was interrupted. We must follow this rule when our meditation is interrupted by distractions. When we are performing a job which requires all our time, and at that very moment a telephone call interrupts us, we continue that work while we listen to the phone ring. This is what we must do when we are interrupted during meditation with the constant telephone calls of our senses ringing, whether imagined or real. No one call — as important as it may seem — is as important as the need to meditate.

The only effort we need make is the effort to return to meditation. This simple return is enough, and is the most effective action to take.

Do not shorten your meditation

Many beginners think that the best way to deal with unavoidable distractions is to end meditation soon. This is an delusion. If we have set a goal of meditating for an hour or even a half hour, we must be faithful to that schedule.

The “intruding visitors” must not make us break our commitment. How would we judge a person who agrees to solve a problem, and then procrastinates every day, not devoting enough time to solving the problem? How would we judge he who commits to resolving an important matter, and then does not do it?

Follow the rules for meditation

If you closely follow the rules given in this chapter, “How To Meditate,” you will be able to avoid distractions. We have said that the MANTRIC MEDITATION is the best form of meditation. If you repeat the MANTRAM chosen for meditation, the intruders will quickly leave, and you can begin to enjoy the peace and bliss which derive from the union with the Godhead in the temple of your own being.

* * * * *

Chapter Twelve – Results of meditation

The Mystical Phenomenon The transformation which gradually takes place in the depths of the soul through the practice of meditation could be called mystical phenomenon, or the mystical experience. This mystical phenomenon, or experience, is indescribable and inexpressible through human language. “That which is felt and seen cannot be told by any tongue because of its highness, kindness, beauty, pureness and nobility, “ says García de Cisneros.²¹⁹

Such experiences are only to be compared with those of Paul of Tarsus which he had after his enlightenment on the way to Damascus. With profound humility, he tells in the third person narrative what happened at that time in the following words~:”I know a man who, fourteen years ago, was brought up to the third heaven — whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know. Only God knows. And I know that this man was brought up to Paradise — whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know. Only God knows. And he heard things that cannot be told, things that man cannot utter.”²²⁰

And why can't man tell of them? Because nothing sublime, ineffable, perfect, eternal, infinite good can be translated into words.

A description using mere words of what a person has experienced can be no more than a pale shadow of what the mystical experience truly was.

The Grace of God What magic power does meditation have? We have already said that it attunes to God. When this attunement with the Divine Wave takes place, it naturally follows that we begin to partake of everything He is. This participation is in direct relation to our proximity to Him and is not restricted to the spiritual plane only, but includes all planes. When you put a sponge into water, it absorbs completely. This also happens with man. The absorption makes him partake of everything with God. This is what is called grace in theological terms.

This work of grace first reaches the mind — which is illumined operate it with freedom. This law is, according to Paul's way of putting it, “not for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinning, for the unholy and profane, for the murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, immoral persons, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and whoever else is contrary to sound doctrine...”²²¹

Physical Transformation Moreover, this act of grace acts upon the physical part of man. How? In deep meditation, breath is calmed, the heartbeat is slowed down, digestion and metabolism slow down, and the lungs hardly work at all, since they have no need to purify blood traveling from the most distant parts of the body to the heart. It is as though a machine that is used to working at an accelerated rate is stowed down to a

²¹⁹ EJERCITACIONES Chapter 30, quoted by Y. G. Arientero in the book “Cuestiones Místicas” La BAC, page 154 — Note

²²⁰ 2 Corinthians XII, 2-4

²²¹ 1 Timothy 1, 9

very slow rhythm. All the senses except hearing are disconnected. The wear and tear on the different organs of the body, and the tension level of the nervous system are near zero. This rest, this intermission, this standstill of the body, is in direct relation to the depth of the meditation.

Changes in Certain Plexus Eastern philosophy teaches that besides his physical body, man has an etherical body, an astral body—a body of desires. In the astral body and along the spinal cord are the seven chakras, which correspond to the plexus and the glands of the physical body. It is pointless to go into detail here. Let us only mention some of the phenomena produced by meditation on certain chakras.

The solar plexus is the one of emotions, desires and feelings. These all originate in the lower parts of the body; the urges to eat, drink and procreate. This energy center activates the lower plexus, the sacrum and coccyx. It is the intermediate center, the one connecting the higher life to the lower life; all the basic urges necessarily pass through this center, and the primal desires are transmuted there into higher ones. Through meditation man is able to understand the specific function of this center of force in emotional life, and discovers that this center causes most of the difficulties of his lower nature. Then he can work to transmute his emotional life into a higher life.

Changes in the Most Important Chakras Eastern philosophers believe that God's life is three-fold: it is manifested in the energy of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It is the principle behind the activities of absolutely all beings, naturally including man, in all his different planes and all his states of mind. It is connected to it through a three-fold thread or path.

In the first one, it manifests as giver of Life, Spirit, Energy; in the second one, it grants consciousness, that is, power of intelligence so that the power of the spirit may react and respond; in the third one, it acts upon the body.

Through meditation in the first aspect, God acts directly upon the pineal gland, the projection of which is on the Third Eye, Spiritual Eye or Christ Center. Enlightenment is attained here. This is why you must keep your gaze as well as your consciousness fixed on that spot during meditation. In the second aspect or consciousness, you contact the cardiac center (heart) and attain the knowledge and consciousness of being God's child.

In the third aspect, you relate to the center of the coccyx, the main source of corporal activity and personality. Through meditation, these centers or chakras are intensely activated, and divine action is manifested in all phases of man's activities. Thus, His superior senses are awakened and stimulated and man begins to live the real life.

Transformation of the Spirit The most important achievements are those manifested in the spirit. But again, remember that whatever we say is only a very faded idea of what the mystical experience is and means.

The common man, who has only lived a routine life of working, sleeping, enjoying, traveling, resting, etc., cannot understand or even imagine the real joys of the spirit:

“The sensual man does not receive the gifts of the spirit of God, for they are foreign to him, and he is not able to understand them, for they are spiritually discerned.”²²²

A Cosmic Vision One of the joys of the spirit is to think and know that the great cosmos, with its many celestial bodies and planets, its millions and millions of galaxies and bright suns, its innumerable stars of all sizes, is not like separate notes of a giant orchestra: everything, everything, absolutely everything has a secret thread underlying and connecting it: divine omnipresence.

Thus, all creatures (We, You, I) are not isolated notes in this great symphony: we are parts necessary to this immense whole, created by the Blessed Father. Likewise, the whole is necessary to each one of its parts.

Meditation makes us experience this great symphony of cosmic unity. All self-realized souls partake of this great sense of Unity.

St. Francis of Assisi, St. Anthony of Padua, the great saints and masters of the East, all have felt the joy of universal brotherhood, which is not restricted to the people of any race or religion, but is open to all men, all beings, all things. A logical consequence of our awakening in divine omnipresence is to feel the blessed omnipresence of God in every creature, every atom, every particle of the cosmos. This realization makes us experience the great Universal Brotherhood. In the Bhagavad Gita, the Eastern Bible, this cosmic vision, a result of divine knowledge, is called “the secret of secrets, the mystery of mysteries, the wisdom which, once completely understood, bestows the supreme Enlightenment.”

“He who being not deluded knoweth me thus as the Supreme Spirit, knoweth all things, and worships me under every form and condition.”²²³

One of the signs of a man out of tune with God is sectarianism, a narrow-mindedness and religious fanaticism that imprisons him in the shell of his own ideas, making him believe that he alone and his sect are sole proprietors of the Truth. A self-realized man has an open consciousness and is free, absolutely free, because he has the freedom of the Lord’s followers.

The Light of Wisdom Meditation opens the gate to wisdom. I don’t say science because science implies the knowledge acquired through reading books. Wisdom is much more than that: it is the knowledge attained directly from the source of all knowledge — God.

This knowledge is also called Enlightenment, because man only has to open the eyes of the soul to see the light coming from the Godhead, and to live and act in that light. Here, God plays the most active and important role. How could illiterate, ignorant fishermen like the Apostles, have cracked Caesar’s empire at its foundation? How could that philosophy have penetrated the mind and consciousness of Jews in the way that it did — the Jews who bore the burden of centuries of tradition and only recognized the law of Moses?

²²² 1 Corinthians II, 14

²²³ Bhagavad Gita. United Lodge of Theosophists, Los Angeles, 1920, page 108

How come a priest of Ars, having barely passed the studies in the emtnar to become ordained as a Priest, has been a pole of attraction and an oracle to theologians, bishops, cardinals, and so on? How is it that in the East, Masters, Sannyasins, poor renunciants, ragged and underfed, traverse towns and cities with a bowl in one hand, with no other book but themselves, bringing LIGHT to thousands? Why aren't any of these mystical experiences related in any of the Sacred Scriptures, but are reported by Eastern and Western mystics?

The answer is simple. The explanation is this: He who walks in the LIGHT, he who sees the LIGHT, and he who experiences the LIGHT, knows what the LIGHT is, that Light which John speaks of in the Prologue of his Gospel: "true light," "Light that shines in the shadows;" light which is life. He who is attuned to that light naturally knows the secrets of God.

Intuition This knowledge is also called intuition. Why? Because in order to attain it, it is not necessary to reason, ponder, argue, etc. This knowledge is gained simply by looking at God, having joy in Him, living through Him and loving Him.

How different is the knowledge and understanding of the man who knows intuitively God's Truth from the man who only knows Truth through a third person!

This knowledge, which the Christian Bible calls Wisdom, is a habit of divine power, a pure emanation of the Glory of the Omnipotent God. It is the splendor of eternal light, the spotless mirror of God's behavior, the image of His kindness. Being only one, it has the power of being everything and staying the same; it renews everything, and covers Holy Souls through the ages, making them friends of God and the prophets... It is more beautiful than the sun; it surpasses the stars, and ranks first among all light... It is faster than anything that moves, it spreads its purity and penetrates everything...²²⁴

Pure Love Meditation is a passage to pure love. God is love. This word, I believe, is the greatest to be created by human language, and must be understood well. As everything comes from and returns to God, the unexplorable abyss of Joy and Bliss, this word can hardly express what it really means.

Love is patient in waiting for the loved one: it is not violence, impetuosity, rage, rapture, passion, excitement. He who really loves waits before the doors of the heart. He waits for the being whom he addresses to open up to him. There is no frenzy, no blindness.

Love is renunciation of interests, comfort attachment. Even more, it is the renunciation of one's "I". He who truly loves has no other will, no other mind, no other awareness than of his beloved. Love means total identification. This results in complete harmony between the lover and the beloved.

He who really loves God may, as Christ does, address the Father: You and I are One. He who really loves his brothers will not only be able to receive, but will also offer what he has — even his own life.

Love is justice and truth. He who really loves cannot deceive anyone; he cannot be unjust.

²²⁴ Wisdom VII, 25-29

Love always trusts and always forgives. It does not matter if he is despised, offended, harmed, insulted, scorned, humiliated, hurt, injured... He shall always be ready, like Christ, to say: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."²²⁵

Consciousness opens through meditation. The heart expands to embrace everyone without exception. That petty love, restricted and limited to a few people, or at most to the family, erupts into a cosmic flame that embraces everything.

This is logical, for when we vibrate in God's love, all limitations vanish.

Love is life: divine, eternal, true life. He who does not love is dead. That's why John, the Apostle of love, says: "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding inside him." Further, "He who does not love remains in death."²²⁶

Through meditation you achieve real peace, complete joy, permanent happiness, universal harmony, constant balance. In one word, all good. We must add that he who is a consistent meditator does not become an eccentric, unadapted and unable to face the problems of daily life. On the contrary, he is a highly dynamic person and energetic person, one who confronts problems.

Today, meditation is not what people living materialistic lives think it to be an activity pertaining only to monks and nuns or lazy people who seek to escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life.

Nowadays, many people meditate, even those whose lives may seem incompatible to this practice. Managers of big corporations meditate. Politicians meditate. Rulers meditate. Scientists meditate. Students, housewives, ladies — young and old — meditate. Lectures and courses given on concentration and meditation are common. It is common to talk about these subjects in universities, colleges, theatres, and so forth.

Masters and teachers of Eastern schools travel frequently, bringing such knowledge to a new mankind which is gorged with material progress and starving for consistent spiritual nourishment.

²²⁵ Luke XXIII, 34

²²⁶ 1 John III, 14-15

Chapter Thirteen – Samadhi, ecstasy, nirvikhalpa samadhi

The evangelists Matthew, Mark and Luke report an exceptional fact from Christ's life: His transfiguration.

“Jesus went up a high mountain and took with Him Peter, James and his brother John. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light.”²²⁷ When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai, he brought the tables of the testimony, and his face was radiant. Aaron and his brother and all the sons of Israel were afraid to approach him since he dazzled from the brilliance of his face. His astral aura was visible to all after the contact with Yahweh. The vision of the three disciples and the visibility of Moses' aura gives us an idea of one of the results of meditation.

When the spirit penetrates the unfathomable abyss of light, it cannot help but experience the joy and bliss of God, it cannot help undergoing that glorious transfiguration — ---- natural result of contact with God. Thus, the spirit acquires divine consciousness.

Samadhi: An Experience Difficult to Describe It is impossible to describe this state. Words are insufficient: Christian mysticism calls it ecstasy, Easterners call it Samadhi. The great Eastern mystic Ramakrishna frequently entered into this state. He himself tells how Chaitanya Deva, an incarnation of Divine Love, fell into Samadhi: “Three were” he says, “his states of consciousness in ecstasy. First, consciousness of the dense and subtle (astral) bodies; in that state he repeated the name of the Lord and sang praises in the Sankirtan. Second, consciousness only of the causal body. In that state he was enraptured by ecstatic joy and retained partial consciousness of the external. He danced in the company of the other bhaktas (devotees). Third, consciousness of the ABSOLUTE (God); he penetrated into the highest realm of Samadhi, rising above every sensation — conscious sensation — and his body remained as if it were dead.”²²⁸

Samadhi in the Bible Paul, the Initiate, had visions and revelations during his life, after his conversion on the road to Damascus when he spoke to Christ resurrected. He refers to them in his letters. With great modesty — characteristic of great souls who do not anchor their glory in extraordinary facts which they know — Paul describes one of the most remarkable mystical experiences. During his Samadhi, he heard voices and words which a mortal cannot describe: “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was brought up to the third heaven — whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know. Only God knows. And I know that this man was brought to Paradise — whether in the body or out of the body, I do not know. Only God knows. And he heard things which cannot be told, which man may not utter.”²²⁹

²²⁷ Matthew XVII, 1-2

²²⁸ Evangelio de Ramakrishna. Ed. Kier, page 190

²²⁹ 2 Corinthians XLI, 2-4

All Revelations are only an emotional description of the supreme ecstasy lived by John, the most loved of Christ's disciples, and the man who wrote: "I, John your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island of Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, 'Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.'"²³⁰

His mystical experience, which applies to all men, is John's best legacy to his brothers.

The description given by the prophets of the Old Testament — Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, etc — of dense clouds, whirls of fire, bronze, high sublime thrones, seraphims that cover themselves with their wings dazzled by God's glory, etc. are literal translations of direct visions and revelations that they had in true states of ecstasy.

The Samadhi of Saints The lives of all of our saints are full of what mystical theology calls ecstasy. In ecstasy, the light of the intellect and the love of the heart are centered so intensely on the vision of God that the spirit remains oblivious to what surrounds it, the inner gaze being fixed on the object of rapture. Through some kind of divine alchemy, the mind, illumined by the light of God, becomes enrapturing love; this love in turn, become light, flooding the spirit with ineffable clarity. This is expressed by the greatest saint of all times, St. Francis of Assisi: "My heart is pierced and burns with love. Mind clad in You is Love."

As if watching a great cosmic screen, the spirit enveloped in divine essence, in one gaze may enjoy and feel absolutely every event in time: what was yesterday; what is today; what tomorrow will be; the growth, evolution and dissolution of beings in the unknown abysses of God's eternity; the rhythm of millions of electrons of the physical world; all the elements, all the planes, all the planetary systems, all beings. ... Furthermore, the spirit feels and lives in full intensity the joy and bliss of feeling like a child of God — a child of that Being, so big, so perfect, so sweet, so kind, so wise, so good, so merciful... whose essence is summed up in this magic word: Love.

Faced with these experiences, having no parallel on the physical plane where we live and which transcend comparison, all souls who, in one way or another, lived them, prefer to be silent or will only say a few words about it.

St. Francis of Assisi was in Santa Maria de los Angeles to have supper with St. Clara, monks and nuns. The moment the food was served, St. Francis started to speak of God with such tenderness, highness and sweetness that all the attendants fell into such ecstasy that the people of Assisi, Bettonna and other nearby towns thought they saw Santa Maria de los Angeles, the monastery lodge and the nearby forest consumed by a great fire. But there was no physical fire — only the fire of God; that is, the fire of the Holy Ghost igniting those souls, manifesting itself as a great fire burning the whole region.

He and his fellow monks experienced this many times.

²³⁰ Revelation 1, 9-11

St. John of the Cross: His Mystical Experience Paramahansa Yogananda describes his samadhi. The Christian mystic St. John of the Cross also describes his mystical experience (ecstasy) — which is, I think, difficult if not impossible to describe in words. These experiences are lived intimately, intensely. They are so intense that if the Beloved Father did not provide some special strength, the mortal creature would burn up in millionths of a second, like a piece of straw in a great fire.

Here is how he describes his experience:

I entered where I did not know
and remained not knowing,
transcending all science.
I did not know where I entered,
But, when I saw myself there,
not knowing where I was,
Great things I understood;
I will not say what I felt,
That I remained unknowing,
transcending all science.
Of peace and mercy
Was the perfect science,
In profound solitude,
understood straight road;
it was so secret
that I remained uttering,
transcending all science.
I was so engrossed,
entranced and absorbed,
That my sense remained
deprived of all sensing;
and the spirit endowed
with a non-understood understanding,
transcending all science.
He who really reaches that state,
loses all previous knowledge.
He believes to be too much;
and his science grows so,
that he remains not knowing,

transcending all science.
The higher one climbs,
the less one understands,
and which is the flaming cloud,
that enlightened the night;
Though the one who knew it
remains always unknowing
transcending all science.
This knowing not knowing
is of such great power,
That the wise men arguing
can never win;
Their knowledge cannot fathom
non-understanding understanding,
transcending all science.
And is of such high excellence,
this Supreme Knowledge,
that no ability or science can understand it;
he who wants to conquer himself
with a non-knowing knowledge
will always transcend
And if you want to hear it, so
This whole science consists
of a higher feeling of Divine Essence:
It is the work of His mercy
to allow you to remain not understanding,
and transcending all science.

A Flash Let us briefly review what a mystical experience is:

when the human self communes with the Divine Spirit, even for a few minutes. It would be utterly impossible to have such an experience if the Spirit of God (called “grace” in theological terms) did not overwhelm the soul, purify it, did not prepare or invigorate it to an infinite degree.

Here is what a person who has had that experience tells us:

It was approximately eight o’clock in the morning. The day was bright; there were no clouds. The sun began to warm the gardens where he was walking. The nearby hills were just awakening, covered with the emeralds of the season’s wheat fields, covered

with the flowered maize fields, the copses, etc. At a distance were the white, silent guardians of our Andes, with their snowy hair illuminated by the morning sun.

He had just meditated. Rather, his meditation continued in the garden. “I prayed intensely for the Father to reveal Himself to me, at least for a few moments, to remove that invisible curtain behind which he hides his beloved presence from mortals. I prayed Him — the REAL LIGHT, THE LIGHT OF ALL LIGHT — to deign to manifest Himself to me as He is. Now, I understand” he adds, “that such a thing was childish, to say the least. It was not necessary in His plans. Nevertheless, He granted my petition, perhaps because he saw me really as a child at that moment? And doesn’t the Kingdom of God belong to the children? Don’t children see the face of God? Yes, I think that the Father considered all of this.”

The Flash is Triggered “When my petition became intense, at once I saw, or rather felt, a kind of intense flame in all my being, something like a dazzling light, like an electric current of millions and millions of volts. Something at the same time so ineffable, so powerful, so immense, so infinitely big; a mixture of light, joy, happiness, bliss, peace, grandeur, everything which is impossible for me to describe in words .

“I Would Vanish In Divine Essence” “I understood” he adds, “that had that experience lasted even a fraction more, I would have melted away in the Divine Essence without leaving a trace, as a straw disappears in an immense fire. Since then” he concludes, “I asked the Father never to repeat that experience. Never again would I wish or even think to experience something like what I had experienced that day. Was it because of fear? No, for hadn’t I seen everything in that very short period of time? Maybe because I didn’t deserve it. Yes, I really did not deserve it. I do not deserve it. Nothingness is always nothing as compared to the Whole.”

Conclusion What, then, is the practical lesson? In spiritual life, we must not ask, we must not desire the fantastic, the extraordinary. He who climbs up Mt. Cannel must do it slowly. He who wants to swim in the ocean must first exercise gradually. The blind who wants to see the sun directly after the blindness is cured must first prepare his retina so the light does not blind him.

Our beloved God prepares us slowly to reach the top of Mt. Cannel, to swim in the ineffable ocean of His essence, to bathe in the inaccessible Light of His Glory.

An Extraordinary Experience In Samadhi, practically all bodily functions cease. The self begins to fully live its life, already free from material attachment. Free, entirely free, it enters divine omnipresence, in communion with all creatures and all things.

Since it isso exceptional, I quote below from the Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda who relates to us his samadhi after receiving initiation:

“My body became immovably rooted; breath was drawn out of my lungs as if by some huge magnet. Soul and mind instantly lost their physical chains and streamed out like a fluid, piercing light from my every pore. The flesh seemed dead, although in my intense awareness I knew that never before this had I been fully alive. My sense of identity was no longer narrowly confined to a body, but embraced the circumambient atoms. People

on distant streets seemed to be moving gently over my own remote periphery. The roots of plants and trees appeared through the dim transparency of the soil. I discerned the inward flow of their sap. The whole vicinity lay bare before me. My ordinarily frontal vision was now changed to an all-perceptive vision. Through the back of my head I saw men strolling far down Raj Ghat Lane, and also noticed a white cow approaching leisurely. When she reached the open ashram gate, I observed her as though with my two physical eyes. After she passed behind the brick wall of the courtyard, I saw her clearly standing still.

All objects within my panoramic gaze trembled and vibrated like quick moving pictures. My body, Master's, the pillared courtyard, the furniture and floor, the trees and sunshine, occasionally became violently agitated until all melted into a luminescent sea; even as sugar crystals, thrown into a glass of water, dissolve after being shaken. The unifying light alternated with materialization of forms, the metamorphoses revealing the law of cause and effect in creation.

An oceanic joy broke upon the calm, endless shores of my soul. I realize that the Spirit of God is tireless Bliss; His body is endless particles of light. A swelling glory within me began to envelop towns, continents, the earth, solar and stellar systems, tenuous nebulae, and floating universes. The entire cosmos, gently luminous, like a city seen from afar at night, glimmered within the infinitude of my being. The dazzling light beyond the sharply etched global outlines faded slightly at the farthest edges; there I saw a mellow radiance, ever undiminished. It was indescribably subtle; the planetary pictures were formed of a grosser light.

The divine dispersion of rays poured from an eternal Source, blazing into galaxies, transfigured with ineffable auras. Again and again I saw the glorious beams condense into constellations, then dissolve into sheets of transparent flame. By rhythmic reversion, sextillion worlds passed into diaphanous lustre, then fire became firmament.

I recognized the center of the empyrean as a point of intuitive perception in my heart. Irradiating splendor issued from my nucleus to every point of the universal structure. Blissful 'amrita' nectar of immortality, pulsated through me with a quicksilver-like fluidity. I heard the creative voice of God resounding as AUM, the vibration of the Cosmic Motor."²³¹

It is very difficult to find, either in literature or in Eastern mysticism, such a lively description and emotional account of a spiritual experience. Only the one who has had such experiences is able to understand and value them. But let us bear in mind that these experiences are neither restricted to nor are they the privilege of saints: we can all have them if we persevere in our meditation.

Compared to such experiences, how small, insignificant and limited are our daily problems! Problems which we have caused ourselves!

At the Threshold of Death I received a letter from a young man — a typical young man of our times — who found himself before death, and returned from far, far away to continue living. "I felt happy" he tells, "because I thought I was dead." When he realized that he was still alive, he felt disappointed. The same disappointment is felt by

²³¹ Autobiography of a Yogi, Paramahansa Yogananda

those who have come back to life when they have already been far away from this mortal life with all of its complications.

After his experience, Yogananda confesses: “Suddenly, the breath returned to my lungs. With an almost unbearable disappointment, I realized that my infinite immensity was gone. Once more I was limited to the humiliating cage of the body, not easily accomodating of a Spirit. Like a prodigal child, I had run away from my macrocosmic home and had imprisoned myself in a narrow microcosm.”²³²

Through meditation, each day we come closer to that infinite ocean of glory and bliss, and fee! the blessing of His presence. This blessing cannot be compared to anything else.

We will also experience, for at least a few seconds, the ineffable joy of the souls who have had the mystical experience of samadhi.

It is most important for us to know that our present life has given us a chance to accumulate needed experiences, so that we may discover — through our own efforts — the kingdom where we belong and to which we are heirs. In return, we receive the bliss to which we are entitled.

Nirvikhalpa Samadhi in the Bible The Bible gives many examples. Patriarch Enoch, father of Methuselah, is praised:

“Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”²³³ In return for the Patriarch’s loyalty to God, when he had to abandon the present life he did not suffer pain, fear or anguish as other mortals, but consciously entered the state of supreme ecstasy in communion with God. The divine consciousness with which he was attuned at the time of his physical death manifested itself in all its glory in such a way that he did not feel the passage from physical life to the state of bliss. This is what Easterners call *Nirvikhalpa Samadhi*, or *Supreme Ecstasy*.

Elijah, the greatest of all prophets, passed directly to the supreme ecstasy of the divine meeting. The Bible says that he did not experience physical death: “And as they still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up with a whirlwind to heaven.”²³⁴ The great prophet lived his final experience in a divine, overwhelming flame which instantly consumed all his human limitations, thus entering the Infinite Ocean of Love and Bliss.

Another important example of *nirvikhalpa samadhi* is Virgin Mary, who experienced no anxieties upon her death. Mary passed directly to the state of bliss; that is, the expansion of her consciousness as a woman, a virgin, the mother of God. In other words, to the joy of what is and what represents Divine Consciousness.

Easterners always refer to the deaths of their masters as *nirvikhalpa samadhi*, and they are correct. For them it is logical that a man who lived in God-in his consciousness and experiences during his earthly life-experiences an expansion of consciousness and acquires its fullness in the glory of the blessed ones.

²³² Ibid. page 133

²³³ Genesis V, 24

²³⁴ 2 Kings II, 11

Nirvikhalpa Samadhi Through Meditation All those who use meditation to acquire the habit of attuning themselves to God during their lives shall have their nirvikhalpa samadhi, in proportion to or relation to their loyalty to daily meditation, which is the key to opening the doors of the kingdom within. This is supreme ecstasy which closes the chapter of present life; the final liberation from the chains which attach us to this present life. It is a conscious liberation, voluntary and wished for. Liberation is the entrance to eternal rest, to true peace and perfect joy. The agony at the moment of death is very much feared and strange to the great majority of men. It is their struggle between the body wanting to prolong its existence, and the soul which desires to be free. Who wouldn't wish it to be a moment of joy, peace and bliss? We can all experience this state of consciousness in return for our committed search for the supreme happiness through assiduous meditation. This is not simply a theory — it is true. Try it.

A common man dreads death. Upon death he clearly sees how all the things he was attached to vanish, dissolve, leave. This causes him anguish, desperation and pain. Why? Because he has never even dreamt of other joys — the real ones — beyond those which he searched for and enjoyed, thinking they were the only ones.

On the other hand, the one who realized through meditation that there are other joys infinitely superior to those that produce only temporary satisfaction will feel very calm and quiet. He will expect the lights of eternity to shine. And he will realize that all that he had looked for elsewhere can be found in God.

May this book awaken in you, dear reader, at least the desire for something better than what this life currently offers you.

Would you like to enter the path? It is your decision.

AUM MANI PADME HUM