

A. Gadal

**ON THE PATH TO THE
HOLY GRAIL**

Roze kruis Pers

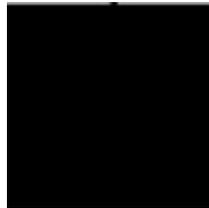
ON THE PATH TO THE HOLY GRAIL

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THE HOLY GRAIL**

The ancient Cathar Mysteries

by

A. GADAL



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PREFACE

May the content of this book find its way all over the world, so that our beloved Brother A Gadal, the Old Servant of the Preceding Brotherhood, the Guardian of the classical Sanctuaries at Ussat-Ornolac, and the faithful preacher of the Cathar Mysteries, will behold the fruits of his work in the hearts of countless seekers.

CATHAROSE DE PETRI

JAN VAN RIJCKENBORGH

THE PATRIARCH OF THE SABARTHEZ

Gadal, the faithful guardian of the Grail, is the spiritual son of the man who for a long time, for three quarters of a century, succeeded in making a large number of historical treasures of the Sabarthez, part of the county of Foix, more widely known.

The name of Adolphe Garrigou is still very much alive in the hearts of the people of La Haute-Ariège, although he died in 1897. His austere life of modesty and work is still an example for them.

As a humble pupil, his successor followed his example as much as circumstances permitted. He did not succeed in revivifying the past as he would have liked: by completing the history of the caves and caverns, and by wholly revivifying the high spirituality still pouring forth from the centre of Initiation at Ussat-Ornolac.

The subterranean passages only reluctantly reveal what they once heard and saw. There remain recesses hiding in obscurity.

The 'Harbour of Pyrenean Catharism' is vast. Its intricate history has remained almost unknown for centuries. The time had not yet come. The laurel had not yet blossomed forth.

But now the call of the Holy Grail resounds from all parts of ancient Europe.

The Sabarthez* has been awakened to new power. Exalted is the devotion of the 'Purs' on the Path of Love, Beauty and Virtue, the eternal and immortal Path to the Holy Grail.

O, beloved Patriarch! Your happiness will be great.

None of your teachings, passed on from the great Masters of old, has been lost!

PART ONE

Renouncing all earthly possessions:

joining the community:

THE CAVES OF THE ÉGLISES OF USSAT

'If any man would come after me,
let him deny himself and take up
his cross, and follow me.'

Jesus [Math.16:24]

I

THE SABARTHEZ:

THE INITIATION CAVES OF THE PARFAITS

The Ariège, a tributary of the Garonne, about halfway through its course, has its source near the border of Andorra in the centre of the Pyrenees. It flows to the north and merges with the Garonne a few miles upstream of Toulouse. The Ariège has lent its name to a province, which consists, in part, of high mountains and partly of level open land. The capital of the province is Foix.

This province largely corresponds to the mediaeval county of Foix that became crown land, when the last earl of Foix, Henry IV, was crowned king of France.

Upstream of Foix, the Ariège valley was inhabited by the Taruscs, called Tarusconienses by Pliny, long before the county of Foix was established. Caesar had spared their territory and Augustus had formalised Caesar's decision.

Tarusco, present-day Tarascon-sur-Ariège, was their capital. It remained independent as a Roman municipium (a free town enjoying Roman civil law), governed by Consuls, and always successfully protected against autocratic rule.

In 718, the Arabs crossed the Pyrenees and settled in this region. In 778, the armies of Charlemagne liberated the Spanish Marks from the yoke of the Saracens by their victory on the Pré Lombard near the gates of Tarascon.

On the eve of that memorable day, 8 September 778, a Black Virgin appeared before the enchanted eyes of the Frankish warriors: the Virgin of Sabart, who lent her name to the Sabarthez, the mountainous country of Foix.

She never allowed herself to be moved elsewhere, for three times she returned to the small chapel that the soldiers had hurriedly erected for her after their victory.

In 779, the chapel of Sabart was rebuilt, enlarged, and placed under the protection of Our Lady of Victory. On the plateau, high above its spire, the old oppidum* of the Druids protected its Black Virgin. A most important event for the whole region, the end of the Saracen oppression, is annually commemorated by a large procession on September, 8th.

Foix celebrates this day with its beautiful Patron's festival. The open-air festival at Quié, the former capital of the Keruscs, near the Sabart, also attracts many visitors on that day.

Nowadays, the Chapel of Sabart, a historical monument, is situated in the Municipality of Tarascon as a precious reminder of a glorious and beautiful past.

The name 'Sabarthez' appears for the first time after the liberation of the territory of the Taruscs.

There are many caves in the Sabarthez* around Sabart-Tarascon and the adjacent villages of Ussat-Ornolac. The most important ones are: Lombrives, Ussat, Ornolac, Bouan, Fontanet, Ramploques, the Hermit, etc. Due to the existence of these beloved, natural sanctuaries, the Sabarthez became the cradle of Pyrenean Catharism after the year 350 AD. It was called the 'Harbour* of Catharism'. On the other side of La Montagne de Thabe, or Pyrenean Thabor, the citadel of Montségur, the sentry facing Occitania*, was called the 'Lighthouse of Catharism'.

Some of these caves served as places of initiation for the Cathar priests, who were called Purs*, Parfaits or Bonshommes (Pure Ones, Perfect Ones or Good Men). Initiation was lengthy and severe. They lived mainly in the subterranean caverns that offered a safe, agreeable, immensely large abode, where they could encounter the Almighty Creative Essence in stillness and silence.

Sometimes they fortified the caves into real strongholds, called spoulgas*.

The beautiful, large and impressive cave of Lombrives served as the abode of a bishop; it was called the Cathedral of the Albigenses. (It should be noted that the name Albigenses was erroneously used for the Cathars.)

The caves of Ussat, Ormolac, Bouan and the cave of the Hermit between the first two were called the Églises (Churches) of Ussat, the Églises of Ormolac (or Bethlehem), and the Églises of Bouan. Together they are referred to as Les Trois Églises (the Three Churches).

After their initiation, the Bonshommes set out from Bethlehem, the Église of Ormolac, to propagate 'their good word' far and wide.

II MOUNT NÉGRÉ

The three Églises are situated less than three kilometres from Tarascon, the old capital of the Taruscs.

This impregnable town was built on a rocky promontory, which from its commanding position dominates five valleys that come together near Sabart. A pleasant road connects the town directly with the Églises on the right bank of the Ariège.

The House of Foix possessed a country house on the road to Ussat. It was an old castle on the top of a hill overlooking Tarascon. The Arabs had erected this hill when they besieged the old town. That's why it was called "la Tour de Mount Négré", or the Tower of the Black Mountain.

On their way to the Églises, the deacons, bishops and bonshommes made a stop here at the chapel of the castle of Foix.

Esclarmonde de Foix; Philippa, countess of Foix, her sister-in-law; Loup de Foix, a faithful servant of the Paraclete; Esclarmonde d'Alion, a sister of Loup; Ermissende, countess of Foix; Guilhabert de Castres, the great Cathar preacher... what famous names of the illustrious House of Foix are evoked when turning to that mediaeval epoch and, in conjunction with these names, to the high spirituality of the Églises and the Cathedral of Pyrenean Catharism!

On the one hand we see: Ramon-Roger de Foix (one of the most valiant and eloquent princes of his time according to the troubadour Guilhem de Tudelle), accompanied by his brilliant vassals, the Lords of Rabat, Lordat, Castel-Verdun, Arnave, and Alion, all of them faithful defenders of the Church of the Paraclete, of Pyrenean Catharism. On the other hand we see the poor Cathar priests, not possessing anything of this world, neither house nor land nor money; completely belonging to the Community; living in complete chastity, and acting as healers and preachers in the name of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The former, armed from head to toe, set out to defend the occupied and plundered fields.

The latter returned humbly to the Églises after a tour during which they distributed, without restraint, their charitable gifts, in order to meditate in tranquillity and silence about Life and Death, Beginning and End, Alpha and Omega.

And they knew that Life* is Death, and Death is the Kiss of God.

In the footsteps of these venerable Bonshommes, two common men walk on the road, a father and his son. We follow them into the immense Églises of Ussat, where the young man, a future novice, will disappear into the mysterious Cave for a long time after having passed the Symbolic Wall, while the father, with tears in his eyes, will give up his child forever. The poor man knows that he will never regain his child as a son: that he will not see him for at least four long years, after which his son will have departed Bethlehem through the Mystical Gate.

O, glorious vocation!

O, immense grief!

III

THE ÉGLISES OF USSAT

The Parfaits, liberated from the bonds of matter, and inhabiting the world of the Spirit, went far and wide to bring the good message of the God of Love, as disciples of Christ.

What did danger, grief, the anger of the wicked, pleasures and death matter to them?

He, their Lord, had ordered it; He had set the example; He had shed his blood and prayed to the Father to forgive even those who had crucified Him, those who, o utter horror, had mocked Him in His Sacrifice.

And this eternally living blood, this eternal, divine prayer of Love and Forgiveness, lent wings and courage to these disciples of their so deeply beloved Master, to these Purs who were, just like Him, capable of sacrificing themselves in Love and Compassion.

O Holy Grail!

May all people of good will understand the beauty of the path leading to You!

The whole Sabarthez* lies immersed in intense tranquillity. The sun bathes the green mountain slopes with its soft rays, making large black spots of the entrances to the caves and caverns.

The Ariège, a sparkling silver ribbon, calmly eddies into the lake in the background, and upstream the sunlight is reflected in a series of silver glints. Everything breathes sweetness, stillness and peace.

The old, walled Town of the Taruscs on its unassailable rock also lies immersed in complete rest. Its old donjon (fortification tower) and its majestic Square Tower rise above the bluish roofs of the houses and overlook the wide expanse of the valley, as if protecting it.

The two men slowly walked along the dusty road between the slopes of the Tarusc mountains that connects the proud capital with the caves of Ussat and Ormolac.

They were a father and his son, a young man.

‘We have reached the end of our journey, my son: here are the Églises of Ussat. Take courage!’

‘Yes, father, you can be certain of that.’

They stood before the wide entrance of the cave. For a short distance, the path bordered the lake formed by the Ariège, and then rose steeply for about fifty steps, ending at a small door. It was open.

The two men entered and crossed a kind of circular, open-air court. It was surrounded by heavy granite walls, and had, at its centre, a big flat stone table. It was a Druid circle. In the background, a large gate in an enormous wall, resembling a rampart, could be seen.

Upon their arrival, this second gate was opened. Father and son entered a large outer ward, the ground of which sloped slightly and was paved with debris, some kind of stone chips that fell from the rocks every year during the hard freeze.

A serious person with long hair, a long beard and bare feet in hemp sandals stood behind the gate. He wore a kind of black linen blouse, a garment that was slightly open at the front, displaying a long-sleeved vest with a little pocket near the collar in which a small booklet had been carefully stowed.

A hollow tubular belt, plaited of seventy-two threads of white wool, was wound around his waist three times, accentuating the leanness of his body. His hands and wrists, as pale as his lean face, contrasted sharply with the black colour of the blouse.

On seeing the holy man, the father and his son fell to their knees.

‘May the Lord bless you and lead you to the good end,’ he said to them. ‘Get up, my sons, and follow me. I was expecting you.’

The three of them walked along a low, but very wide wall that seemed to be part of the vertical mountainside, which rose several hundred meters. After a few minutes, they stood again before heavy walls that closed off this first space, and in which they saw another heavy, strong gate. This gate was also opened upon their arrival.

Another dignified person stood behind it who, silently relieving the first guide and blessing the new arrivals, led the father and son into the second walled space.

They followed the low, wide wall until they reached a point near a heavy, closed gate where the wall seemed to merge with the rocks.

The immense entrance to the cave could only be imagined from the enormous dark dome rising above the mysterious wall.

Without a word, the guide pointed to some stairs that opened up to a symmetric arched entrance: it was a small cave adjacent to the great cavern.

The father and son understood the gesture. They climbed the stairs, then stooped to follow a low, narrow passage and, pushing on a half-opened door, entered the Chapel. It was a natural room, equipped for its purpose. The rock displayed many small, man-made niches on both sides. On the right-hand side, a basin collected the purification water that was dripping from some stalactites in the vaulted roof. On the left, opposite the basin, was a large cavity, veiled by white linen. A block of granite lay as a stepping stone in front of the cavity. A few meters away, a small light flickered in a groove in the rock. A large, flat stone, about eighty centimetres high, had been placed exactly in the centre of the chapel on a floor of ground brick, between the basin of purification and the veiled cavity.

A person, resembling the previous two, but much older, knelt before this stone. He sat motionless, facing East (toward the small flickering light). His white hair fell on his black garment. He looked like a statue.

Father and son also knelt, prayed and waited. The father’s eyes filled with tears.

At last the old man stood up and turned to them. His handsome face was as white as his hair, but beautified by fasting, praying and meditating.

‘May the Lord bless you and guide you to the good end,’ he said to them.

Affectionately, he made the father, then the son, stand up.

‘O blessed father!’ he continued, ‘I understand your temporary grief. The moment has come to bid farewell to your beloved son. But think of what your son will be in a few year’s time! He will be a Parfait, a disciple of Christ, Master of his destiny and of the Way of the Stars. Think of the words of the Master: “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, who will not receive a hundredfold in this world and in the age to come: eternal Life.” Isn’t this the finest reward you can desire? Could a father think of greater happiness than to know that his son is worthy of such a reward? Wipe your eyes, father, and be glad.’

‘As for you my son, here you are in the House of the Lord, in the Temple of the God of Love.’

Your resolution delights me. However, this is a very serious moment for you. Before leading you into our abode, I want to give you the freedom to reconsider your decision; that is still possible...

Look at the large wall that completely surrounds the outside of our Églises, from the entrance gate to the first enclosed space. This wall does not serve, as you might have thought, to protect us. No, it has a more noble purpose. It is the Symbolic Wall! Once you have passed through it, if you want to become a perfect disciple you cannot do it a second time.

The side from which you came, and to which you still belong, is the world of matter. On the other side is the world of the Spirit, which you do not know. That world, I cannot keep it from you, is filled with four years of hard work, study, prayers and fasting. It keeps our sons in the solitude and deep silence of our beloved caves, for we must deserve the final victory of the Mystical Gate, as you will understand.

Reconsider it once more and then choose...

But don't forget that the divine Master has said: "If any man will become my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."

The father bent his head to hide his emotions. He was overwhelmed by strong emotions when he heard his beloved son say: 'I am prepared! I will follow you.' Faint-hearted, his eyes filled with tears; he felt, as if in a painful dream, two arms embrace him and two lips touch his forehead in a fervent kiss: the last kiss of his child!

Then he saw the old Bonhomme take the hand of the young man and descend into the Chapel, followed by other Bonshommes whom he had not previously seen enter the hall. The old Bonhomme opened the massive gate, passed the Symbolic Wall and then the group was swallowed up by the darkness of the mysterious cavern. He saw the pitch-black darkness, which seemed awful to him, extend far, very far. The procession vanished into that blackness, and his son disappeared from this world of matter forever, and was forever lost to him.

Fraught with grief, the poor father knelt. He was alone in the Chapel. Absolute, profound silence prevailed in the many caverns, galleries and passages he imagined behind the rock walls of the Temple in which he found himself.

For a long time he remained there, alternately praying and suffering. At last he painfully rose, approached the cavity veiled with white linen, and cried: 'O Christ, O Lord, forgive a father his weakness. God has given him to me, now God has taken him from me. Blessed be the Name of the Lord!'

After a fervent prayer he also left the Chapel.

The gate, which was forbidden for simple believers, was closed. He looked at it for a moment, knowing well that his son would not open it before many, long years had passed after this sad, and yet so happy, day.

He returned by the footpath along the Symbolic Wall, which now seemed holy to him, passed the gates of the two enclosures without seeing anybody, reached the lake of the Ariège, and slowly continued his journey back.

He walked laboriously, bumping his feet against pebbles strewn over the road.

When he reached the last bend from which he could still see the Églises of Ussat, he abruptly turned around, ardently absorbed their image, and let the tears that choked him flow freely: the deep grief of a father who has just lost his beloved son!

Witnessing the scene from the Églises Supérieures, high on the mountainside, where his meditation had led him, a Parfait prayed for the father *and* his son. He understood this human

sorrow, but he could not partake of it. On the contrary, for he knew the Beginning and the End! Truly, this was a blessed day, a day of happiness, for the son *and* for the father!

He sent the father words of comfort: 'May the Lord bless you and guide you to the good end,' and also 'the Most Wonderful Consolations of the God of Love', for Whom the son had just courageously bid farewell to the world of matter.

IV

‘Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’

Jesus [Matth.11:28-30]

Led by the hand, Matthew, the young man, had just passed the Symbolic Wall, and thus entered the cave’s wide and spacious forecourt, which was illuminated by a nut-oil lamp. Before him was the mighty entrance to the cave; an almost perfect semicircle through which an imposing hall was visible, reminding him of the familiar ‘Cathedral of Lombrives’.

Through an opening in the rock ceiling, a hundred meters ahead of him, a few very weak rays of the setting sun entered; to the left and right, deep passages could be seen that dissolved into absolute darkness.

But how high the cavern was!

Impressed by this unexpected view, and moved by the sublimity of where he was, he involuntarily stopped for a moment and looked back.

The gate was closed again, the Wall limited his view and the procession of Purs still followed him.

At that moment, a deep, soft voice slowly spoke, reverberating through the rocks, and resounding in the silence and darkness, as if from the top of the mountain: ‘It is the sixteenth hour... of the fourth day... of the new moon... oon... oon... n’ and vanished in a weak echo.

Immediately thereafter, another equally earnest, slow, soft voice resounded from the centre of the hall, about halfway to the top. All present knelt, bowed their heads and folded their hands.

Matthew immediately recovered and knelt as well.

‘Our Father* who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name!
Thy kingdom come!
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation... ation... on... n... n.’

The echo died away.

The Parfaits rose and disappeared in the winding passages.

Only the old Bonhomme stayed behind with Matthew.

‘My son, I will take you to the person who will support you from now on. Guilhem is good, kind, intelligent and devout. I could not find a better man. He will be your “Ancien”. Follow your Ancien like a shadow. He will certainly lead you on the right path. Here he comes!’

Matthew hadn’t seen him coming; his eyes hadn’t adjusted to the darkness. A lean, but agile, young man came forward and bowed before the old Bonhomme.

‘Guilhem,’ he said, ‘this is your young brother.’

Would you be so kind as to start showing him our abode? He has sufficient time to learn what he has to know.'

And as both brothers bowed humbly, the old Bonhomme laid his hands on their heads with the words: 'My children, receive the most wonderful Consolations of Bethlehem.'

Like a ghost, he disappeared through a passage on the right side of the large hall.

When the young men were alone, Matthew plunged into a sad reverie in which he threatened to become stuck.

Guilhem grasped his hand and said: 'Come on, don't let your thoughts wander any longer. I'll show you our abode; that will distract you.'

And he took Matthew along.

First they visited the large hall.

Matthew caught a glimpse of the high, broad 'cheminée', which, by a rudimentary staircase, led to the Églises Supérieures a hundred meters higher, directly above the Symbolic Wall. He also saw a gently sloping passage, the end of which was shaped like a round window in the vault of the cavern: 'That is the Announcement of the Time,' Guilhem said softly; and pointing to the adjacent passage: 'This is the Voice of Prayer'.

They then returned to the entrance and turned into the large passage on the left. They walked a few hundred meters, wherein Matthew allowed himself to be guided, for he could not see anything. Darkness and silence ruled in these places. In a bend in the passage, he discovered a tiny point of light: a miniature lighthouse in this dark ocean.

'This is "the Gallery of the Cemetery", the burial ground for the material body,' Guilhem explained. Feeling a slight shiver in the hand of his Jeune*, he added: 'We won't go there now. Look, to our left you see the passage to the kitchens. Do you see that point of light there at the end?'

Later we will see, by the exit, the small platform that forms another entrance. Let us now return!'

Once again they came into the Great Hall.

Suddenly the voice calling the hours resounded from the top of the Églises:

'It is the seventeenth hour... of the fourth day... of the new moon... oon... oo... n.'

The voice leading the prayer immediately followed:

'Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name,' etc.

Guilhem and Matthew, who had knelt to listen and pray, rose again and continued their tour through the passage on the right. It was vast and had numerous low, narrow, short side-cubicles on both sides: they were the small, personal rooms where the inhabitants of the cavern* came to spend part of the night.

Guilhem showed his brother his sleeping place.

His 'bed linen' consisted of branches and leaves. A stone, its centre hollowed out and filled with oil and a wick, served as a lamp, which was put in a small niche in the wall. A pointed stick, stuck into a crevice of the rock as well as possible, served as a clothes peg.

Matthew's heart tightened as he surveyed the austerity of his 'bedroom'. He was thinking of his parental home, his mother's care, his comfortable bed and the crackling fire in the hearth.

Again Guilhem grasped Matthew's hand to continue the tour. There were passages and small cubicles (bedrooms) everywhere, on both the left and the right.

Finally they reached a large, almost circular hall that appeared to be the end of the cave. In its centre, heavy, mostly flat stones were placed in a semicircle on a floor of loam and silica,

which was soft to the feet. It was the communal refectory, poorly illuminated by a stone lamp.

The communal use of all possessions was an absolute rule, as the Divine Master had ordered and exemplified. Poverty is the ideal state; the mendicant state is a holy state, a virtue! Those shrinking from this extreme requirement did not enter the Community.

Matthew knew these things; he was not at all surprised to see nothing but stones: no tables, no chairs, no utensils, nothing reminding him of a refectory. He followed Guilhem, who showed him two upward sloping passages at the back of the refectory, hidden behind boulders that had fallen from the vault.

‘This is the passage to the Chapel, used by the Purs* only,’ he said. ‘We, Jeunes, are allowed to use it only when the Master says so.

And that passage runs from the cave to the Workshops. We shall go there tomorrow.’

They had hardly time to leave the passage before the Parfaits entered as silently as shadows. Their clothes merged with the darkness of the subterranean passages. They were followed by a group of about ten young men, novices, recognisable by their ordinary clothes. Without a word, without even noticing their new companion, they all went to the centre of the refectory. They sat down on the stones of the circle and surrendered to prayer and reflection. Truly, a ‘School of Silence’!

Guilhem and Matthew followed them and took their seats in the corner reserved for novices.

A deep silence prevailed while they waited for the arrival of the Master.

Suddenly the old Bonhomme appeared, alone, without having been seen or heard, and stood next to the stone reserved for him, halfway along the line that formed the base of the semicircle.

A Parfait immediately got up, holding an earthenware dish with water for purification. He held the dish up to the Patriarch who dipped his fingers in it. Then he went to each of the brothers in the circle, who did the same. The novices, however, did not join in this ritual.

Then the Master raised his arms in a gesture of blessing, knelt, and while all present followed his example, recited the only prayer given by Jesus.

‘Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy Name,’ etc.

Matthew was deeply moved by what he saw: the place, lost in the bowels of the earth; the surroundings, this immense cavity in the mountain; the fervour of the prayer; the almost complete darkness; these beings, who had freed themselves from all earthly bonds for the sake of Love and Faith; this true image of the Community of Christ and His disciples. All of this made an indelible impression on the consciousness of the novice.

All rose and sat down on the stones of the circle.

The old Bonhomme took a big loaf of bread from a basket behind the stone he was sitting on and broke it up. A jug stood beside him in the darkness.

After a gesture of blessing, the basket of blessed bread and the jug were passed around and everyone took his share. Along with the bread, the menu consisted of fresh fruit and a plate of thick vegetable soup.

A frugal meal taken in absolute silence!

While eating, Matthew reflected deeply on this mysterious ritual, without understanding its meaning. Not until much later, in the course of his studies, would he learn that Jesus considered the breaking of bread as a kind of Holy Supper, a communal experience of being

taken up into the currents of renewal. And that the disciples piously preserved this ritual of breaking bread and celebrated it with the same intention.

He had also observed that the old Bonhomme had spoken of 'Brothers' when addressing Parfaits who were younger than he. This was a consequence of the fact that in the circle of Christ no hierarchy exists. All were called 'Brother'. He had discarded all titles signifying superiority, such as rabbi, father and Master. Only He was Master, and because only God was Father, the greatest of all must be the servant of all.

It is evident that ignorant, secular human beings could not easily understand all of this.

Matthew and Guilhem, who were the last to leave, saw the Brothers disappear one by one into the numerous winding passages of the cavern*. They also rose to go to their cell in the rock, to sleep on their bed of branches and dry leaves.

The oil lamps at a few places in the bends of the passages were extinguished one by one. Soon the cavern lay in deep darkness.

An eerie silence filled the halls and deep passages, interrupted only by the sound of water dripping from the stalactites, and by the Announcement of the Time, followed by the Voice of Prayer.

Poor Matthew! Understandably, he could not fall asleep that first night in the Églises.

The whole outside world, his family, his home and his village, which he would not see for a very long time, passed before his eyes. But his willpower brought him back to reality. The unfamiliar coldness of the stone, the night-time coolness of the air in the cove, the hardness of his less than elementary bed, kept him awake for several hours, while his Ancien slept like a log.

However, nature resumed its course: his nerves calmed down, his eyes closed and finally sleep granted him merciful rest.

‘Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, not about your body, what you shall put on.

Therefore do not be anxious, saying: "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.’

Jesus [Matth.6:25, 31-33]

Guilhem was the first to wake up.

He did not want to disturb his Jeune yet. He knew by experience how exhausting the first nights in the Églises were for new novices.

He rose silently, but not so quietly that it kept Matthew from leaping to his side. ‘You could have slept a bit longer if you wanted to. It is certainly not yet time to go to the Workshop.’

‘O, I am used to getting up early. At home, everybody is up before sunrise.’

One by one, the others appeared from their ‘diverticules’, guided by the wavering lights of lamps, which had already been lit at each intersection.

‘The Great Brothers in charge of the Announcement of the Time and the call to Prayer had prepared everything at the crack of dawn,’ the Ancien explained, while they walked to the Great Hall.

At that very moment the voice resounded high in the mountain. ‘It is the fourth hour... of the fifth day... of the New Moon...’ and they put heart and soul into the first prayer of the day.

‘Our Father who art in heaven...,’ which they repeated a second time simultaneously with the echoes in the Cavern.

Daylight glimmered only weakly through the great arch of the entrance, above the Symbolic Wall.

As he rose, Matthew saw that the other novices and also Brothers were still on their knees praying, waiting for daybreak.

Almost simultaneously all rose, crossed the refectory and went to the Workshops. But the Brothers walked through the Chapel, while the novices took the direct path to the Workshops.

Guilhem explained that there was a passage between the Chapel and the Workshops. ‘The Brothers go through the Chapel before joining us, but not all of them because some of them have to look after the Spiritual service.’

Matthew entered the upward sloping passage.

About fifty meters ahead he perceived the first light of dawn. He approached it and found himself out in the open, on a small terrace overlooking the valley. With joy he absorbed the splendid panorama.

The mountain of Lombrives could be seen on the opposite side of the valley, and through the thick mists, the Cathedral began to reveal its immense dark entrance. Down below he saw the lake of the Ariège, its water splashing against the Mountain of Ussat along the Églises. To the right was the closed exit of the Chapel, and to the left was an unfamiliar cave he assumed to be the Workshops.

He was delighted by this beautiful view and hurried back into the cave of the Workshops. It was a beautiful front cave, with a high gothic entrance opening to an enormous hall.

Leisurely, Matthew looked into the many corners. A large kiln was excavated in the rock.

‘Our Brothers are Purs*,’ Guilhem explained. ‘Everything they use, must be pure. They are the only ones permitted to apply the final touch to everything.’

Since the Jeune* did not understand him properly, he added: ‘This large kiln is used for making ceramics.’

The sacred Symbol of the Holy Grail and the chalice used for purification, for example, may only be touched by pure hands; this also applies to the bread for the Service, the bread that is broken during the meals, the sacred linen clothes and the belt. We, novices, start the work and prepare everything; but the Brothers, the Parfaits, finish what we have begun.’

They entered the large hall.

‘Here are the two ovens for baking bread,’ Guilhem continued. ‘There are the bags of grain, the millstones for grinding it and the kneading trough. Here you see the piles of wool, flax and hemp, near the instruments for rippling, spinning and weaving. We grind the grain with the millstone, we spin the yarn, and press nuts for oil; we also select the fruit that is most suitable for preserving, but our great Brothers finish the work.’

The provisions are stored at the back of the Great Hall. There is a corner that is dry in winter and cool in summer.’

‘Look there!...’ Matthew pointed to a pile of bags, baskets and hampers. He was surprised and could not help asking: ‘Where does all of that come from?’

‘Our friends from the Sabarthez obey the commands of the Divine Master, as we do:

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume. Give away what you possess. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes.”

They know that all of us are disciples and they send their gifts to us regularly. Guillaume de Lordat, Othon de Quié, Bertram of Tarascon, Guillaume-Bernard d’Arnavé, Arnaud de Castel-Verdun, and not the least of all, Raymond-Roger de Foix, all those good Seigneurs of our Sabarthez see to it that we do not lack anything and send us all we need: grain, fruit, flax, wool and hemp. And don’t forget the faithful who are certainly prepared to forgo very much for us.

Our Venerable Ancien* pays them back by medical care, material help, and “Wonderful Consolations of Bethlehem”. And our Great Brothers would not tolerate not being able to go everywhere, under all weather conditions, to render “the good end” to all and show them the “Way of the Stars”.

But let us now start working.’

They went to where the grain was ground, sat down on the ground, and crushed the grain with a serrated piece of granite, which they turned lightly over the grain that was held in place by the notches of a millstone. The flour and the bran fell into a coarse sieve. Two Parfaits kneaded the dough, and after the necessary interval for it to rise, baked the bread in two small ovens that had been carved in the rock, in the same manner as the crockery oven.

By this work, the morning passed quickly. At eleven o’clock (which time the Brothers derived from the position of the sun) everyone left the Workshops and went to the refectory, each by the path meant for him. They arrived together in the Great Hall to join their prayers with the ‘Voice Announcing the Time’ and the ‘Voice of Prayer’, the profound voice of the Great Brothers in the Églises Supérieures.

Next they went to the refectory where lunch was served following the usual rituals.

The afternoon in the Workshops also did not seem unduly long. They had to clean the flax fibres, in preparation for cooking, spinning and weaving. Spinning and weaving were done by a Pur in order to obtain, as always, the highest degree of pureness.

Silence also ruled in the Workshops. Only a few novices talked briefly and softly with each other.

Usually this concerned advice of the Anciens to their Jeunes. During the first months, the Jeunes were only required to absorb the atmosphere of the Community, and to become acquainted with the work routine, activities and Prayers. They especially had to raise themselves up to this new life that was so different from family life. They had to liberate themselves from the terrible impression of austere indifference and aloofness which the Great Brothers, who had already been taken up by the Rock and its Mysteries, made on the novices who approached them, with their habits of family life still in mind.

Rejection of all earthly possessions, entering into the Community and absolute Obedience were the first steps of the Initiation of the Disciples of the Christ. Matthew understood their strictness, and recalled inwardly the words of the Divine Master:

‘For where your treasure is, there will your heart also be.’

‘No one can serve two Masters: God and Mammon.’

‘Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own evil be sufficient for the day.’

He knew that Jesus required His disciples to be completely detached from the earth and totally devoted to their task; hence the requirement: no travel money, no money in their belt, not two shirts!

They must practise absolute poverty and be dependent on hospitality and alms. Longing for possessions was considered a flaw.

‘For whoever would save his life will lose it, and losing his life for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel means salvation.’

‘For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul.’

But Jesus, who rigorously demanded everything from his disciples, was himself the Great Example!

Then, why should he be afraid of the heat, cold and suffering of his miserable carnal body?

We have to know suffering, as He did!

And, inwardly strengthened by his reflections, Matthew began to forget the severe requirements of the Symbolic Wall.

VI

‘...so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good...’

‘For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?’

Jesus [Math.5:45, 46]

It was Sunday, the Day of the Lord!

Nobody was in the Workshops on that day.

Everybody, including the novices, spent their time in the Chapel, except the Brothers who had a special task.

The previous evening, the Master had opened the passage to the Chapel for the novices. Early in the morning, Matthew and Guilhem had hurried to the Holy Place. But they were not the first ones to arrive. All the Brothers who did not have a task were already on their knees praying, while a few novices already occupied their places behind the Brothers.

‘The Star of the Shepherd’, a few metres from the white linen-veiled cavity, spread a twinkling light, while the light from the stone lamps in the little niches in the wall intensified the weak rays of daylight filtering through the entrance.

Complete silence ruled; not a single shadow moved, though the hardness of the packed earth ultimately hurt their knees.

This silent, communal meditation and prayer lasted a long time: the Voice of the Announcement of the Time had already resounded twice, when it announced the seventh hour.

What did hours mean to these Parfaits who were not distracted by thoughts of beginning or ending, and who were used to suffering without taking any notice?

At that moment, like a spirit, the Patriarch, the Master suddenly stood before the Table of Service. How did he come to be there without being seen or heard? So great and ardent was their directedness that nobody could have answered. Not until they heard the words ‘Brothers and sons’, did everyone look up and focus their attention on the holy stone Table.

Spontaneously all rose, crossed their arms, and awaited the Invocation with which the Ancien commenced the Service.

The Table was covered by a pure linen cloth, on which the Gospel of John, the Book of the Well Beloved, lay open. Then the Patriarch, with his eyes turned to heaven, raised his arms to protect all those attending and, while pouring the Beautiful Consolations of Bethlehem over them, softly pronounced, full of inspiration, the Invocation with which the holy Ceremony was opened:

‘If I am worthy, I myself am the rational Temple of God.’

‘Jesus Christ, His Son, is the living image of a living Majesty.’

‘A soul that has been taught by the Truth is his Altar.’

‘The honours and sacrifices that must be given to Him consist only of simple and pure prayers.’

He knelt and everyone followed suit.

With bowed heads and clasped hands, the Lord's Prayer seemed to float from the floor up to the vault of the Chapel, with soft echoes fading away into the rock.

'Our Father who art in heaven...'

O, what a beautiful and fervent prayer!

Next the 'public Confession of sins' took place, while they were all still on their knees. This formed the third part of the Service on Sundays only.

The Patriarch began to paraphrase Faustus, the famous Master of Milève:

'O, Christ, o Divine Master,

I have kept the three elements of perfection:

the purity of my hands,

the purity of my mouth,

the purity of my heart.

I have left father and mother, brothers and sisters.

I have rejected everything the Gospel requires us to give up; I no longer carry gold or silver in my purse.

I live by the simple food each day brings. I do not worry what I shall eat or drink tomorrow, or what clothes I shall put on.

In me, you see the beatitudes that You have preached and of which the Gospel is composed.

You see that I am poor, meek and peaceful, and that my heart is pure.

You see how I, in tears, suffer hunger, thirst, persecution and the hatred of the world for the sake of Justice.

Have I sinned?

Only the Father and You can know.

My ignorance is the cause of my silence, for I have done everything to avoid errors. Forgive me if I have sinned against You.'

The Confession ended quickly. What could these poor souls, who were detached from the world, and for whom the commands of Christ were sacred and absolute, have to confess?

'May the Lord bless you and guide you to the good end,' the Master said, blessing those attending with his left forearm, forefinger and middle finger raised, and the three other fingers bent into the hollow of his hand.

The Brothers and the novices took their seats on the stones in the semicircle.

It is impossible to describe the deep emotions that filled Matthew. No wonder! The simplicity of the gestures, the naturalness of the words, the austere seriousness of the place stimulated the soul to roam to more lofty spheres.

Now the fourth part of the Service began, a simple paraphrase of the Gospel.

Matthew knew that when Jesus went into the Temple, he began to read. The 'hazzan', the official reader, then handed him the Book. He unrolled it, and read the 'parascha' or 'haphtara' of the day. From this text, He extracted those developments that conformed with his ideas, 'midrash' or commentary.

Matthew imagined the Patriarch as being Christ in person, as the Patriarch after having bowed deeply three times, dipped his fingers into the water for purification that had dripped from the stalactites and had been collected in a basin in the rock to the right of the Service

Table. Then the Patriarch took the Holy Book from the pure linen cloth, and started reading in a voice full of devotion:

‘Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.’

And the voice continued slowly and emphatically:

‘When you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, who want to be seen by men.

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door, and when you are aware that you are alone, pray to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. But God, your Father, knows what you need before you ask Him.’

Matthew drank in every word. He even found it unpleasant when the paraphrase of the Gospel was over. He would have liked the voice to continue for a while.

He was the last to kneel to participate in the Prayer that concluded the Service.

The Master had returned the Bible to the Table, washed his hands again and, slowly and very seriously, bent his knee three times.

Then he turned to the cavity in the rock on his left, which was covered by the white linen. Solemnly he moved towards it, wiped the soles of his poor, worn sandals on the floor, and stepped on the granite block placed against the rock below it. With all of his attention he carefully lifted the white linen veil, took a precious vase from the cavity, raised it up before his eyes, and slowly, very slowly, turned around as if he did not want to move the Holy Symbol. He extended his hands forward: like a statue, as if merging with the block of granite on which he was standing, he stood there as the bearer and guardian of this Divine Ceremony.

For a moment he remained standing there.

All the Brothers had fallen on their knees in adoration, their foreheads touching the earth, and, with complete inner directedness, detached from everything around them.

‘The Holy Grail!... The Perfection in Christ!’ Matthew said to himself, without looking up. ‘Lapis ex Coelis*!’ What a sublime moment!

Slowly, the Patriarch turned to the left again, replaced the Holy Symbol in the cavity, carefully rearranged the white linen cover, stepped down from the granite block and returned to the Table.

There he bent his knee three times to conclude ‘the benediction of the Ritual’, turned to the right to the Parfait next to him, and gave him the Kiss of Peace, which everyone in the circle in turn passed on to his neighbour.

To conclude the Service, all prayed the Lord’s Prayer together, on their knees.

After the Patriarch had taken up the Holy Book and the pure cloth again, he disappeared into the passage leading into the interior of the Églises without another word.

One by one, the Brothers came to the Table, knelt and, with their hands placed flat on the stone, lost themselves in meditation for a long time.

Matthew would like to have stayed in the Chapel forever.

But Guilhem grasped his hand and led him through the exit to the plateau of the cave of the Workshops, not of course to go and work there on this Sunday devoted to the Lord, but to rest for a moment in the beautiful sunlight and fresh air.

After lunch and prayers, they walked through the many passages in order thoroughly to acquaint Matthew with his new abode. Next they attended a talk the Master was giving about the celebration of the annual feasts:

the Feast of Birth, the Manifestation of Christ;
the Feast of the Passion, without the suffering of Christ;
the Feast of the Resurrection, without sojourn in the Grave;
the Feast of the Ascension, the triumph of the Passion;
the Feast of the Pouring-out of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles;
and finally: the Feast of the Paraclete, the Manisola, in autumn.

In fact, there were four great Feasts:

Christmas (Nadal), Easter (Pascor), Pentecost (Pentecosta), and the Manisola;
two were devoted to the Saviour: Christmas and Easter, and two to the Comforter:
Pentecost and Manisola.

Each of the first three Feasts would have to be preceded by forty days of fasting.

Matthew, intelligent and pious by nature, absorbed all these words and stored them indelibly in his memory.

Without much effort he fitted into the Community; he would certainly not be left behind on the strenuous Path to the Holy Grail, which he had voluntarily entered.

VII

‘A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.
And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.
Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground
without your Father’s will.
But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.
Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.’

JESUS [Matth.10:24, 28-31]

The days in the Églises passed with perfect regularity for Matthew. He had feared the severe winter for a moment, because he thought that the inner halls and passages would be extremely cold. However, he realised his error.

The constant temperature in these subterranean caves, seemingly cool in the warm season, felt quite pleasant when rain, snow and frost were raging outside, for the air in the interior does not follow the changes in the outside temperature.

Even in the cave of the Workshops they felt comfortable: the burning boxwood trees and gorses from the mountain spread an agreeable heat. The ovens burned continuously and served as ‘central heating’!

After some time, after he had become used to the harsh life, the changes in temperature no longer bothered him.

The teachings, the lessons, the talks became more frequent and more interesting. Although he was still somewhat left on his own, Matthew began to understand that the Master had started serious spiritual Work with him that would require a great deal of effort from him, for there was still much to see and to learn.

Resolutely, he embarked on the study of the Doctrine of the Faith:

There is only one God, who is referred to by three names:

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
the foundation, the source of Good.

The Good is Life, Light, Intelligence, the Word; it is the Son of God, it is God Himself.

And Matthew began, however vaguely, to understand Evil. Evil is Lucifer or Satan, the rebellious Angel; it is pride, ambition, excessive desires and lies.

But one day, Christ, the Conqueror, will return the repenting Lucifer to the feet of the God of Love! And the God of Love will, in utter compassion, forgive Lucifer’s ambitious revolt!

After each talk, the Master gave Matthew sufficient time to assimilate the teachings he received.

On sunny days, the Master took the novices to the slopes of the Mountain and taught them about the plants and the wild animals; and in the evening, about the movement of the stars.

And while they were enjoying themselves, they were at the same time being instructed step by step:

‘The Son is the Creator; Lucifer only constructs the form. Lucifer, moved by pride and ambition, wanted to imitate the works of Christ; he is the mimicker of God.

Hence his work is only a lie, an imperfect world, a collapse, nothingness.

The world is an animal. The elements, the forests and the mountains have a voice, a language; the plants have affections, feelings; the stars are Spirits clothed in Fire; the Heavenly Hosts, the morning stars, and the choirs of the stars are real.

A human being consists of Spirit and Matter, of life and substance. The soul, the heavenly human being, is the work of the Son; the body, the earthly human being, is the work of matter.

Souls are lower angels that have been expelled from Heaven; the birth of a human being is the fall of an angel.

Hence creation is a fall, life is a penance, and the earth is a place of testing and chastisement!

The exiled souls return to Heaven by Purification. First of all, this Purification occurs on earth; next from star to star, by successive ascensions, according to one's progress on the path of Perfection.

Life is a sullied garment that is discarded at death; it *can* (and *should*) become the first stage of the Path of the Mysteries: from caterpillar to pupa, and from pupa to the perfect insect (the butterfly).

True Life means Death, the Kiss of God!

The unworthy souls evolve from star to star until their final deliverance into the heart of God.

'There is no hell in Eternal Love!'

Matthew began to gain insight: the words he heard daily, and which often turned up in his mind, became alive:

'I am the Alpha and the Omega.'

'I have neither Beginning nor End.'

'For from the Beginning to the End is Death!'

'But the End is the Beginning of Life!'

In his moments of reflection, he followed the Way of the Stars, as if in a dream. The Way for a Parfait, for a Pur, so glorious that he can descend without fear into the material world, after having climbed this Way with the help of the Holy Grail, which has been temporarily moved to the Spiritual World.

And he realised with joy: it *will* come: later! The Path of the Holy Grail! The Way of the Stars! The 'pupa' must be transformed into a Perfect Astral Body!

The longing to learn became ever stronger in Matthew; and with joy, the Master took this into account.

The lessons continued:

'The One Godhead is referred to by three names:

Agnostos, the Father,

Demiourgos, the Son,

and Parakletos, the Spirit.

The Father is God in his absolute, invisible and unknowable aspect;

the Son is the visible God, the Creator of the World, and revealed to Humanity;

the Spirit is a female principle; created by the Comforter before the Dawn, and descended to the earth clothed in an etheric body, beautiful and glorious as a God.

Christ did not come to the earth to expiate, but to propagate the Truth.

He takes away the sins of the world with the Word.

He could neither be a victim, nor die, nor suffer on the Cross: because He is *God!*
Life is Death that liberates humanity from an evil world, from mortal and useless flesh.
Death grants the Life of Angels.

Hence, a pupil must strive for continuous Purification through poverty, fasting and absolute chastity.

The pure Cathar has no possessions.

Charity and hospitality are natural to him.

He does not belong to himself, but to the Cathar Community, which is his Master.

He eats not meat, but vegetables;

and according to where he lives and his state of health, he uses a little milk or a few eggs.

In imitation of the Divine Master, he observes three periods of rigorous fasting, lasting forty days each year:

around Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.

His ideal state is a state of purity;

the holy state is a state of Celibacy;

the most venerable state is widowhood.

The latter state is, however, exceptional because marriage is not an imperfection.'

The Master did not forget to teach them the duties of the Parfaits. They had to be healers;

in battles, they only came to prevent bloodshed and to care for the wounded;

they granted the Consolamentum* (as the highest Consolation) to the dying;

they treated the illnesses of the body as well as those of the soul;

just as the ancient Magi, they had knowledge of the stars as well as of medicinal plants;

they had to go everywhere to allay grief and to render the Wonderful Consolations of Bethlehem.

Before he became a novice, Matthew already knew that the fame of the Brothers was due to their holy lives, their knowledge and their being eagerly prepared to sacrifice themselves. He had heard them called 'Friends of God' and they were welcomed as 'Angels from Heaven'.

As his 'abstinentia'* had come to an end, and his 'probatio' had satisfied all the requirements, he yearned to be able to make further progress on the Path to the Holy Grail.

Mès-Naut!... Mès-Naut!...

(which means: ever higher, ever higher!)

Abstinentia, the noviciate, the period of the endura, of teaching and of practising the life of a Parfait (for a period of two years) had earned him the respect of all the Brothers:

Probatio, with its three periods of compulsory fasting, had earned him their friendship;

Traditio, knowledge of the Doctrine of Faith and Prayer, had given him a good reputation with the Holy Men.

The moment had arrived in which he would be elected to continue to the second part of his Initiation.

The following Sunday, during the Service, Matthew was given an extra fast of forty days.

He knew what this meant: and his inner joy was great!

Kneeling, he prayed for a long, long time.

PART TWO

THE CAVES OF THE ÉGLISES OF ORNOLAC:

THE HERMIT

‘How dare you say to your brother:
“Please, let me take the speck out of your eye,”
when there is the log in your own eye?
You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye,
and then you will see clearly
to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.’

Jesus [Matth.7:4-5]

VIII THE HERMIT

‘How dare you say to your brother: “Please, let me take the speck out of your eye,” when there is the log in your own eye?

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.’

Jesus [Matth.7:4-5]

Matthew’s extra fast had ended.

Pale, skinny, but as strong in body, heart and spirit as the rock in which he lived, he waited for the arrival of the Patriarch.

As usual he rose at the crack of dawn and went to the Great Hall to listen to the Announcement of the Time and the Prayer.

He had hardly finished his prayer, when he felt a light hand on his shoulder. He rose to his feet, turned around and stood before his Venerable Master.

Without a word, the latter gave a sign to follow him. Respectfully, Matthew joined the shadow that vanished into the passages.

The Patriarch led him through the refectory into the Chapel where they knelt and prayed.

Then they went to the Workshops, where the Brothers and novices had just begun their work.

At the back of the hall, they climbed to the top of the wall by the small notches that had been cut in the rock. There was a small, hidden opening, a dark, slightly sloping passage, a low, semi-dark space and an opening, halfway up the vertically rising mountain, which looked out over the lake that washed the base of the rocks, deep down the steep slope.

The Patriarch pretended to ignore the instinctive gesture, by which the Jeune, caught by this impressive spectacle, drew back. Slowly he continued across the rough rocks, his feet trying to find support on boxwood shrubs that seemed to be hanging there as if by chance.

Matthew braced himself, suppressed his fears and followed. More than three hundred meters high, the trail led about twenty meters along the steep flank of the mountain. Then they were standing in front of a small cave, almost at the top of the mountain, opposite the entrance of the Églises.

The Master stopped for a moment as if to inspect the surroundings.

Matthew could see another path cut into the rock, leading to a higher plateau. Because he had visited the Églises Supérieures many times, he realised that, apart from the narrow passage into the interior of the mountain, there was also another path on the outside connecting the lower and the higher ‘floors’. It was certainly far from easy to walk, because it was hidden under thorn bushes, boxwood bushes and all kinds of high grass.

Matthew distinguished a number of symbols that had been roughly drawn with thin charcoal lines on the right wall of the small cave.

When he stopped to take a close look, the Patriarch said: ‘We not only continue the work of the Apostles and of the First Christian church, but we are also the keepers of their Knowledge and their pure spirituality.’

These symbols, which you do not understand, but with which you will soon become familiar, will bring you still closer to Him who has shown us the Path.'

From there, a path ran another hundred metres along a pile of stones from the plateau to a rocky protrusion on the Mountain of Ussat. Here, there were several caves. The one they entered was called the Cave of the Hermit.

They crossed through a walled space, opened a gate in the defence wall of the front cave and reached, by way of a passage of ten metres, a spacious hall, into which daylight could enter directly.

Some Parfaits walked slowly up and down, lost in the texts of voluminous manuscripts.

Nobody took any notice of the arrival of Matthew, who was passed on to Guilhem's care by the Patriarch. Yes, it was Guilhem, who had left the Églises of Ussat before his Jeune, whom he now welcomed into the Hermit.

Again Guilhem, who was glad to be re-united with his good friend, would serve as Ancien to Matthew.

He began to show him around.

There were hardly any differences here with regard to the material aspects: the refectory, the meals, the beds etc., were just as he was accustomed to in the Églises of Ussat.

However, there was less manual work, but much more intellectual work.

The New Cave was longer than the other ones and traversed the whole mountain. Near the exit was the Chapel.

Matthew was impressed when he saw it. After he had crossed a number of halls and passages, and had crawled with great effort on his stomach for about ten meters through a low, pitch-dark space, he rose to his feet and suddenly found himself in the full light of the Chapel.

It was a circular hall, the vault of which, though not very high, vanished into a cleft which, invisible to the eye, continued halfway up into the mountain. Daylight entered through this cleft and spread a soft, intimate light in the Chapel. On the east side, Matthew noticed a semicircular basin of polished marble, which was the 'Fount Santa', the Holy Fountain, as Guilhem explained.

'Behind the Fount Santa, near the vaulted passage you see over there, the 'Labyrinth' begins. I cannot tell you more about it, because we are not allowed to go there yet. Let us return.'

They returned through the narrow passage to the inner cave, visited beautiful passages which were covered with a white deposit, and finally reached the hall near the entrance of the cave.

Matthew was certain that he would not have any difficulty getting acclimated to his new life. He was prepared to enter the second part of his initiation.

IX

‘The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all that he himself is doing.’

Jesus [John 5:19-20]

Matthew diligently followed the lessons of his different Masters and applied himself to studying the Holy Scriptures.

Determinedly he embarked into the domain of the Spirit.

‘Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures unto eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on Him has God the Father set His seal.’

Thus Jesus had commanded; and He must be obeyed. And the successive commands of the Divine One were:

‘I am the Bread of Life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’

‘It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail.’

‘The words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and Life.’

‘He who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.’

For Matthew, it was not always easy immediately to understand the lofty meaning and spiritual value of these divine words.

But the Masters were good, gentle and patient; they often repeated the explanations that were either not, or insufficiently, understood.

For his part, the ever-devoted and persevering pupil did not let a single opportunity pass to profit from the lessons and the repeated explanations.

In addition, time counted for neither the Brothers nor Matthew.

‘I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by me.’

‘I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor, to be with you for ever.’

‘The Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.’

‘When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.’

And he repeated the words of John, the Well Beloved one:

‘God is Love, and he who abides in Love abides in God, and God abides in him.’

Yes, at last Matthew understood.

Religion means serving the Spirit;

the Heavenly Bread makes living in the Spirit possible;

and the Spiritual Baptism and the Eucharist are heavenly gifts of grace, an indication from the Holy Spirit to complete the Manifestation.

All these things gradually increased and matured his initial insight, and began to show him the letter as well as the spirit of the Cathar Gospel.

What Matthew enjoyed most were the uncomplicated stories concerning Jesus' life that the Great Brothers told in turn; many aspects of which were unknown to most people. These stories were not told in any logical sequence, but were certainly intended to enrich the pupils' imagination.

He saw himself among the Essenes, where Jesus spent a number of years; in his mind, he experienced their life of retreat and silence, and made serious and useful comparisons with the life of the Parfaits:

the Essenes diligently studied the hidden powers and effects of plants and minerals;

some of them possessed the gift of prophecy;

a noviciate of three years was required before they could join the Brotherhood;

then: communal meals, sacred clothes, prayers, silence, a ban on swearing oaths;

hatred of lies, humility and an exemplary moral life followed;

the esoteric tradition of the Prophets.

And what did not escape his attention was:

sanctification of the consciousness;

individual freedom;

purification by a modest life;

strictly observing the Rules of the Order;

strictly guarding the Secrets of the Order!

This was logically followed by:

the joyful ascending of the soul, liberated from the fetters of the body, as if from a long state of slavery;

Love of one's neighbour; not being allowed to swear an oath to affirm the Truth; solitude in and love of the caves, because of their immeasurable influence on profound meditation;

the fraternal Last Supper in preparation for the Sacrifice;

the Mystery of the Son of Man and the Son of God.

The principal Holy Caves became familiar to him:

the Cave of Engaddi in Palestine, on the shores of the Dead Sea, and above all those of Egypt, on the shores of Lake Maoris.

He knew even the highest initiation of the fourth degree, which was granted to Christ, in all its details.

What a great spectacle!...

A spacious hall inside a large cave, with a Table, and stone seats placed in a semicircle around it;

the Head of the Order, the Anciens and the Initiates assembled in the hall for the mysterious Ceremony, carrying torches and palm branches in their hands.

After the prayers, songs and sacramental words of the Ancien, the latter spoke of the Holy Cup that was most carefully guarded by the Head of the Order and which no one outside their circle had beheld. This Cup may only be offered to a Great Initiate who displays undeniable proof of a Prophetic Mission.

Abraham had received this Cup from Melchizedek in the form of the Bread and the Wine.

This Cup, the symbol of the Highest Initiation, contained the Wine from the Vineyard of the Lord, the symbol of Divine Inspiration.

Moses had drunk from this Cup with the seventy.

The Ancien had fallen silent... for some minutes an impressive silence prevailed in which all surrendered to prayer.

At last, the Head of the Order slowly rose from his separate seat and walked to Jesus and offered him the Golden Chalice, the Cup, saying:

‘This Cup was entrusted to me long, very long ago. I have guarded it with all my love and respect.

From Melchizedek to Abraham, from Moses to the centenarian that I am, the Laws of the Order have never been violated.

The Great Law says:

The Cup, the Golden Chalice, may only be passed on to a Master, in whom the Head of the Order has, with certainty, beheld the signs of a Prophetic Mission.

According to the Law, I add:

Nobody can define this Mission for him who receives the Golden Chalice. He himself must find it on the basis of his own inner power.

Jesus, I pass the Golden Chalice on to you.’

‘Jesus took the Chalice..., he was pale..., he was sad..., he looked forlorn, already very far away.’

Matthew was lost in his reflections about the Cup, the Golden Chalice.

Mark has said, describing the Last Supper:

‘And He took a Cup...’

and Matthew has said: ‘And he took a cup...’

And Luke has said: ‘And likewise he took the Cup after supper, saying: “This Cup which is poured out for you, is the New Covenant in my blood.”’

John, the Well Beloved, did not say anything, undoubtedly because he, the Initiate, knew the secrets and was not allowed to betray them. He, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who was the only one suspecting the truth, had silently bent his head to his Master’s breast.

A sublime thought made him descry Jesus’ Sacrifice. For this Cup of Truth, this Golden Chalice of the prophetic Mission, this Cup of Divine Love, the Golden Chalice in which He already saw his Blood, Jesus offered to his Apostles, to his Disciples. It was entrusted to them in a sublime and very tender Farewell.

The Cup, the Golden Chalice... the Holy Grail!

But the Divine Master had already long known who, ultimately, in his turn would guard and pass on the Holy Vessel.

‘The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father... But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.’

Jesus [John 4:21,23]

From time to time, on sunny days, the Patriarch came to ‘the Hermit’. Then, he took Matthew, Guilhem and some of their friends to ‘the Grand-Père’ by simply walking around a sharply protruding part of the mountain.

‘The Grand-Père’ was a jewel, a small round cave, the walls of which were covered with all kinds of mysterious drawings and symbols. At the end of it a large Druid circle with a covered passage and numerous separate chambers could be found.

A high platform, which formed a crescent, was ‘the Table’, covered with profound symbols, and the seats for the audience. The Patriarch even showed them a beautiful Pentacle, which was hewn in the rock, but did not look very old. But who knows?

‘This is the place where my Ancien began his mission,’ he said, and knelt before the Table, stretching out his open hands on the sacred stone, and praying in a long, silent meditation.

‘Never forget,’ he added, ‘to come here from time to time to receive extra strength.’

At first, it seemed difficult to distinguish the various symbols that were drawn over and through each other; they appeared on every wall of the Grand-Père. But the Patriarch was so skilful and experienced in these studies, so self-confident that Matthew was amazed to see him use the pointer, and enraptured, he listened to him.

Soon he became familiar with the resch*, the iesmon*, the chrismon*, the iesmon-resch, the ieschrismon-resch, the Eternal Circle, the Alpha and the Omega, the shining Pentalpha or Star of the Magi, the Microcosm and the Macrocosm;

He became familiar with the first rallying signs of the early Christians, the Christians of the Seven Churches of Asia, and the Greek, African and Roman Christians;

with the Apostolic Cryptography, the secret monograms, diagrams, trigrams and initials;

with the numerous different symbols of the first centuries of the Christian era;

with the initials from before the Christian era.

Eagerly he followed his Master who, by means of drawings on the rock wall, went back as far as the Grand-Père, who proclaimed the immortality of the Soul in this cave named after him:

the male and female aspects of the Eternal One which, in perfect unity with the seven-branched Tree of Life, form the Supreme Being;

the perpetual Sacrifice of the Creation of the Universe through the self-sacrifice of the Supreme Being;

the Father, the male aspect of the Eternal One;

the Mother, the female aspect of the Eternal One;

the Son, the Tree of Life, the Creative Word;

the Trinity: AUM.

After these beautiful lessons, he made rapid progress; he spent many hours:

with Rama on Mount Albori;

with Krishna on Mount Meru;

with Hermes in the deep caves of Memphis or Thebes;
with Moses on the rocks of Serbal;
with Orpheus on Mount Kaukaion;
with Pythagoras at Delphi;
with Plato in his Academy;
with Jesus, the Divine Master, on the Mount.

But he went even further! For he enjoyed immersing himself, in ever deeper contemplation, in renowned visions:

the Vision of Rama, under an oak tree in a clearing in the forest.

Rama is asleep; then he hears a powerful voice call his name.

An impressive figure dressed in white is standing before him; he carries a small stick with a serpent coiled around it and a golden sickle. He points out a mistletoe to Rama, and later a Torch and a Chalice.

And he hears the words of the Genie, the Light-bearer:

‘Rama, do you see this Torch? It is the sacred Fire of the Divine Spirit.

Do you see this Chalice?

Hand the Torch to the man, and the Chalice to the woman, for it is the Chalice of Life and Love.’

the Vision of Krishna, in the hut of the centenarian Vasichta, deep in the Holy Forest.

Matthew also felt himself lifted up to the seventh Heaven of the Devas, to the Father of all Beings. He saw Devaki, the Virgin Mother who, beholding the Divine Love, received the Son, the Creative Word.

the Vision of Hermes, in a secret tomb, surrounded by Magi and Hierophants.

Matthew saw Osiris, the Highest Intelligence, and the seven rays of the Word that is Light, corresponding to a phase of Soul Life. He saw the seven Genii of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn;

he listened to and recognised the Voice of the Light;

he read in the Egyptian Book of the Dead about the Souls who, after a shorter or a longer time, according to their state of purity (i.e. being liberated from the errors of the physical human being, the caterpillar) were sailing to that Light in the Barque of Isis.

the Vision of Moses, on top of Mount Sinai near the entrance to the cave that is protected by terebinths. He saw the Sun Angel, a Ray of the Elohim, and he heard its Voice dissolve in infinite space: ‘I am who I am.’

the Vision of Orpheus, High Priest of the Temple of Mount Kaukaion.

Matthew drank in his words, when he heard how Orpheus proclaimed that there is one unique Being, the divine Husband-Wife Father-Mother, the Demi-Ourgos whose Son is Dionysus;

he followed the Word into the cave of Persephone, Maia the beautiful Weaver, the divine Virgin. He remembered Orpheus’ statement:

‘Arduous is the Way to Heaven’;

Matthew translated this in his own way as:

‘Hard is the Path to the Holy Grail.’

the Vision of Pythagoras, on the hill with the terebinths and olive trees at Croton.

He followed the tests of Initiation, derived from the Egyptian Initiation, the key to the Cosmos. He became one with the four elements: earth, air, water and fire, and grasped the fifth etheric element, the cosmic fluid, the astral light, the Soul of the World.

the Vision of Plato, in his Academy in Athens, after he had understood the Philosophers of Asia Minor, Egypt and South Italy, where Pythagoras had already found many followers. With him, he studied the sacred numbers, esoteric Cosmogony, the doctrine of the Soul, the Microcosm and Macrocosm, the wanderings of the human and the divine soul, the True, the Beautiful, the Good; and finally he followed this Master into the Eleusinian Mysteries.

the Vision of Jesus.

Here Matthew proved how much he had already grown spiritually. Here he had only to consult his memory.

The Egyptian priests, guided by Ahmosi the High Priest, had announced that the Phoenix would rise from its ashes.

John the Baptist, who sensed that his role was nearly finished, spoke about Jesus:

‘He must increase, and I must decrease.’

Jesus could only turn inward and, for a period of forty days of fasting, withdraw into an eagle’s nest in the cave of Engaddi, where he found the Reflections of the Prophets, a little fresh water, nuts and figs.

And just as his Divine Master, Matthew also cried out in ecstasy:

‘I accept the Cross, so that the world may be saved!’

Is it necessary to add that Matthew had reached the stage of his Rebirth?

The Patriarch realised this and told him that he would soon be introduced to the knowledge of the Law that governs the Symbolic Water, so that he would possess the gift of prediction and prophecy.

Matthew’s joy was great. He understood that the moment of his Ordination, of his achieving Perfection was approaching.

But he still had to pass through the Purification by Water in the ‘Fount Santa’, the Holy Fountain, and a forty-day retreat, to be concluded with ‘the Death as to Matter in the Tomb’.

Bethlehem, the Mystical Gate, came into view... Soon he would be an Initiate, a Pur, a Parfait!

What a beautiful prospect!

XI

‘Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute you.’

Jesus [Luke 6:27, Matth.5:44]

After his morning prayer, Matthew was meditating.

Gradually, the words of his Masters came back to his mind and imperceptibly prompted him to broaden his insight.

‘The animal human being, who is immersed in materiality, can only liberate himself from it by rising above his animal state.

When he passes through the elements, he surrenders to them that which belongs to them, that which belongs to lower nature, and thus he will become more and more pervaded by the Divine nature.

From the Symbolic Water, the purifying Water, which contains all possibilities of Formation and Transformation, he ascends to the true human state, to the state of being wholly Human.

The Knowledge of the Law that governs this purifying Water grants the faculty of Prediction and of Prophecy.’

The Patriarch interrupted his contemplation by touching him on the shoulder.

Matthew knelt and received the blessing of the good Patriarch, who enjoyed being allowed to guide his diligent pupil. Both went to the Chapel of the Hermit.

The sun stood high above the valley. Its rays penetrated into the Chapel through the large, high cleft over the exit, so that the cave was well lighted.

When Matthew appeared from the compulsory narrow, low passage, which could only be passed on one’s knees, he was filled with great inner joy by the spectacle before his eyes: around the Table, as always covered by an immaculate linen cloth, and on which the Holy Book had been placed, Parfaits were kneeling in prayer.

Also on his knees, the Service Leader was awaiting the arrival of the Master and the Son before beginning the usual ceremony of the Service.

Behind the Table, the Fount Santa, directed mi-resch or in a semicircle toward the East, had already been prepared.

Only the passage to the Labyrinth was illuminated for the benefit of the Brothers, who were in charge of the administration of the Water.

When the Patriarch appeared, all present rose to their feet, while the Service Leader, with outstretched arms, spoke the Invocation:

‘And Paul arrived in Phrygia. And the Galatian Phrygians had little enthusiasm for the worship of Zeus. As soon as they heard the voice of the Apostle Paul, they were quick to embrace the Religion of Christ.

Paul chose a rock near Smyrna on which to settle definitively, and transformed this rock into a mysterious City.

And they gathered the Astral Water, the only water admissible for the Immersion.

O Holy Baptistery of Paul, O Holy Fountain! May Matthew be truly imbued with the Divine, when he has passed through the Purification by the Symbolic Water.

May the flaming Five-pointed Star lead to that end!
O Christ! May this new Son ascend the Way of the Stars, and be worthy and able to assist
our Brothers to sow your Divine Word!
And grant that he be born of Water and the Spirit according to your commandment, so
that he will enter the Kingdom of God.'

The Service continued.

The Holy Book which was opened to the page of the day, dealt with Nicodemus' visit to
Jesus and the dialogue which followed:

'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs
that you do, unless God is with him.'

'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the
Kingdom of God.'

You can be sure that the Service Leader was convincing, enthusiastic, and yes, impressive
about this topic! Even more so because the select audience of Parfaits stimulated him to show
that he was well versed in this page of the day!

And he proved this abundantly in his Commentary.

'Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God;
that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;
you must be born anew.'

'The Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than Light, because
their deeds were evil.'

'But he who does what is true comes to the Light, that it may be clearly seen that his
deeds have been wrought in God.'

Matthew's thoughts flew out to the more tenuous realms during the Commentary. He went
beyond what the Service Leader said, for his thoughts, which were somewhat overburdened,
easily distracted him. And God knows whether each path his thoughts took was long, and
strewn with new arguments, which, in turn, evoked other attractive thoughts.

Suddenly he felt himself surrounded by the Brothers and almost carried away by friendly
and pious hands. Suddenly he stood in the basin of the 'Fount Santa', the water reaching up to
his knees.

He did not hear anything.

He saw nothing.

He was totally lost in his Purification.

However, the prayers continued one after the other.

Three Parfaits arrived through the Labyrinth, each carrying a chalice of water.

The Patriarch received each of the vases and poured them out over Matthew's head.

'In the name of the Father... and of the Son... and of the Holy Spirit.'

Matthew felt, each time, as if warm water had been poured over him. He felt as if he was
being raised into a new world by this sensation of warmth that increased with each
sprinkling.

He knelt.

And the Parfaits surrounding him proceeded to lay their hands on his head, while the
Patriarch, with his left forearm, forefinger and middle finger pointing to heaven (the sacred

ritual of the Apostles!), with the love of a Master and Father, blessed the Son who had just received the Holy Purification:

‘Reject forever everything belonging to your lower life.

May your animal nature perish in this Water that God has warmed and which He has sent to us in this Holy Place.

Be worthy of our Divine Master.

May the Lord bless you and lead you to the good end.’

Without knowing how, Matthew found himself alone in his own chamber.

Then he began to remember everything.

He was aware of having received the second degree of his long initiation.

Again he experienced his entry through the Symbolic Wall into the Églises of Ussat. He remembered the years spent in study, loneliness, fasting and prayers, which had brought him only joy and happiness.

And he felt he would soon be ready to pass through the Mystical Gate.

Suddenly, however, he remembered the retreat, the forty days of fasting, and the Tomb... which the Patriarch had imposed upon him before he could enter Bethlehem...

XII

‘I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from Heaven, and it remained on Him.

I myself did not Him, but He who sent me to baptise with water said to me: "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptises with the Holy Spirit.’

John the Baptist [John 1:32,33]

Above the Églises of Ussat and the Cave of Ormolac, known as the Hermit, at a short distance from both of them, is a small, separate cave looking out over the valley and the lake of the Ariège, which is very well suited for long meditations.

This place had been chosen for the retreat and fasting to which the future Parfait was subjected before ‘his death as to matter’: the caterpillar was becoming a pupa.

It was a carefully selected place, simultaneously agreeable and austere, truly an ideal place to experience, with inner equilibrium, the crisis and the beholding of the Truth, which all prophets, all initiators and all initiates have known, before being returned to the material world to accomplish their Mission.

The Patriarch took Matthew to his new, temporary abode.

The cave had been equipped for its purpose: it was exposed to the sun during the day, a bed of leaves had been spread on the floor out of the draught, a large flat stone in the middle served as a table, and another stone served as a seat.

Acacias and terebinths covered the entrance, giving it a green appearance at all times.

‘Here is your place of retreat, my son. Make good use of the coming days; reflect on everything we have been allowed to teach you; finish the process of the maturation of the fruit that will soon appear to be very sweet, because you will then be worthy to eat of it to your heart’s content.’

The Patriarch returned to his numerous activities.

When Matthew had finished his first prayer, he looked out over the countryside from the entrance of his retreat.

From this high vantage point, he could see the whole valley and the lake, which appeared very small to him, and the mountain on the opposite shore, the rocks of which seemed to dissolve into its flanks.

According to his commendable habit, he quickly moved his thoughts to the most distant times:

He considered how, according to the testimony of the Ancients, natural rock temples already existed in Central Asia at that time.

He thought of the Mysteries of the Atlantean period;

of the Sun and Moon gods rising up from the mountains;

of the stones, caverns, alignments and Mystery places of the ancient Celts;

of the Cavern full of flowers and springs dedicated to the Creator;

of the general custom to use caves, crevices and craggy mountain formations for the Mysteries.

He fully understood that the most ancient Worship took place in natural or man-made caves, because they are utterly suitable for an encounter with the Almighty Creative Essence.

How beautiful and how beloved the Églises, *his* Églises, appeared to him!

The days of the retreat, which could have seemed long, seemed short to Matthew, due to his continuous state of ecstasy.

His eyes did not see. His soul, partly free from the physical body, continued its purification and regeneration.

It became beautiful and radiant. It increasingly withdrew from the earthly atmosphere.

Gradually, the Parfait discarded his animal body and built his soul body: the work of the caterpillar forming the pupa.

However, it appeared to him that something was missing.

But what?

He did not know.

One day, a flight of birds swept down into the valley from the high mountains.

Contrary to his habits, Matthew attentively followed their flight and tried to recognise the species.

Suddenly, while the birds followed the meanders of the valley, one bird separated itself from the others and headed for the Cave of Retreat, the Cave of the Acacia.

This struck Matthew at once and he did not lose sight of the bird that approached him without haste, in a smooth and regular flight.

‘O, a dove!’ he said to himself.

This word confused him so much that he fell to his knees, while keeping his eyes on the symbolic animal.

‘The dove!... The dove!...’

It was as if a total change had come over him.

An inner rapture overwhelmed him.

With inner vision he saw the dove coming into the cave and descending onto his head for a moment. Then it flew away as graciously as it had come. It followed the valley and vanished on the horizon.

What a sublime spectacle!

He came to his senses again and cried in ecstasy.

‘The dove!... The Paraclete!...’

O Christ, I thank you!...

My God, hallowed be Your Name!...’

From that day on, Matthew showed an even greater ability to master himself. His self-examination widened the circle within which the knowledge of his Brothers was usually contained.

A new faculty was added to his consciousness. It permitted him to proceed resolutely to a higher degree of Initiation.

In this period of solitude in which he found himself, he did not neglect to roam on spiritual heights scarcely known to him yet. Thus he achieved clear insight concerning the profound historical roots of what he had been taught.

‘The Soul that is purified by the Light enters the domains of the Living Water.

On this Living Water, the luminous Ship of the Moon sails.

In order to enter the heavenly realms, the Soul must embark on this luminous Ship of the Moon.

And then, another Light Ship, the Sun, will continue further, ever further, into the Fire of Life.

Then the Soul has returned to its origin, to the Kingdom of Light, to Paradise.'

Then everything he had not yet understood became clear to Matthew: in a drawing that a Brother of the Temple of the Spirit had drawn on the wall of the Cave he saw:

A barque on an ocean of purified souls; and in the middle of the boat stands an iesmon-resch held by a strong hand, with an Eagle on the left and a Christ monogram on the right.

It represents the Christ Column, the Light-Ship of the Sun. It is the Earth that, thanks be to God, has been saved by the Resurrection.

The Eagle of the Divine Spirit, the Tree of Life, the Barque of Isis, the Light Column, all these pictures, roughly drawn with a few lines, but with a strong hand and enlightened insight, were consciously absorbed as to the profound meaning the Ancients had expressed in them.

He realised how great the value of the total Heritage was, a Heritage of which he had become a participant, a Heritage linking him with the Atlanteans, Hindus, Persians, Babylonians, and Egyptians.

Sitting at the entrance to the cave in the evening, lifting his eyes to the starry sky, he undoubtedly found there the Christ Demiourgos, whose Heavenly Power has wrought Creation.

Above all he liked to contemplate the life of Mary Magdalene: how she had reached Provence, and had settled with the Taruscs on the Rhône, the brothers of the Taruscs of the Sabarthez, from whom Matthew was a worthy descendant.

A mystery was hidden in all of this that he would like to have solved.

More or less automatically his thoughts turned to the Golden Chalice of Jesus, and subsequently he could no longer imagine the Holy Chalice apart from Mary.

Then he could imagine the successive events:

Mary, who was present when Salome presented John the Baptist's head to Herodias, cried loudly: O, Mystery of all Mysteries! For the eyes that had been closed until then, opened wide and looked at her.

Mary, who after having returned to her room, shook her robe and ... shuddered at the sight of the drops of John's blood falling on the fabric.

Mary, who was urged to go to Magdala by an unknown force and thence ask Herod's permission to return home.

Mary, who was glad to be back home and see beautiful Galilee again, where she could forget her past life and licentiousness.

Mary, who was accompanied by the mysterious Egyptian Ahmosi, who supported her when she fainted on hearing the first stroke of the hammer drive the first nail home.

Mary, who for a long time stood with a bowed head and pale-faced before Mary, the Mother of Christ.

Mary, who knelt down when she heard Christ's divine words:

'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'

Mary, who softly spoke to her brothers: 'Come, let us go from here!... We have no longer the right to be here.'

Mary, who anointed her Lord with true, precious oil of nardus, and who wiped his feet with her hair, as was told by John the well-beloved Apostle.

John continues: 'But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene.'

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother:

'Woman, behold, your son!'

Then he said to the disciple:

'Behold, your mother!'

In this Matthew recognised a divine Command:

'Mary is the mother of the Church of Jesus, of the Church of the Spirit.

John, the son of Mother Mary of the Church of the Spirit, became the Head of this Church; and Mary Magdalene...?'

'...But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.'

Mary was still there, with a cup in her hand; and her tears fell on the feet of Christ, and she wiped them off with her hair as if she wanted to anoint the divine Body.

'Yes!...Yes!...The Cup!... The Blood of Christ!...Mary!...'

That was the meaning of the long look Jesus had given her, after having entrusted John with his Mission. This was the Mission that Mary had received from Jesus Christ.

John and Mary Magdalene both had understood their Mission:

The first one: to take care of the Church of the Spirit;

the second one: to keep and serve the Chalice, the Holy Grail.

Then the events followed one another quickly.

Mary Magdalene, was brought to Rome on a ship of Ahmosi along with Martha, Trophimus and Maximinus; then to Massilia on the banks of the Rhodanus (Rhône), with the Taruscs, in the region of Tiberias, along with these brothers of the Taruscs of the Sabarthez...

Mary settled in a mountain cave, just as her Master had done, and worked so hard and well on her task in Gaul that people from the Rhine to the Pyrenees came to look for the Holy Balm. This caused the Via Aurelia to be crowded with pilgrims and envoys of the tribes.

In the meantime, the last High Priest, the Great Adept of Thebes, had left Mary and her retinue in Rome. Ahmosi had returned to Egypt to die there with the last Hierophants of Hermes.

'O Egypt! O Egypt!'

At this moment Matthew saw, just as Ahmosi had seen, the eternal Hope, the God of Love!

One evening, the Patriarch came to announce that the end of his sojourn in the Cave of the Acacia had come. His retreat would now be concluded in Keplèr!

Matthew followed the Master along the Path to Bethlehem!

PART THREE

BETHLEHEM

‘He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.’

Jesus [John 12:25]

XIII BETHLEHEM

‘He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.’

Jesus [John 12:25]

Matthew was truly ready to enter the last stage of his initiation: the voluntary sacrifice of his life, the supreme goal of his long preparation.

However, he still had to achieve the destruction of his material aspect, the task of truly returning to matter that which is only matter. He had to die before he could lift himself up to the Spirit.

‘When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself.’

Jesus [John 12:32]

That is why the future Parfait had to surrender his ‘chenille’, his caterpillar state, before he could pass through the Pentacle of Bethlehem (the five-pointed Initiation Star), before he could receive the Consolamentum*, the Sacrament of his death as to matter. The caterpillar becomes a pupa by giving up its first garment. Thus Matthew must prepare to surrender his material garment in order to become a Spirit-Soul.

He understood the mystery of the three sacred caves superimposed next to ‘the Chapel of the Hermit’, which, starting with the lowest one, his Masters had called: Keplèr, Mès-Naut and Ka.

Now the Master approached Keplèr, opened it by removing a pentagonal stone in front of the entrance, and said to Matthew:

‘My son, here you will find the Mystery of Death, of Rebirth and of Transformation. Do not forget the words the Master spoke, when He went to Lazarus’ tomb:

“I am the Resurrection and the Life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”

You know that it is necessary to let go of matter forever in order to be reborn in the Spirit. Well, *here* you will be able to dispose of it in four days. Then you will be able to rise to the cave above, to Mès-Naut.

You will be like a pupa, a Spirit-Soul that we will strip of all matter in Bethlehem.

The Parfait, the Brother you will have become, will have only one goal: to be able to raise himself up to Ka*, the third cave above your head, via the Way of the Stars.

O Matthew, the Transformation will then turn you into a worthy Apostle of our Divine Master: then you will be a *Light* Soul in eternity.

The Way to Christ, the Path to the Holy Grail, is harsh, but beautiful!

My dear Son, one more effort, a little courage yet. Your victory is near!!’

Resolutely Matthew entered Keplèr, the lowest cave. It was simply a tomb, just large enough to stand up and move about.

He was immediately reminded of Lazarus' resurrection:

'Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.'

Matthew understood.

Accustomed to silence, meditation and prayer, he made preparations to use the time as pleasantly as possible.

Matthew was in a *tomb*..., but he knew that he had not been forgotten, that his present state did not mean giving up his physical body, to return it to dust, but to place his soul body *above* his physical body: the indispensable Rebirth.

A Parfait, a 'Superman', needed his body to be a vessel for the Spirit, which guided and enabled him to accomplish his Mission while still living here on earth. Total sacrifice was asked for one purpose only: ever higher... Mès-Naut!

Having reached *this* insight, he was reminded of all the lessons of his Great Brothers with all their many aspects; and he spent a long time in isolation to bring the necessary order to this rich treasure:

'An Egyptian died in Osiris'

Similarly, a Christian dies in Christ: in Christo morimur.

Paul's words revealed the meaning of this holy Mystery to him:

'The faithful are the fellow heirs of Christ.'

The mystical Union of body, soul and spirit showed him the Egyptian heritage* and its cosmic nature. The lofty words of Hermes Trismegistus resounded in the tomb:

'Do you want to live with the Gods?

Do you want to become a God yourself? Then be worthy of them!

Live according to the will of the Gods and follow the divine commandments of the Cosmos! Then the Gods will not be ashamed of your presence, and you can speak with them as equals.'

Detaching yourself from this world, devoting yourself to the ideal of Soul Perfection means dying as to the world on yonder side, in other words: becoming totally free from the nature of death with its two spheres. Then earthly death is only a new birth, a rebirth in the Spirit, a new youth for your innermost Self.

From the moment the earthly body ceases to play an active role, Ka* takes over the role of the earthly body for the remainder of life. Ka is the Light Soul*, the new Astral Body.

The Spirit is the eternal part of the human being. Activating the life of the Spirit depends on:

the justification of the human being;

his ritual purification;

and finally the sanctification of Christ in the heart.

To give up matter, to detach from it inwardly, is the caterpillar that returns to the earth; the caterpillar is transformed into a pupa, just as the physical human being is transformed into a Spirit-Soul Being.

The small cave of Keplèr, the tomb of matter, leads to the cave of Mès-Naut, to the restored link with the Spirit. Bethlehem consecrates the reality of this state of being.

However, Ka*, the third sacred cave, will always be the sublime goal of every Parfait: his transformation from Spirit-Soul to life-giving Spirit.

Yes, the 'pupa' must be transformed into a perfect soul.

I am Today;

I am Yesterday;

I am Tomorrow!

I am the divine mysterious soul.

My radiation fullness illuminates every resurrected one, who seeks with difficulty his way through the realm of Darkness, in successive transformations in the Kingdom of the dead.'

(The Egyptian Book of the Dead)

The reader can imagine that Matthew had sufficient time to reflect again on everything that had been taught and explained to him during these few days of preparation for his total sacrifice.

He knew that Christ had said at Lazarus' grave:

'This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it.'

He stayed two days longer in the place where he was, but the Apostles did not understand this. At last he told them:

'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep...'

And then He said:

'Lazarus is dead!'

And when He arrived in Bethany, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days...

And then the Resurrection took place. Martha and Mary were crying and followed Jesus with their pleas. And Jesus said: 'Martha, did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?'

And then He said: 'Take away the stone!' And they took away the stone.

And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: 'Father, I thank thee; thou hast heard me.'

What a flow of ideas followed all of this!

'Lazarus... who was John, the well-beloved disciple! And his death was the final stage of Initiation enabling him to discard his physical garment. It was the Rebirth, the caterpillar that changed into a pupa; the physical human being who became a Spirit-Soul Being. This was absolutely necessary for a Parfait, who had to remain in matter because of his noble vocation in the service of his neighbours, but always, at all times, be ready to join Christ: for he was a Disciple of Christ!'

What a profound mystery life and death form, with all phenomena involved! And what about the great number of states in which the soul exists in service of its necessary perfection: States of which the first Christians, Celts and Druids were aware.

There is the hypothesis of reincarnation that is enticing, and which, at first, gives consolation, but comes to nothing when thinking of what could become of the soul.

There is the hypothesis of spiritualism, implying that we could be taken up in a continuous process of perfection by being born and dying over and over again.

And there is the opinion of those who only philosophise about life* and death, and whose conclusions, which lack any real basis, are never convincing

And Jesus? It seems that he alludes to the reincarnation of Elijah in the person of John the Baptist, but He never speaks about the Law of Reincarnation. Jesus invites us to the infinite bliss of eternal Life; and He shows us how to discard the chains of this world and, though still in this world, to pass from life in matter to Life in the Spirit;... which means the preparation for the Transformation of the soul.

Inevitably, Matthew's thoughts were drawn to the Egyptian Mysteries. He imagined the Initiates spending more than three days in the tomb, just as John, the well-beloved Lazarus did, and just as he must do, in order to liberate himself from his physical garment. For it is hard always to have to carry the burden of sin, a burden that follows the Spirit to yonder side.

Hence the desperation of the soul that beholds its own imperfections on earth and yearns to gain its freedom.

*'Oh, God of Truth and Justice!
Destroy the evil that is in me!
Deliver me from my vices and my crimes!
Expel from my heart all evil
that might separate me from You,
so that I may be with you in Peace!'*

(The Egyptian Book of the Dead)

The Weighing of the Words, the Judgement of the dead on yonder side, enables him to enter into 'the Beautiful Amenti', where he is examined with regard to the possible redemption from the sins of material man. If he is considered worthy to continue the Path of Transformation, he becomes one with Osiris. (And Matthew was thinking of the Green Osiris* of the Tombs and the Scarab*, the sacred symbol of the metamorphosis that lay next to him in the Tomb.)

When the deceased, after his passage through the Underworld and the Beautiful Amenti, is allowed to ascend to the full Light of Day, he can manifest himself at will in all the forms of existence. Then the following words apply to him:

*'I am the God Ra!
I am the Great Godhead!
I have become a God, Your equal!'*

(The Book of the Dead)

And when he will have to cross the Realms of Fire, he will no longer be surrounded by the wrong actions of his past earthly life with no way out. They can no longer keep him prisoner forever!

(The Book of the Dead)

After physical death has occurred, and the soul, liberated from matter, is clothed in a subtle vesture, this body is threatened by a second death: the third stage of the metamorphosis, of the Transformation, which the deceased fears very much. For in order to make the sanctified Spirits 'parfait', i.e. perfect, *the voluntary Sacrifice of the purified, sanctified human being, who has achieved the divine Perfection, is necessary.*

(The Book of the Dead)

Matthew remembered the many days he had spent in the silent and sacred atmosphere of the caves: truly, a School of Silence!

He thought of the Mysteries of purification and sanctification, of the immense passages, of the mysterious chasms, of the impressive underground rivers and of the extensive halls of the Cathedrals... all those places of reflection, prayer and contemplation, venerable places where the Spirit always breathed, and which had always been a Centre of Initiation.

The beautiful Druid Triads still echoed in the subterranean caves. The Druid circles, dolmens and menhirs, symbols of the Mysteries of a rich theogony that our Apostles accepted without hesitation, adorned the region with a noble simplicity, while the immense remnants of the Pyrenean Ursus seem to protect the sacred Priests of the sacred Mysteries.

He dwelt in his mind with the Mythology of the Romans, with the Apostles of pure original Christianity, with the Gnostic Sages, the bearers of the High Knowledge of Hermes Trismegistus, and with the eclectic Alexandrian teachers, who brought the Message of the Kingdom of the God of Love everywhere, because Dualism, negative Dualism, had ended with the School of Alexandria. In the Kingdom of Love, there is no place for evil!

Even the old scriptures of Toledo*, from which the magnificent stories of the Holy Grail blossomed forth, had prepared the way for Pyrenean Catharism, the High Spirituality, which has left its traces on the whole region of Ussat-Ornolac, on the whole Thabor mountain and on the proud Montségur, in brief, in all of Occitania*.

All those guardians of the Great Mysteries were faithful to their beautiful system of Initiation, in spite of imprisonment, suffering and death!

Matthew, as all the Bonshommes who would soon be his Brothers, was not afraid of the new life that awaited him, for had Christ not set the example?

But he still had some, undoubtedly unfounded, fears. For what great sins could a young Novice have committed during the long, hard process of initiation in a forever silent world, protected, along with Masters and companions of equal modesty, against the temptations and debasing influences of the evils of the outside world?

He would be a justified and purified human being, on the straight path to Perfection; that was certain!. But in order to be able to raise himself up to the ineffable, eternal Ka*, in order to perfect his sanctified Soul being, he still had to perform, immediately after his Rebirth, his voluntary self-sacrifice!

And the ultimate perfection in Christ dawned already in tomorrow's Parfait.

The scarab caterpillar next to him, showed him the path he had to go: As soon as it had changed into a pupa, after the death of the first garment, it had only one purpose; to transform from a pupa to a perfect insect, that is, into a beautiful new scarab*.

The green Osiris* of the tombs was transformed into the Black Osiris* of the Heavenly Realms. And He awaits the arrival of the Light Souls* in order to lead them into the Kingdom of God.

And hence tomorrow, after Keplèr, rapidly to Mès-Naut, via the Pentacle of Bethlehem, in order to bring about his voluntary Self-Sacrifice.

And after that, the ultimate perfection in Christ by the Sanctification on the Path to the Holy Grail.

XIV

‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.’

Jesus [John 10:11]

The Patriarch came to wake up Matthew!

Night was falling.

The moon, at its peak, poured its pale rays over the Ariège and the lake. The mountains projecting fantastic shadows, stood dark against the blue sky and carefully hid the caves and caverns of the Sabarthez.

The path to the Églises could hardly be seen in the darkness. It was a grey ribbon shimmering weakly near the foot of the rocks. But the Patriarch knew precisely every nook and cranny of this large domain. Matthew followed him mechanically..., for his thoughts were elsewhere.

They arrived at the famous, fortified cave, the spoulga* of Ormolac, which concealed the Chapel of Bethlehem. After having crossed two walled courtyards, they reached the main entrance. The gates opened as if by magic, something that no longer amazed Matthew. By then he knew that they did not leave anything to chance. The Bonshommes, the Brothers, were always ready to sacrifice themselves or to be of service at a moment's notice.

They were in the spoulga proper now.

A broad staircase of boulders led them to a kind of triumphal arch that could be vaguely seen.

‘This is the Mystical Gate,’ the Patriarch explained.

This word brought Matthew back to reality.

‘Oh! The Mystical Gate,’ he repeated with understandable joy and a longing to look at it from all sides.

But the Patriarch quickly walked on, crossed a kind of vestibule, and came to a low entrance in the opposite rock wall. Here they had to bend low and almost crawl for ten metres along a passage through the rock. At the end, through another small door, they suddenly came into a hall, a Chapel.

Moved by emotion, as if transported into another world, Matthew let himself be guided, because he understood that he had arrived in the Temple of the Most High, the sacred place of his Ordination, the place of his Rebirth.

What an immeasurable joy!

At that moment, ineffable joy overcame every expression of his will.

‘Now you are in Bethlehem, my Son.

Tomorrow you will be our Brother. Ask Christ this night for the completion of your inner preparation, so that you may be worthy to receive the Consolamentum*.

Now I leave you alone with Him.’

The Patriarch was silent, said a prayer, and then slowly left the Chapel, while Matthew had already knelt.

It is hard to tell how much time had passed before Matthew regained possession of himself!

Finally he rose to his feet and glanced around the Chapel from which only Purs could leave. On the East side, the Star sparkled in its niche in the rock and spread a light so weak that it looked like a touch of moonlight.

The impressive granite Table of beautiful dimensions had been placed under the Star.

The private Door, which was of course closed, stood out against the high rampart that joined the two opposite rock walls on the North side. Only the faithful, preceded by the Head of the Order, had the right to pass through this door. For only he had the right to open and close it. Hence it was an honour that was exclusively reserved for Purs* whom the Head of the Order wanted to remunerate.

Matthew noticed that the granite staircase began at the private Door, ran along the wall to the Star, and left enough room near the Table for the officiating Brothers: what a beautiful block of granite, pure granite!

Oh... there in the wall was a place covered by a white linen cloth, in which... perhaps!...

Finally he saw the Pentacle and the ascending and descending stairs that had been carved into the rock.

Again Matthew was lost in his prayers. For he had understood! The hour of the Great Sacrifice was near.

He was ready!

His body, which he had overcome physically, no longer mattered to him; long ago, his Soul had learned to follow the Way of the Stars. And it was his innermost longing to be able to finish an already high initiation as a Master: for the sake of the God of Love, for the sake of Christ.

From now on, nothing else mattered.

He did not even notice that the Brothers entered very early, carrying torches and oil lamps to illuminate the Chapel.

Bethlehem was indeed festively illuminated!

The Pentacle, which was surrounded by light, truly was the Star of the Magi. On the Table, covered with a white cloth, lay the Great Bible that was used for special occasions only. White linen cloths for the Purification of the hands had been placed next to it.

The white linen veil on the wall above the Table did not unveil its secrets yet, although it was also clearly illuminated.

The Brothers had entered the Chapel, knelt and totally surrendered themselves to their prayers.

Everyone respected Matthew's profound contemplation, his inner communion with the divine Master.

It was, however, then necessary to place him before reality, a reality sweet and joyful, because he had accepted, good shepherd that he was, to lay down his life for his sheep.

XV

‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,
who is and who was and who is to come.’

The Revelation of John [Rev.1:8, 21:6]

The Patriarch, who was leading the Service, knelt in front of the granite Table. Two Brothers assisted him, kneeling too, one on his left and the other on his right.

Matthew, alone, was facing him.

The Chapel was completely filled with kneeling Brothers.

Matthew’s Ancien was standing behind him and carried over his arms the sacred clothes meant for Matthew.

Suddenly the private Door slowly opened.

The Head of the Order entered, descended from the granite stone, went along the wall and knelt on the granite stone that had been placed, slightly above and behind the Patriarch and his two assistants, beneath the white linen cloth.

After the prayer, all rose to their feet.

The Service Leader and his two assistants then proceeded to wash their hands, after which the ritual of Purification was completed by drying their hands with the white linen cloths lying next to the Great Bible.

Then the Patriarch spoke slowly and affectionately:

‘Matthew, you must understand that when you are standing before the Church of God, you are standing before the Father and before the Holy Spirit, as is shown in the divine scriptures. Christ says in the Gospel of Matthew:

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

And in the Gospel of John he says:

“If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

And Paul says in the second letter to the Corinthians:

“For we are the Temple of the Living God! As God said: I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

And Paul says in another place:

“Seek the proof of Christ who speaks in me.”

In the first letter to Timothy he says:

“I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you, so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the Church of the Living God, the pillar and bulwark of the Truth.”

And Paul says to the Hebrews:

“But Christ was faithful over God’s house as a Son. And we are his house. May the Spirit of God be with the faithful of Jesus Christ.”

Christ explains in the Gospel of John:

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you.”

He says in the Gospel of Matthew:

“I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

And Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians:

“Do you not know that you are God’s temple, and that God’s Spirit dwells in you! If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are!”

Christ says in the Gospel of Matthew:

“For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

And John says in his letter:

“And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.”

And Paul says to the Galatians:

“And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father.”

‘All of this proves that your presence before the Sons of Jesus Christ is a confirmation of the faith and the teachings of the Church of God, as they come to us through the Holy Scriptures.

For the people of God had once turned away from their Lord and God. They have turned away from the Counsel and Will of the Father, due to the deceit of evil spirits and by submitting to their will. That is one of the many reasons why it was explained to us that the Father has mercy on His people and wants to take them up in Peace and Unity through the coming of his Son Jesus Christ.

That is why we have assembled here.

You are in the presence of the disciples of Jesus Christ, at a place where, in a spiritual sense, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit dwell, as was just explained, in order to receive the Holy Prayer that our Lord Jesus Christ has given to His disciples, so that when you pray, your prayers will be answered by our Father.

Thus you must understand that when you receive this holy Prayer, you must repent your sins and forgive everyone, for our Lord Jesus Christ says:

“And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one, so that your Father who is in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”

In addition, you should have the intention in your heart of keeping this Holy Prayer, in purity and in truth, for all your life, as with all other virtues God grants you, just as it has always been done in the Church of God. Thus we pray to our Lord, who has granted the disciples of Jesus Christ the spiritual power to receive this Prayer with firmness, that He may also bestow on you the mercy to receive it with firmness, and to His honour and your salvation.’

Next, the kneeling Patriarch, along with everyone present, spoke the Lord’s Prayer.

Then the Patriarch continued:

‘We pass this Holy Prayer on to you, so that you receive it from us, from God and from the Church, and so that you possess the power to use it for your whole life, by day and by night, alone or with others, and so that you will never eat or drink before having spoken it. If you were to neglect this, you should do penance!’

Matthew who was on his knees before the Ancien*, along with all the Brothers, replied to all his Master's questions in a firm voice.

The Ceremony, following the Ritual that has foreseen the minutest details, continued with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

'Matthew, do you want to receive the spiritual Baptism, which is conferred in the Church of God by the Laying-on of hands by the Bonshommes, and which grants the Holy Spirit by way of the Holy Prayer. In the Gospel of Matthew, our Lord Jesus Christ says to his disciples about this Baptism: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

And in the Gospel of Mark He says:

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole of creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

And in the Gospel of John he says to Nicodemus:

"Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God!"

And John the Baptist speaks about this baptism, when he testifies:

"I baptize with water, but he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie, is stronger than I am. He baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

And Jesus Christ says in the Acts of the Apostles:

"John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

'The conferring of the Holy Spirit by the laying-on of hands has been established by Jesus Christ, Luke says. According to Mark, Jesus said that His friends would also do it: "They laid their hands on a few sick people and healed them." And Ananias conferred this baptism to Paul at his conversion. Afterwards, Paul and Barnabas did the same in many places. Paul and John conferred it to the Samaritans, for Luke says in the Acts of the Apostles:

"Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen on any of them. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit."

The Church of God keeps this Holy Baptism by which the Spirit is conferred, from the time of the Apostles until this day. It has been passed on from Bonshommes to Bonshommes, and it will go on in this way until the end of time.'

According to the Ritual, 'the Power to bind and to unbind' came next.

'Matthew, you must know that the Church of God has received the Power to bind and to unbind, and to forgive and to retain sins, as Christ says in the Gospel of John: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Next came ‘the Power to perform miracles that Jesus Christ and, on his command, His disciples performed.’

In another place Christ says: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers.” And in the Gospel of John He says: “He who believes in me will also do the works that I do.” And in the Gospel of Mark He says:

“And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

And in the Gospel of Luke He says:

“Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you.”

The Ritual continued with ‘the Order always to remain faithful to the commandments of Jesus.’

‘Matthew, if you want to receive the Power to perform all the miracles that Jesus Christ and, on His command, his disciples performed, you must obey all the commandments of Christ and of the New Testament to the best of your abilities. Be aware that He has commanded:

that no man shall commit adultery, or kill,
or lie,

or swear an oath,

or take or rob anything from anyone or inflict anything upon anybody that he does not want others to inflict upon him;

to forgive those who inflict evil upon him,

to love his enemies,

and to pray for those who speak evil of him,

and to bless them.

If any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also;

and if any one would sue you and take away your coat, let him have your cloak as well;

do not condemn or judge;

and many other commandments the Lord has imposed on His Church.

You must hate this world, its works and the things that belong to this world.

For John says in his letter:

“Beloved, do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, Love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever.”

And Christ says to the nations:

“The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil.”

And in Ecclesiastes we can read:

“I have seen everything that is done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind!”

Jude, the brother of James, says in his admonishing letter: “Hate even the garment spotted by the flesh.”

‘For the sake of all these testimonies and many more, you must obey God’s commandments and hate the world. And if you do this well until the end, we hope that your sanctified soul will have eternal life.’

Matthew received ‘the forgiving of sins,’ and softly said the formula of ‘the final Sacrifice,’ but so resolutely and calmly that it impressed all Bonshommes, who were in all respects used to firmness:

‘I promise to totally surrender to God and the Gospel;
never to lie or to swear an oath;
not to touch any woman;
not to kill any animal;
not to eat meat,
and to feed myself with vegetable food only,
to act only after having said the Lord’s Prayer;
not to travel, to eat or pass the night in any place without a companion;
and if I fall into the hands of my enemies and be separated from my Brother, I promise to abstain from any food for at least three days;
only to sleep in my clothes;
finally: never to betray our Faith, in the face of any threat of death!’

All knelt.

Then the Ancien took the Great Bible, after having cleansed his hands, and put it on Matthew’s head, while the assigned Bonshommes lay their hands on him and recited the sacred formula...

The Prayer and the reading of the first seventeen verses of the Gospel of John then followed. Matthew then bent to the ground in front of the Parfaits.

The Patriarch continued:

‘Matthew, the moment of your becoming a true Man has arrived. The special honour of being liberated from all matter under the light of the Flaming Star will be bestowed upon you. Behold the shining Pentalpha, the divine Star of the Magi: for you, it is the symbol of Death, of the End. Die then for Christ!

But the divine Master also said: “I am the Alpha!” He will lead you on the Way of the Stars. And you will return to us as a Pur, a Parfait, because you will have entered your new Life in the Spirit: your end in matter is your beginning in the Spirit. You will have accomplished your Rebirth: the physical human being will have become a Spirit-Soul Being; the caterpillar will have become a pupa. Go now, Matthew, you, new disciple of Jesus Christ!’

All the Brothers knelt, except the appointed Ancien*, who stripped Matthew of his poor clothes. Then Matthew climbed the carved notches in the rock and stood in the Pentacle, the five-pointed Star. From there he beheld his kneeling Brothers below him: from that moment on he was their equal.

He listened to their magnificent Prayer and felt overwhelmed by a sensation he had never experienced before, even in his longest meditations. It was as if he had left this world and had been taken up into Heaven.

Then he saw the Head of the Order rise to his feet, purify his hands for a long time and lift the white veil. A rough tabernacle became visible in the wall. And while the Head of the

Order bowed very respectfully, his thin hands, emaciated by age and fasting, took from the tabernacle...

O, sublime moment!

Matthew was no longer alive; no, he was no longer of this world. Suddenly he saw a light, stronger than that of the sun, emanating from the hands of the Head of the Order. A ray of immense light fell on his eyes. He saw nothing but a hall, completely bathed in Light that even deprived him of sight of the ground. It was as if he had been taken up into the Sun itself. An immeasurable radiant aureole surrounded the Head of the Order, who held before him the Holy Object from the tabernacle.

Matthew could only cry out: 'The Cup! The Golden Chalice! The Holy Grail!!!... O Christ, I am ready... Yes, you have only to command: Just as for You, the Sacrifice will be *my* most precious good!... The Golden Chalice!... The Holy Grail!'

The Head of the Order had, full of happiness, replaced the sacred Relic. He slowly approached Matthew who was still filled with a profound emotion and no longer had the slightest notion of the Ceremony. He made him step down from the shining Pentalfa and ascend the three steps of 'the Way of the Stars,' and finally descend the six rungs of the Mystical Ladder leading him to his new life. For Matthew was born anew. He had commenced this path still bearing the last stains of matter; he had returned, liberated as to matter and filled with spirituality. The caterpillar had died, but had been transformed into a pupa! The perfect insect saw the transformation approaching on the horizon.

But a small sacrament still had to be carried out. While descending, his feet had touched the ground and thus were no longer absolutely pure! In that state, he was not permitted to don the 'sacred clothes.' That is why he was led to the Table, where his Ancien* carefully washed his feet (as the divine Master had done).

Then Matthew was absolutely pure. His Ancien handed him his new clothes, the sacred clothes:

the *sadéré*, a kind of shirt with sleeves, and a small pocket under the collar in which to store the 'Gospel of John';

the *kosti*, a hollow, tubular belt made of seventy-two woven threads of white linen that was wound around his waist three times;

finally the black habit and the simple, half-open sandals.

How happy Matthew was! How filled with joy! How lovingly he pronounced his first Prayer as a Parfait, as a Bonhomme!

Twice he was embraced by all the Brothers, first by the Head of the Order at his right and the Patriarch at his left. He gave the kiss of Peace to the Head of the Order, who passed it on to his neighbour, and so on.

After the kiss of peace, everyone congratulated the new Pur. The most affectionate was certainly Guilhem, who waited a bit impatiently for the moment when he could resume their conversations about the Églises and the Hermit. At that moment the good Brothers were not at all silent: they did not know how to express their joy when they congratulated the new disciple of Christ. For a while, they suspended the strict rules of Initiation, which were never forgotten and never disobeyed, regardless of how strict they might be.

'The Disciple is taciturn and never argues; he never tries to convince someone, because Spiritual Love need not be transmitted.

He should turn himself into a Pur in spirit and truth: if he would only cling to appearances and outward forms, everything would only be a disappointing illusion.

Turned inwardly, the Disciple deeply reflects on, and penetrates into, the secrets of nature; he knows only too well that the true tradition has never been reduced to a formula, and that the true sage has to admit that he does not know anything.

In obscurity, he totally surrenders to the task he has been given: he fears any profanation, he speaks as little as possible and only in the presence of trustworthy disciples.'

But this was a day of celebration in Bethlehem! The tongues could wag among the disciples. For a short while, they were allowed to manifest a very sweet joy, such joy as only these Purs, these dead-yet-alive Bonshommes could so completely understand.

Suddenly the private Door opened. The Head of the Order and the Patriarch paternally took Matthew by the hand and went outside the spoulga*. A procession of Brothers followed. And then came the apotheosis, the great finale:

In solemn joy, Matthew passed through the Mystical Gate!

It was the end of his Initiation. He has thus been given the freedom to fulfil his Mission.

'Matthew,' the Head of the Order said, 'four years ago you entered through the Symbolic Wall. Now you leave, victorious, through the Mystical Gate. The former was the Alpha... The latter is the Omega...'

This is the end of your retreat from the world, but now you receive a new Beginning.'

And he showed Matthew, across from them in the foothills of Mount Thabor, the Way of the Cathars, leading to Montségur in Occitania*.

Matthew smiled and thanked.

God is Love!

He had become a Man, a Pur! God is Love!

Total Sacrifice smiled on him!... God is Love!

And the words of John, the Well-Beloved, crossed his mind as if by chance:

'God is Love; and he who abides in Love abides in God, and God abides in him!'

His divine Master had only to command him.

Nothing would be able to frighten him or lead him astray from the right path of the Man who had come to life in Bethlehem.

No one in the world would be able to overcome the Mysterious Power he manifested!

EXPLANATION OF WORDS

Some words in this explanation have been marked in the text with an asterisk (*). The numbers between brackets () refer to page numbers in the text.

The Path to the Holy Grail, and (later) *The Way of the Stars*, were used by the Ancient Cathar Brotherhood to indicate the One Path to Life, the return to the original human State of Life, to the Divine-human State of the Beginning, through the evangelical Rebirth of Water and the Spirit.

This Way back, which is the one true Purpose of Life of a human being born in this world, is for present-day humanity described extensively in, among other things, *The Coming New Man* by J van Rijckenborgh, a publication of the Young Gnostic Brotherhood, which, as the authorised representative of the Triple Alliance of the Light:

- the Brotherhood of the Golden Rosycross,
- the Brotherhood of the Cathars,
- the Brotherhood of the Holy Grail,

is active in the present Period of the Harvest as Guardian and Propagator of the ancient Christian Mysteries, under the name: International School of the Golden Rosycross 'Lectorium Rosicrucianum'.

Hence, the Patriarch of the Preceding Brotherhood, Mr A Gadai, has transferred the Grandmastership to J van Rijckenborgh and the Archdeaconate to Catharose de Petri.

ABSTINENTIA: the two-year Probationary period, at the end of which it must be clear whether the novice would be able to continue on the Path of Initiation; whether his state of health or his inner weakness would not be hindrances. During the Initiation, life was harsh and difficult. Whoever was unable to continue, entered a period of rest. ()

ANCIEN: see: JEUNE. ()

CAVERN: a particularly large cave. ()

CHEMINÉE: very steep cleft, formed by vertical cracks in the interior of a high mountain. ()

CONSOLAMENTUM: The Ancient Brotherhood knew *two* forms of Consolamentum: the Consolamentum for the dying that gave consolation and rest, and the Consolamentum for Living Dead, the Initiates (see chapter XV). ()

DIACLASES: rather shallow clefts in the rock that in the period of the formation of the Earth have remained open between the still fluid rocks and have not completely melted shut. ()

THE EGYPTIAN HERITAGE and its cosmic nature: All true gnostic Wisdom and its effects in the Aryan period of human history, hence including the original, true, living Christianity, had and has one origin: the Egyptian Arch-Gnosis of Hermes Trismegistus, the Wisdom of the Great Egyptian Mysteries. They show fallen humanity the way back to its universal Origin, the Only-begotten Son of God. ()

HARBOUR/HAVEN OF CATHARISM:

- a *harbour* is a quiet place where ships are safe from the dangers of the sea;
- a *pier* protects the harbour against the raging waves;
- a *lighthouse*, at the end of the pier, points out the safe route to ships.

In this sense, the Valley between Tarascon-Ussat-Ornolac, with including the caves of Initiation, was called a safe, quiet *haven* of Catharism; Mount Thabor, the Way of the

Cathars across St. Barthélémy the *pier*; and Montségur, looking out over Occitania, this refuge of the Parfaits, illuminated as a true spiritual *lighthouse* the whole of the Languedoc. ()

JEUNE and ANCIEN: In the Communauté des Cathares (Community of the Cathars) an Ancien (or Senior) was assigned to a pupil (the Jeune or Junior) to give the latter help and advice. In a more mature stage of pupilship, one of the teachers themselves acted as Ancien.

KA: the Divine-human state of the Beginning, the true God-Man, 'after the image of the Father;' in the words of the Egyptian Mysteries: *Ka* or the Black Osiris (see Osiris). ()

LAPIS EX COELIS: a very old legend tells that, when Lucifer fell from Heaven, his fall was so terrible that one of the sides of his Crown of Light, which knocked against a star, broke off and fell to earth, where it shattered into a thousand pieces.

That is a 'lapis ex coelis', a stone from Heaven: a small particle, a shard of the original heavenly Crown of Light!

According to this allegory, the Cathar Brothers called the Light of the Gnosis, a touch of the original, Divine-human state, 'lapis ex coelis' ()

LIFE IS DEATH, and Death is the Kiss of God. With respect to this and other statements, the reader must remember that he is very close to the most profound Mysteries of Life when reading this book. With regard to the different quotes, he should think of Christ's statement:

'Whoever loses his life for my sake will find It.' ()

LIGHT SOUL: the highest goal of the Parfaits; it is the name the Cathar Brothers gave to Ka, the Black Osiris, the true Son of God. The Young-Gnostic Brotherhood speaks in its Philosophy about: the life-giving Spirit. ()

THE LORD'S PRAYER: the Cathars prayed this prayer with the words from the Gospel of Luke. They explained that the additions 'Your will be done' and 'Deliver us from the evil one' were superfluous, because, they said: this Prayer has been given by Jesus to his *disciples*, to whom God's Will is the only standard in their lives; besides 'Your Kingdom come!!' And even in our fallen human state, God's Will occurs irresistibly. And with regard to 'deliver us from the evil one', we ask God: 'Do not lead us into temptation!' What could the evil one still do then?? ()

OCCITANIA: in the Middle Ages it was the name of the Languedoc. Of old, Le Languedoc, or Occitania, was an independent region in the South of France, with Toulouse as its capital; it encompassed, amongst other things, the present-day Département de la Haute-Garonne, de l'Aude, du Tarn, de la Haute-Loire, etc. After the so-called crusade against the Albigenses, it has been added to the crown by the French king in 1271. ()

OPPIDUM: a town fortified by the Romans. ()

OSIRIS: the Green Osiris and the Black Osiris:

Under 'The Egyptian Heritage' we said with regard to the Egyptian Mysteries: They show fallen humanity the way back to its universal Origin, the Only-begotten Son of God.

The Egyptian Mysteries indicate the way-back, which the prodigal son must walk to the Father, as:

the Path from the Green Osiris to the Black Osiris.

The *Green Osiris* is the serious candidate, who consciously and guided by the Gnosis, sets out on his Way-back and perseveres faithfully on it;

via the Tribunal of Osiris (i.e. after having proved from within, by a new mode of life, to have matured for further progress), he fully achieves the ascent to the *Black Osiris*, the Great Accomplishment, the Return in and with the Father.

In the language of the Egyptian Mysteries, this threefold path is also called:

Kepler - Mès-Naut - Ka, or symbolically:

the caterpillar - the pupa - the perfect insect (the butterfly).

It is the ancient Path of Transfiguration, from the living Soul to the life-giving Spirit, or in the language of the Cathar Brothers:

Formation - Reformation - Transformation. ()

PURS, PARFAITS, BONSHOMMES:

These names were used to indicate those, who had achieved the *rebirth* in their whole being, on the Path of the Christian Mysteries, and who then, as true Disciples of Christ, ascended the Way of the Stars, the Path of Transfiguration in service to the world and humanity.

In its Philosophy, the Young-Gnostic Brotherhood calls the state of the 'Purs' that of the Reborn Soul, the Spirit-Soul that can partake of the universal Divine Wisdom, the *Gnosis*, again, due to a restored link with the Spirit. ()

RESCH, IESMON, CHRISMON, etc., etc.:

The signs and symbols, which can also be found in the Catacombs. Just think of the fish, the anchor, the symbol *Chi*, the resch P, etc.

They are all part of the Gnosis, the profound living Knowledge of God, of the purest Christianity. ()

LE SABARTHEZ: the ancient name of the south-eastern part of the present-day Département Ariège in the Pyrenees.

In Roman times, this region was inhabited by the Tarusconians mentioned by Pliny. Its capital was Tarusco, present-day Tarascon-sur-Ariège, near Ussat-Ornolac. ()

SCARAB: The candidate on the Path of Kepler - Mès-Naut - Ka, the Green Osiris, was accompanied by the holy Beetle, the symbol of Rebirth and Resurrection. ()

SPOULGA: this word has been derived from the old Latin word spelunca, i.e. a fortified cave. ()

STALACTITES: calcareous rock formations hanging from the ceilings of caves. ()

TOLEDO: the Ancient manuscripts of Toledo:

Chrétien de Troyes, and Guyot de Provins, both troubadours at the Court of Champagne (Provins), were regular visitors at the courts of Toulouse, Carcassonne, Foix, Tudelle *and Toledo*.

Toledo had a flourishing Arab-Jewish-Spanish university.

In the old manuscripts of this university, Kyot (i.e. Guyot de Provins) has found the golden tread of Parcival.

Wolfram von Eschenbach, who also visited the afore mentioned courts, and was a friend of the troubadours, drew from the information of Kyot and Chrétien for his songs. In this way, Wagner arrived at his German Parcival. ()

THE MEANING OF THE SYMBOLS

on title page and page VIII.

The first one is the Christ monogram of Ormolac, composed of the following values:

- the Circle of Eternity;
- the resch P, a Mystery character indicating *God* the Son;
- the Greek character *Chi*, Christ;
- the Alpha, the Beginning;
- the Omega, the End;
- Caput Christi, inverted: symbol of Death;
- Caput Christi, upright: symbol of Life.

Seen as a whole: *God* the Son is the Alpha and the Omega,
the Beginning and the End;
the Beginning, Life and Death,
the End, Death and Life.

The second Symbol is the Symbol of 'the Cave of the Acacia' in Ussat, and expresses in a surprisingly clear way 'The Path to the Holy Grail'.

The Arc of the Circle indicates 'the Way of the Stars,' the Path of Transformation (Transfiguration) through the Seven Planets that are represented in 'the Seven Churches of Asia:' the veiled indication of the glorious Way back through the Seven Cosmic Planes.

On this Way, the physical human being gradually decreases (the small ☛), becomes ever more refined and subtle, and on the other hand, the human being gradually increases in pure spirituality and ever more glorious spiritual Power (the larger ☛). It is the Mystery of the Alpha and the Omega, the Omega and the Alpha; it is completely rising above the grip of matter by a never-ending Transformation (Transfiguration); it is the absolute return to the Pure Spirit Man after the Image of the Father.

Whoever walks this path, will naturally manifest the One God with three aspects, which by means of the Sanctifying Spirit (the Moon) turns the liberated Man to a bearer of the Kingdom of Love, expressed in the downward pointing Triangle, the self-sacrificing Godhead.

Hence the symbol of the Tri-Unity, the basis of all Manifestation, and of the radiant Seven-Light, whose sevenfold Sacrifice of Salvation (Healing) and Redemption is expressed by the seven waves that bring the infinite Sea of Cosmic Fullness to diseased humanity.

In and by this Sacrifice, the Temple of the Spirit, the Mystery School, founded on five pillars, the five drops of the blood of Christ (the fivefold Initiation in the Christian Mysteries through the three Sevens), rises up in the fallen world. In other words: the Five Elohim of the Father who, in and through the Son, pour out His Blood, His Love into the Holy Grail, so that M, *Mary*, the spiritual Mother Spirit of the *Church of the Spirit*, will pass on from it the healing- and eternal, life-giving Water to all who truly seek It, to all who are worthy of It, to all who are capable of receiving It.

[back cover]

A. Gadal

ON THE PATH TO THE HOLY GRAIL

In this book, the last patriarch of the Preceding Brotherhood describes the path of initiation as it was walked by the novices of the ancient Cathar Brotherhood, after they had withdrawn into the sanctuaries of Ussat-Ornolac in the valley of the Ariège.

By 'On the path to the Holy Grail' and [later] 'the way of the stars,' the Cathar Brotherhood indicated the one path of life, the return to the original state of life, the Divine-human state of the beginning, via the evangelical rebirth of water and the spirit.

The reader of this book will not experience any problem recognising in it the gnostic message of salvation of all ages, as it is propagated again in our time by the International Spiritual School of the Golden Rosycross, Lectorium Rosicrucianum.

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