

TOM P. RECOMMENDED READING LIST

For more information on Tom P. (the founder of All Addicts Anonymous), the book, *Invitation to a Great Experiment*, or the 12 Step spiritual community called East Ridge - contact Matt at: mdingle76@yahoo.com or call (845)-887-6575.

It is possible to get along without books. Knowledge of God was imparted to man and transmitted from one man to another for a very long time before books were invented. You *may* learn what you need to learn by having another person teach it to you by example and word of mouth only.

But that would be very unusual today. Teachers who can teach that way are now rare, and even they might not wish to eliminate the use of books entirely. In the last three or four thousand years written or printed documents have become such basic adjuncts to learning that if you can read at all it would be rash to overlook them. Books can strengthen understanding and faith, deepen prayer, give basis and structure for meditation, and sometimes even provide the spark that sets off the sunburst of enlightenment, as in the cases of Bucke, Pascal, Augustine, and others.

There are four kinds of books about God and the path to God. The first kind are *bad* books, ranging from merely indifferent to really bad. They are either useless or harmful. At best they are a waste of time; at worst they may get you mixed up or lead you badly off the track. The second kind are *good* books. There are so many of these that their very number creates a special problem, which we will consider in a moment. The third kind are *great* books. It is necessary to know what these books are and where you may find them, because they are basic tools in the work we are carrying on. Fourth and last (but first in importance) are the *greatest* books — the sacred scriptures of mankind. They are in a class by themselves, and you should by all means know them and know how to use them.

Books are listed here in alphabetical order. The approximate “weight” of each book is indicated by notations e, ee, or eee immediately following the listing: e means light reading; ee means medium reading; eee means heavy reading.

Please use caution in interpreting these marks. They are intended as a rough index of ease of reading, but they must be applied with discrimination. It would be a misuse of this device, for example, if you were simply attracted to the easy books and repelled by the difficult ones. Some of the not-so-easy works may be among the most useful and enjoyable of all books for you. The Bible, for instance, is marked eee because, like all sacred writing, it *is* difficult to understand thoroughly. But at the same time it is of the greatest practical value even to people who are not used to hard reading.

On the other hand a single e does not mean that the work so checked is frivolous or shallow; it just indicates a book that treats its subject in an elementary way or in terms that are quite easy to comprehend. For instance, Brother Lawrence’s *Practice of the Presence of God* is marked e because it is easy reading; nevertheless it is a profound spiritual treatise, as you may discover for yourself by reading it over four or five times a year and experimenting with the practice it suggests. So take these es, ees, and eees with a grain of salt and an eye to your own particular situation. Used that way, they should serve you without misleading you.

For a listing of books grouped according to special purposes, see Special Book Listings below.

- Albert the Great, St. *Of Cleaving to God*. London, 1954: Mowbray. ee.
- Alcoholics Anonymous*. Anonymous. New York, 1955: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. e.
- Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*. Anonymous. New York, 1957: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services. e.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas. *Basic Writings*. Edited by Anton C. Pegis. New York, 1945: Random House. eee.
- . *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Translated by Anton C. Pegis. 4 vols. Notre Dame, Inc., 1975: University of Notre Dame Press. eee.
- . *Summa Theologiae*. 60 vols. New York, 1976: McGraw-Hill. eee.
- Aristotle. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. New York, 1941: Random House. eee.
- The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology*. Compiled by Igumen Chariton Valamo. Translated by Kadloubovsky and Palmer. London, 1966: Faber. eee.
- Ashten, Joan. *Mother of All Nations: The Visitations of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Her Message for Today*. San Francisco, 1989: Harper. e.
- Attar, Farid al-Din. *Muslim Saints and Mystics*. Translated by A. J. Arberry. Boston, 1973: Routledge and Kegan Paul. ee.
- Augustine, St. *The City of God*. Edited by Vernon J. Bourke. New York, 1950: Doubleday. ee.
- . *Confessions of St. Augustine*. Translated by Rex Warner. New York, 1963: New American Library. ee.
- Aurobindo, Sri. *The Life Divine*. New York, 1949: The Sri Aurobindo Library, Inc. eee.
- Austin, Lou. *You Are Greater Than You Know*. Winchester, Va., 1955: The Partnership Foundation. e.
- Baker, Ven. Father F. Augustine. *Holy Wisdom*. Wheathampstead, Herts, England, 1964: Anthony Clarke Books. eee.
- The Baltimore Book of Prayers*. Roman Catholic Books. ee.
- Baly, Denis. *The Geography of the Bible*. New York, 1974: Harper and Row. e.
- Bar Hebraeus. *Book of the Dove*. Translated by A. J. Wensinck. Leyden, Holland, 1919: E. J. Brill. eee.
- Beevers, John. *Storm of Glory: The Story of Therese of Lisieux*. New York, 1977: Doubleday. e.
- Belloc, Hilaire. *Characters of the Reformation*. Rockford, Ill.: TAN. e.
- Benoit, Hubert. *The Supreme Doctrine*. New York, 1968: Penguin. eee.
- Bernard, Theos. *Hatha Yoga*. New York, 1950: Weiser. ee.
- Bernard of Clairvaux, St. *On the Song of Songs*. Translated by Kilian Walsh. Kalamazoo, Mich., 1976: Cistercian Pubs. eee.
- Bhagavad Gita. Of special value because of Gandhi’s great personal demonstration of the Gita’s teaching is *The Gita According to Gandhi*. Ahmedabad, India, 1946: Navajivan Publishing House. eee. Gandhi himself considered Arnold’s the best English translation:
- . *The Song Celestial*. Translated by Sir Edwin Arnold. London, 1948: Routledge and Kegan Paul. eee.

Other translations:

. *Bhagavad-Gita, The Song of God*. Translated by Prabhavananda and Isherwood. Hollywood, Calif. 1973: Vedanta Press. eee.

. *The Bhagavadgita*. Translated and with commentary by S. Radhakrishnan. New York, 1948: Harper. eee.

For interpretation and study:

. *Essays on the Gita*. By Sri Aurobindo. New York, Sri Aurobindo Library. eee.

. *Talks on the Gita*. By Vinoba Bhawe. London, 1960: George Allen and Unwin. eee.

. *The Yoga of the Bhagavat Gita*. By Sri Krishna Prem. London, 1938: Watkins. eee.

Bible. The word “bible” means simply “book.” The Bible is “the Book” (although really it is a collection of books). The Christian faith is based upon the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. The New Testament is a group of writing about Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, and his disciples. It consists of the Gospels, which tell of the life and teachings of Jesus and describe his death by crucifixion, his resurrection, and his ascension; the Acts of the Apostles, an account of the activities of the first followers of Christ Jesus; the Epistles, letters of counsel and doctrine written by Paul, James, Jude, Peter, and John; and a concluding prophetic book, the Revelation of John.

The Old Testament contains books that are held sacred in both Christianity and Judaism. These books deal with the Creation, the Prophets, Psalms and Proverbs, stories like Ruth and Esther, and great psychological and spiritual treatises like Job and Ecclesiastes.

The effect of the Bible upon mankind is quite incalculable. It has inspired Christianity and Judaism directly, and Islam indirectly, and the influence of the peoples of these faiths upon the rest of the world has been enormous.

The Catholic Bibles.

. *The Holy Bible*. Douay-Rheims Version. Rockford, Ill.: TAN. (This is the traditional English-language Catholic Bible, first published in 1582.) eee.

. *The Holy Bible*. Ignatius Press. (This is the Catholic edition of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible [see below, The Protestant Bibles], said by some modern commentators to be the best modern Catholic Bible for general use.) eee.

. *The Navarre Bible*. Four Courts Press. eee.

The Protestant Bibles. In England, between 1525 and 1611, no less than eight Protestant translations appeared: the Tyndale (1525), the Coverdale (1535), Matthew’s (1537), the Great (1539), the Geneva (1560), the Bishops’ (1568) — and finally in 1611, the King James Version, which became, and to this day remains, the most popular English Bible.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the influence of the King James Bible. So highly esteemed was it by all denominations as an inspired and masterful rendering of the Word of God that no major subsequent translation appeared for 273 years, until the Revised Version in 1884.

In the present century — and especially since 1950 — a host of new English translations have appeared, incorporating advances in biblical scholarship and seeking to improve upon the unfamiliarity of the language of the King James Version. Two of these modern translations deserve special mention: The Revised Standard Version (1952) is highly regarded for its scholarly accuracy and for its readability, and now exists in both Protestant and Catholic editions. The Amplified Bible (1965) provides full and precise translations of key words in the ancient texts; and, by bracketing explanatory words and phrases directly in the text, it eliminates the need for footnotes or other “helps.”

. *The Amplified Bible*. Zondervan. eee.

. *Holy Bible with Apocrypha and Book of Common Prayer*. King James Version. Preservation Press. eee.

. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha*. Revised Standard Version. New York: Oxford University Press. eee.

. *New Testament Apocrypha*. Westminster/John Knox Press. eee.

. *The Scofield Study Bible*. King James Version. Edited by C.I. Scofield. New York: Oxford University Press. eee.

The Bible of Judaism. One thousand years ago the rabbinical scholar Saadia Gaon observed: “Israel is a people only by virtue of the torah.” This is no exaggeration. Without the bible it is impossible to imagine that the Jews could have survived as a distinctive people or as a religious fellowship through so many centuries and through so many vicissitudes. Actually the bible is not just one book. It is a “library” or collection of sacred Jewish writings. Regarded throughout the English-speaking Jewish community as the standard English translation of the Holy Scriptures, the *Tanakh* has been acclaimed by scholars, rabbis, and lay leaders — Jews and Christians as well.

Here in a single volume are the Torah (the five Books of Moses), the Prophets (including the early prophets, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah, and the twelve minor prophets), and the Writings (including the Books of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Chronicles I and II.)

. *Tanakh*. Philadelphia, 1983: The Jewish Publication Society. eee.

Boehme, Jacob. *The Aurora*. Greenwood, S.C., 1960: The Attic Press. eee.

. *The Forty Questions*. Translated by John Sparrow. London, 1911: John M. Watkins. eee.

. *Mysterium Magnum*. Translated by John Sparrow. 2 vols. London, 1924: Watkins. eee.

. *The Signature of All Things*. Greenwood, S.C., 1960: The Attic Press. eee.

. *The Way to Christ*. London, 1964: Watkins. ee.

. See also Franz Hartmann.

Boisen, Anton T. *Religion in Crisis and Custom*. New York, 1955: Harper. ee.

Bossuet. *Letters of Spiritual Direction*. London, 1958: Mowbray. ee.

Brahmananda, Swami. *The Eternal Companion*. Compiled by Swami Prabhavananda. Hollywood, Calif. 1944: Vedanta Press. ee.

Brianchaninov, Bishop Ignatius. *On the Prayer of Jesus*. London, 1953: Watkins. eee.
 Brother Lawrence. *The God Illuminated Cook: The Practice of the Presence of God*. Hankins, N.Y., 1975: East Ridge Press. e.
 Buber, Martin. *Eclipse of God*. New York, 1957: Harper. ee.
 . *For the Sake of Heaven*. New York, 1969: Atheneum. ee.
 . *Hasidism and Modern Man*. New York, 1958: Harper. ee.
 . *I and Thou*. New York, 1970: Scribner. eee.
 . *The Legends of the Baal-Shem*. New York, 1969: Schocken. ee.
 . *Tales of the Hasidim*. 2 vols. New York, 1973: Schocken. ee.
 Bucke, Richard M. *Cosmic Consciousness*. Secaucus, N.J., 1970: Citadel. ee.
A Buddhist Bible. Edited by Dwight Goddard. Boston, 1970: Beacon. eee.
 Bulwer-Lytton, Sir Edward. *Zanoni*. Blauvelt, N.Y., 1971: Rudolf Steiner Publications. ee.
 Bunyan, John. *Pilgrim's Progress*. New York, 1970: Dutton. ee.
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 Butler, Alban. *Butler's Lives of the Saints*. Christian Classics. ee.
 Carrel, Alexis. *Prayer*. London, 1947: Hodder & Stoughton. e.
 . *The Voyage to Lourdes*. New York, 1950: Harper. e.
 Catherine of Genoa, St. *The Treatise on Purgatory*. Westminster, Md., 1946: Christian Classics. ee.
A Catholic Dictionary. Edited by Donald Attwater. New York, 1961: Macmillan. ee.
 Catton, Bruce. *This Hallowed Ground*. New York, 1955: Doubleday. e.
 Chapman, Dom John. *Spiritual Letters*. Edited by Dom Roger Huddleston. New York, 1935: Sheed & Ward. ee.
 Chesterton, G. K. *Collected Works*. Volume 3. Ignatius Press. e.
 . *The Everlasting Man*. New York, 1953: Dodd, Mead. e.
 . *Orthodoxy*. Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw Publishers. e.
 . *St. Francis of Assisi*. New York, 1957: Doubleday. e.
 . *St. Thomas Aquinas: The Dumb Ox*. New York, 1956: Doubleday. e.
The Choice Is Always Ours. Edited by Dorothy Berkley Philips, Elizabeth Boyden Howes, Lucille M. Nixon. Wheaton, Ill., 1975: Theosophical Publishing House.
 Cleckley, Hervey. *The Mask of Sanity*. St. Louis, 1964: Mosby. ee.
The Cloud of Unknowing. Anonymous. Edited by Evelyn Underhill. London, 1946: Watkins. ee.
 . Edited by Abbot Justin McCann. London, 1952: Burns Oates. ee.
 . Translated by Clifton Wolters. New York, 1968: Penguin. ee.
 . Translated into modern English by Ira Progoff. New York, 1957: Julian Press. ee.
 . Shortened version in modern English. New York, 1948: Harper. ee.
 Collin, Rodney. *The Theory of Celestial Influence*. New York, 1954: Weiser. eee.
 . *The Theory of Eternal Life*. New York, 1974: Weiser. eee.
 Collins and Lapierre. *Freedom at Midnight*. New York, 1980: Ballantine. e.
 Colson, Charles. *Born Again*. Baker Book House. e.
 . *Life Sentence*. Baker Book House. e.
 Common Prayer, The Book of. (Episcopal.) New York, 1928: Oxford University Press. ee.
 Confucius. *Analects*. Translated by Arthur Waley. New York, 1966: Random House. eee.
 . *The Wisdom of Confucius*. Translated and edited by Lin Yutang. New York, 1948: Modern Library. eee.
 Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. *Am I My Brother's Keeper?* Plainview, N.Y., 1947: Books for Libraries. ee.
 . *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*. New York, 1964: Harper. eee.
 . *Hinduism and Buddhism*. Westport, Conn., 1971: Greenwood Press. eee.
 Cousins, Norman. *The Anatomy of an Illness*. New York, 1979: Norton. e.
 Cranston, Ruth. *The Miracle of Lourdes*. New York, 1955: McGraw-Hill. e.
 Cruz, Joan Carroll. *Eucharistic Miracles*. Rockford, Ill.: TAN. ee.
 . *The Incorruptibles*. Rockford, Ill.: TAN. ee.
 . *Miraculous Images of Our Lady*. Rockford, Ill.: TAN. ee.
 . *Prayers and Heavenly Promises*. Rockford, Ill.: TAN. ee.
 . *Relics*. Our Sunday Visitor Press. ee.
 Daily, Starr. *Release*. New York, 1942: Harper. e.
 Dante. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*. Translated by Dorothy L. Sayers. 3 vols. New York, 1974: Penguin. eee.
 Daumal, René. *Mount Analogue*. Translated by Roger Shattuck. San Francisco, 1952: City Lights. ee.
 Davenport, Russell W. *The Dignity of Man*. Westport, Conn., 1973: Greenwood Press. ee.
The Dead Sea Scriptures. Translated and edited by Theodore M. Gaster. New York, 1956: Doubleday. e.
 De Caussade, Jean Pierre. *On Prayer*. Translated by Algar Thorold. London, 1949: Burns Oates. eee.
 . *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence*. Translated by Algar Thorold. Rockford, Ill., 1985: TAN. eee.
 . *Spiritual Letters*. Translated by Algar Thorold. London, 1948: Burns Oates. eee.
 Dechanet, J. M. *Christian Yoga*. Westminster, Md., 1972: Christian Classics. ee.
 DeHartmann, Thomas. *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff*. New York, 1972: Penguin. e.

De Laredo, Bernardino. *The Ascent of Mount Sion*. New York, 1952: Harper. eee.

De Molinos, Michael. *The Spiritual Guide*. London, 1907: Methuen. eee.

De Monval, Maurice Boutet. *Joan of Arc*. New York, 1980: Viking. e.

De Sales, St. Francis. *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Edited and with introduction by Thomas S. Kepler. Cleveland, 1952: World. ee.

De Voragine, Jacobus. *The Golden Legend*. Princeton University Press. ee.

The Desert Fathers. Translated by Helen Waddell. Ann Arbor, Mich., 1957: University of Michigan Press. ee.

The Dhammapada. Translated by S. Radhakrishnan. New York, 1974: Oxford. eee.

Dionysius the Areopagite. *The Mystical Theology and the Celestial Hierarchies*. Nr. Godalming, Surrey, 1961: The Shrine of Wisdom. eee.

. *Theologia Mystica*. Translated by Alan W. Watts. West Park, N.Y., 1944: Holy Cross Press. eee.

. *On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*. Translated by C. E. Bolt. New York, 1940: Macmillan. eee.

Dunkerly, Roderic. *Beyond the Gospels*. New York, 1957: Penguin. ee.

De Nouy, Lecomte. *Human Destiny*. New York, 1947: New American Library. ee.

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov*. New York, 1957: New American Library. ee.

. *The Idiot*. New York, 1935: Random House (Modern Library). ee.

Durant, Will and Ariel. *Caesar and Christ*. New York: Simon & Schuster. ee.

. *The Life of Greece*. New York, 1939: Simon & Schuster. ee.

. *Our Oriental Heritage*. New York: Simon & Schuster. ee.

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. *Meister Eckhart*. Translated by C. de B. Evans. 2 vols. London, 1947 and 1952: Watkins. eee.

. *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation*. Translated and with commentaries by Matthew Fox. New York, 1980: Doubleday. eee.

. *Meister Eckhart and the Rhineland Mystics*. By JeanneAncelet-Hustach. New York, 1957: Harper. eee.

Ehrenfeld, David. *The Arrogance of Humanism*. New York, 1978: Oxford. ee.

Ellul, Jacques. *Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation*. New York, 1977: Seabury. ee.

. *The Betrayal of the West*. New York, 1975: Seabury. ee.

. *The Judgment of Jonah*. Grand Rapids, Mich., 1971: Eerdmans. ee.

. *The Meaning of the City*. Grand Rapids, Mich., 1970: Eerdmans. ee.

. *The Subversion of Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Mich., 1986: Eerdmans. ee.

. *The Technological Society*. New York, 1964: Knopf. ee.

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. *The Life of Christ*. Edited by The Very Rev. Karl E. Schmoger. 4 vols. Rockford, Ill.: TAN. ee.

. See also Schmoger, The Very Rev. K. E.

The Essential Gandhi. Edited by Louis Fischer. New York, 1962: Random House. e.

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Fischer, Louis. *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*. New York, 1962: Macmillan. e.

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. See also G. K. Chesterton; *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Future Of an Illusion*. New York, 1975: Norton. ee.

. *Basic Writings*. Edited by Dr. A. A. Brill. New York, 1938: Random House (Modern Library). eee.

Friedlander, Ira. *The Whirling Dervishes*. New York, 1970: Macmillan. e.

Gandhi, M. K. *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Boston, 1972: Beacon. e.

. *Ramanama*. Ahmedabad-14, India, 1949: Navajivan. e.

. *Self-Restraint vs. Self-Indulgence*. Ahmedabad-14, India, 1928: Navajivan. e.

. See also Bhagavad Gita; Collins and Lapierre; Louis Fischer; Vincent Sheean.

Garrigou-Lagrange, Rev. R. *God: His Existence and His Nature*. 2 vols. St. Louis, 1934: Herder. eee.

. *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*. 2 vols. St. Louis, 1947: Herder. ee.

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. *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*. New York, 1960: Random House. eee.

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Gobbi, Fr. Stefano. *To The Prists: Our Lady's Beloved Sons*. St. Francis, Maine: The Marian Movement of Priests. ee.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang Von. *Faust*. Part I. Translated by Alice Raphael. New York, 1930: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith. ee.

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. *Spiritual Maxims*. Springfield, Ill., 1961: Templegate. ee.

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. *Meetings with Remarkable Men*. New York, 1963: Dutton. ee.

. *Views from the Real World: Early Talks of Gurdjieff*. As recollected by his pupils. With a foreword by Jeanne De Salzman. New York, 1973: Dutton. ee.

. See also Rodney Collin; René Daumal; Thomas De Hartmann; Maurice Nicoll; P.D. Ouspensky.

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. *Organon of Medicine*. Philadelphia, 1897: Boericke & Tafel. eee.

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. *Paracelsus: Life and Prophecies*. Blauvelt, N.Y., 1973: Rudolf Steiner Publications. eee.

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. *Is God in History?* Hollywood, Calif. 1950: Vedanta Press. eee.

. *Training for the Life of the Spirit*. Hankins, N.Y., 1975: East Ridge Press. ee.

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. *The Fathers of the Church: The Apostolic Fathers*. Edited by Ludwig Schopp. New York, 1947: Christian Heritage. eee.

Heschel, Abraham. *God in Search of Man*. New York, 1966: Harper. ee.

St. Hildegard of Bingen. *The Book of Divine Works*. Edited by Matthew Fox. Bear & Co. eee.

. *Mystical Visions*. Translated by Bruce Hozrski. Bear & Co. eee.

. See also Dr. Wighard Strehlow

High Holyday Prayer Book. 2 volumes. Translated by Philip Birnbaum. Hebrew Publishing Co. ee.

Hilton, Walter. *The Stairway of Perfection*. New York, 1973: Doubleday. eee.

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The Imitation of Christ. Variously attributed to Thomas a Kempis, Tauler, and others. Whitford translation. Edited by Edward J. Klein. New York, 1941: Harper. ee.

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Special Book Listings

The following books are grouped according to the special purposes to which they are related.

These groups of books do not constitute a suggested schedule or diet of reading; taken as such they might produce indigestion. Each group, rather, is a kind of book cafeteria from which you can select what suits your appetite. You are responsible for your own

diet. Titles representing widely different viewpoints are included — orthodox and unorthodox, Western and Eastern, ancient and modern. This broad scope is indicated because of the variety of the spiritual needs of individuals today. It is assumed that from the cafeteria offering you will choose such books as may meet your particular requirements. It is assumed further that you will not confuse yourself with incompatible mixtures but will simply pass over books which do not fit your background, are out of phase with your spiritual orientation, or are outside the range of your present interests.

Books relevant to the way of reason

Two books, one Protestant and one Catholic, are suggested as bridge books between philosophy and the more specifically theological viewpoints. The first is Elton Trueblood's *Philosophy of Religion*, an excellent outline and examination of the possibilities and difficulties of thinking one's way toward the reality of God. The second is the beautifully disciplined and boiled-down study entitled *Approaches to God* by the great Catholic scholar Jacques Maritain. This little book covers the various philosophical approaches to God, with major emphasis naturally on a philosophy which is fundamental in Catholicism, that of St. Thomas Aquinas. If one wishes to take a deeper look in this area he can do so in *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* and in the *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, both by Etienne Gilson.

There are lots of kinds of theology, and we will put off some of them to another place: ascetical and mystical theology, for example, deal more with spiritual experience and with knowing and keeping the rules, than with reasoning. But anyone who hopes to keep his own thinking about God on the track should get acquainted with at least the main outlines of formal theology.

An easy and interesting book of basic Catholic theology is F.J. Sheed's *Theology and Sanity*. A deeper book, bearing directly upon the question of God's reality, is *God: His Existence and His Nature* by the Dominican theologian Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, a thorough exposition of the traditional proofs of God's existence and the knowledge of God's nature and attributes from the Catholic point of view. A Protestant theology is ably presented in Reinhold Niebuhr's famous book *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. Another outstanding Protestant theologian, Paul Tillich, in his *Systematic Theology* goes extensively into the question of the reality of God and discusses fully the place of reason in the quest of that reality. An Anglican exposition of sacred doctrine is provided in *Theological Outlines* by Francis J. Hall, a condensation of Professor Hall's classic ten-volume work.

An approach to God sometimes called "natural theology" develops out of the questions "Is there evidence in nature and in natural science for the existence of God? Can we see God in nature?" Gerald Heard presents a contemporary essay in natural theology in *Is God Evident?* Other books in this area are *Human Destiny* by Lecomte Du Noüy, *Man Does Not Stand Alone* by A. Cressy Morrison, and *The Imprisoned Splendour* by Raynor Johnson, particularly Part I, entitled "The Data of Natural Science."

Reason may be used to seek evidence of God not only in nature and in science but also in history (a very important pursuit for Christians, whose religion is particularly historical). Gerald Heard follows this line of inquiry in *Is God in History?* See further *A Study of History* by Arnold J. Toynbee, *The End of the Modern World* by the Roman Catholic philosopher and theologian Romano Guardini, and *The Crisis of Our Age* by Pitirim A. Sorokin. Note also *The Dignity of Man*, an inquiry into the historic spiritual crisis of modern man by a former editor of *Fortune* magazine, the late Russell W. Davenport.

Finally, for those who wish to explore the nature of the divine Reality and man's place in it with an Eastern mind of universality, brilliance, and depth, *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo is suggested.

Books relevant to the way of faith

One of the most helpful of all books on faith is still Harry Emerson Fosdick's well-known and well-loved *The Meaning of Faith*. Arranged for daily reading over a twelve-week period, it covers the ground thoroughly from practical, inspirational, and rational viewpoints. The problem of faith and its renewal in the present human situation is explored on a worldwide scale by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan in *Recovery of Faith*, a sharp pointing-up of man's need for faith and the ways to its acquisition as taught and demonstrated in the great living faiths of Hinduism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, and others.

Faith, the spiritual reality, has a basic common meaning in all religions. But, in addition, "faith" as a system of belief or consent has different meanings in different religions, and you should make your choice of books with this condition in mind. For a Roman Catholic, for instance (as for the great majority of Christians of the past and present), faith is "a theological virtue by which our intellect is disposed to assent firmly to all the truths revealed by God. . ." and also "'a habit of mind by which eternal life is begun in us, in that it makes the mind assent to things which appear not. . .'" (St. Thomas Aquinas's comment on St. Paul's statement that "faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not"). So far the Catholic and many other Christians could agree. But to the Catholic, "faith" also means "the sum of the truth taught by the Catholic religion." And "Catholic" here evidently means not simply "universal" and not Anglican and Eastern Orthodox and others who call themselves "Catholic" but specifically "Roman Catholic." "Faith," therefore, to a Roman Catholic, is belief in what the Roman Catholic Church teaches. *The faith*, in this view, *is* Roman Catholicism. For a succinct yet comprehensive presentation of what the Roman Catholic faith is, in both its general and its more particular sense, see *A Catholic Dictionary*. See also *The Faith of Millions* by Reverend John A. O'Brien.

To certain Evangelical Christian groups, "faith" means belief in the literal words of the Bible, literally understood. To Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Catholics, and to Protestants of various denominations likewise, "faith" has different and particular meanings in addition to its universal meaning of belief and trust in God.

There is a further particularity in which the word "faith" distinguishes a large part of Christianity from the rest of the God-seeking world: many Christian groups accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the only Son of God, and the one incarnation of God. Other

great world religious faiths — Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism, for example — do not share this viewpoint. So faith, as creedal or formal belief, has different meanings not only within Christianity but within the worldwide body of all those who believe in and seek to know the Supreme Reality.

The different shades of belief among the various Protestant denominations and other religions are described in the literature of each group, which is far too large for a listing to be attempted here. You can easily find the works you are interested in by contacting a minister, priest, or rabbi of the particular group whose faith you are studying. Among survey books in this area are *A Guide to the Religions of America*, edited by Leo Rosten, *Religion in the Twentieth Century* by Vergilius Ferm, and *The World's Great Religions* by the editors of *Life* magazine.

The following books, dealing with the faith from a broad Christian point of view, are by Protestant authors, but they treat the subject without provoking Protestant interdenominational issues or raising the Protestant-Catholic question: *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis and *The Christian Faith* by David H.C. Read.

Finally, a particular modern view needs special attention. A movement of religious-psychological thought and practice has grown up around the fact that faith can produce increase in mental and physical well-being and success in daily undertakings and practical affairs. In this movement faith is emphasized as a means to some or all of these ends. Christian texts, such as Mark 11:24, are quoted in support of this view. Faith is cultivated by prayer, by optimistic attitudes (“positive thinking”), by disciplined affirmations of good and denials of evil, and by keeping watch over the mind so that desired thoughts are retained and undesired thoughts are rejected. In brief, this movement believes and demonstrates that man, by religious and psychological techniques, can influence his inner and outer circumstances for good. The movement can trace its origins to the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, and Thomas Troward.

It is recognized that certain of the groups within the pattern would not acknowledge their inclusion in any such overall designation as a movement. The common denominators, however, are apparent. The term “movement” is used here for the sake of brevity, clarity, and convenience and not with any intention of grouping bodies which do not wish to be so grouped. The chief divisions within the movement are those which are known as New Thought, Christian Science, Mental Science, Metaphysics, and the Unity School of Christianity. Many individuals who share the movement’s views are not associated with these divisions but are members of regular Christian denominations. Dr. Peale, for example, one of the most influential spokesmen of the movement, was a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church.

These particular techniques in the application of faith, or “mental science,” or “divine science” to the human problems of health and supply have become widely popular, especially in the United States. Obviously they fill a deeply felt need and often are genuinely effective. In some quarters, however, they have been regarded as serious distortions of the religious and psychological facts of life. A great contribution of these doctrines lies in their ability to correct and relieve people who are suffering from unfounded and obsessive pessimism. Difficulties arise, however, from the fact that when the teaching is not applied with understanding and discrimination, it tends to produce unfounded and obsessive optimism.

Books relevant to the way of experience

There are many books which describe in detail the traditional three ways to God (purgation, illumination, union). Among the best of these are Evelyn Underhill’s *Mysticism** and Father Garrigou-Lagrange’s *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*. The following books about the experience of God as reported in terms of the Western traditions are also suggested: *The Dialogues of Plato* (these works are usually read for their literary and philosophic interest, but actually they are full of references to experience of higher Reality; note particularly *The Republic*, Book VII, the story of the prisoners in the cave); *The Mysteries*, edited by Joseph Campbell (the Greek, Egyptian, and other mysteries were techniques for introducing their subjects into direct experience of spiritual Reality; note particularly “The Meaning of the Eleusinian Mysteries”), *The Enneads of Plotinus* (writings of one who experienced God directly† and whose views deeply influenced Christian thought for many centuries).

Outstanding books by or about Western saints and mystics include: *The Confessions of St. Augustine*; *St. Francis of Assisi*, by G.K. Chesterton; *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*; *The Treatise on Purgatory and the Dialogue* of St. Catherine of Genoa; *The Complete Works of St. Teresa of Jesus*, particularly in Vol. 1, the *Life*; *The Life of the Servant*, an autobiography by Henry Suso; *St. Ignatius’ Own Story*, a short, direct biography of St. Ignatius of Loyola; *Brother Nicholas*, a biography of Nicholas of Flüe, “Bruder Klaus,” by George Lamb; *The Curé d’Ars*, a biography of an amazing man, the patron saint of priests, by Abbé Francis Trochu; *Storm of Glory* by John Beevers, the story of St. Thérèse of Lisieux; *The Life and Doctrines of Jacob Boehme* by Franz Hartmann.

* “Mysticism” is one of those hot terms. It is a very old and universal concept, and no one studying empirical knowledge of God can afford to misunderstand it. Mysticism means experience of God. But the word has become muddled almost beyond recognition as our knowledge and valuation of spiritual experience have degenerated. Evelyn Underhill’s book by that name is an excellent exposition of what mysticism really is. So also are the articles entitled “Mysticism” in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and in the *Columbia Encyclopedia*. At least look up and read these articles, so the next time you hear someone talking or writing as if a mystic were somebody with a crystal ball and a dunce cap you will be able to determine on whose head the dunce cap really belongs. See further *Mysticism in Religion* and *Christian Mysticism* by W.R. Inge.

Mysticism lies at the root of all religion. Aldous Huxley, in his introduction to the Bhagavad Gita, has written: "From this fact [that mystical knowledge is superior to the devotional practices which lead up to it] have arisen misunderstandings in plenty and a number of intellectual difficulties. Here, for example, is what Abbot John Chapman writes in one of his admirable *Spiritual Letters*: 'The problem of *reconciling* (not merely uniting) mysticism with Christianity is more difficult. The Abbot (Abbot Marmion) says that St. John of the Cross is like a sponge full of Christianity. You can squeeze it all out, and the full mystical theory remains. Consequently for fifteen years or so I hated St. John of the Cross and called him a Buddhist. I loved St. Teresa, and read her over and over again. She is first a Christian, and only secondarily a mystic. Then I found I had wasted fifteen years, so far as prayer was concerned.' And yet, he concludes, in spite of its 'Buddhistic' character, the practice of mysticism (or, to put it in other terms, the realization of the Perennial Philosophy) makes good Christians. He might have added that it also makes good Hindus, good Buddhists, good Taoists, good Moslems, and good Jews."

† "Four times, during the period I passed with him, he achieved this Term, by no mere latent fitness but by the ineffable Act. To this God, I also declare, I Porphyry, that in my sixty-eighth year I too was once admitted and entered into Union" (*Enneads*).

The Miracle of Lourdes by Ruth Cranston and *The Voyage to Lourdes* by Alexis Carrel are books which touch upon special aspects of spiritual experience: charismatic healing, the apparition of persons in a supernatural state to human beings, unaccountable physical phenomena or miracles, stigmatization, and so on. Note also: *Miracles* by C.S. Lewis, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* by Herbert Thurston, S.J., *The Story of Therese Neumann* (the life of a contemporary stigmatist) by A.P. Schimberg, and *Our Lady of Fatima* (an account of the appearance of "a Lady made wholly of light" to three Portuguese shepherd children and the unaccountable solar phenomena witnessed by 70,000 people) by W.T. Walsh.

Experiment in Depth by P.W. Martin is a good introduction to spiritual experience from the standpoint of modern depth psychology, particularly the psychology of C.G. Jung. Freud's psychology basically is materialistic, mechanistic, and atheistic, and so he and his followers are bound by their most fundamental hypotheses not to understand spiritual experience as spiritual experience but rather as illness, superstition, or illusion (see *The Future of an Illusion* by Freud). Jung, on the other hand, is genuinely and profoundly open to and interested in the reality of religious and spiritual experience. See *Psychology and Religion: West and East* by C.G. Jung. For a criticism of Jung's religious views see *Eclipse of God* by Martin Buber.

Two modern survey books which cover the field of spiritual experience very thoroughly are *The Ways and Power of Love and Forms and Techniques of Altruistic and Spiritual Growth* by Pitirim A. Sorokin.

Insight into spiritual experience may be gained by exposing oneself to the witness of contemporaries who have had such experience. Four books by widely different modern witnesses are suggested: *The Seven Storey Mountain* by Thomas Merton, a young man who became a Trappist monk and priest; *You Are Greater Than You Know* by Lou Austin, a businessman who discovered he had a Partner; *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* by "Bill," the anonymous co-founder whose spiritual experience has led to the recovery of three-quarters of a million alcoholics; and *Release* by Starr Daily, the incorrigible criminal who was visited by Christ in prison and taught the Way of freedom.

Anthologies offer a very practical and enjoyable way to study spiritual experience. The following are suggested: *The Perennial Philosophy* by Aldous Huxley, *The Choice Is Always Ours* by Dorothy Berkeley Phillips, *A Year of Grace* and *From Darkness to Light* by Victor Gollancz, and *The Soul Afire* by H.A. Reinhold.

Of special interest to the world of today is the spiritual experience of the Russian people. For a historical survey, including many writings and accounts of the lives of Russian theocentric saints, see *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality* edited by G.P. Fedotov (note particularly the conversation of St. Seraphim of Sarov with Nicholas Motovilov, an interesting example of a theophany transmitted to one man by the power of another, an ability which Sri Ramakrishna also possessed). For an inquiry into the spiritual life of present-day Russia see *Visions Rise and Change* by Pierre Van Paassen.

The Eastern traditions of direct experience of God have much of interest, wisdom, and help to offer the seeker, whatever his religion. The literature of these traditions is very large. The following books would provide a rudimentary introduction to this great area of empirical knowledge: *How to Know God: The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali* translated by Prabhavananda and Isherwood; *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* translated by Swami Nikhilananda; *The Essence of Buddhism* by D.T. Suzuki; *Tibet's Great Yogi, Milarepa* edited by W.Y. Evans-Wentz; *The Secret of the Golden Flower* translated by Richard Wilhelm. (The Eastern scriptures are of course most essential for an understanding of the matter in hand and should be consulted ahead of the books indicated immediately above.) Zen Buddhism, a strictly experiential school of spiritual awakening, has aroused increasing interest in the Western world. A good introduction is *The Way of Zen* by Alan Watts. See also *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* by D.T. Suzuki.

The experimental path to God has had an interesting history in Islam. Note *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* by Margaret Smith, *The Mathnawi of Jalálu'ddin Rûmî* edited by Reynold A. Nicholson, and *Muhammad's People* by Eric Schroeder.

Jewish experience of God is set forth in the Old Testament. For later developments see *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* by Gershom Scholem; *Tales of the Hasidim* and *The Legend of the Baal-Shem* by Martin Buber; *God in Search of Man* by Abraham J. Heschel; and *The Zohar*.

Books relevant to the practice of prayer

Useful books on prayer cover a very wide range. One must be careful not to read too many different kinds at anywhere near the same time, and not to read deep books too soon. To do so can lead to either pride or confusion or both; or it can give you a bad taste

for books which, taken in right time, would be wonderfully good for you. On the other hand certain people, without vanity or gagging, are able to get help from even the deepest sources (from Meister Eckhart, for instance) quite early in their work. As you must find your own way in the Way, so you must find your own books.

The following listing is arranged in four divisions. These are necessarily somewhat arbitrary, and experts on prayer might easily rank some of the books differently. Our purpose, however, is not scholarly but strictly practical. The present grouping can serve as a rough but functional guide by which you may select books according to your present condition and need. These books are listed not chronologically but in the estimated order of their usefulness and interest to a working prayer.

Beginners' books

Prayer Works by Austin Pardue. Written in the simplest of language by the Episcopal Bishop of Pittsburgh, this is an excellent primer for anyone who wants to start prayer and really work at it, without getting into complications or intellectual problems right away.

Prayer by Dr. Alexis Carrel. A simple, powerful essay on prayer by a world-famous scientist, surgeon, and physiologist, "for those of little faith or none at all" as well as for more mature Christians.

The Meaning of Prayer by Harry Emerson Fosdick. Written back in 1915, this book remains to this day one of the classic practical introductions to prayer for the ordinary person. It is simple but thorough and quite complete in covering what you need to know in the first few years of work in prayer.

The Way of a Pilgrim. Anonymous. This book must be included in any list of beginners' books on prayer, because it is the only introduction in Christian terms to one of the most powerful of all methods of prayer — a method which, for all its depth, is within the range of the rankest novice.

Working books

A Preface to Prayer by Gerald Heard. A penetrating working inquiry into the meaning and practice of low, middle, and high prayer, by a man who has devoted a lifetime to the search for such meaning.

How to Pray by Jean-Nicolas Grou. This book consists of the chapters on prayer from Père Grou's outstanding work, *The School of Jesus Christ*. A working outline of prayer based on the view that God alone teaches to pray, including discussions of various ways of prayer and a spiritual commentary on the Lord's Prayer.

Spiritual Letters by Dom John Chapman, O.S.B. These letters, written to individuals who were involved in specific problems in prayer, are a mine of skilled and sensitive counsel, particularly in abandonment and in those phases of prayer in which "dryness" and lack of consolation are encountered. Abbot Chapman was one of the most understanding of near-contemporary directors of prayer. He taught that "the simplest kind of prayer is best" and "the more you pray the better it goes."

The Way to Christ by Jacob Boehme. The famous collection of prayers and instruction in prayer by the God-illuminated shoemaker of Goerlitz, Germany, written in the years 1622-1623 and containing six tracts as follows: "Of True Repentance," "Of True Resignation," "Of Regeneration or the New Birth," "Of the Supersensual Life," "Dialogue Between an Enlightened and Unenlightened Soul," and "Of Divine Contemplation." Boehme is not for everyone, but those who can hear him find him a very great help.

Contemplative Prayer by Shirley C. Hughson, O.H.C. "The only object [of this book] is, in a humble way, to introduce souls who desire to love God to that higher, simplified mode of prayer which St. Francis de Sales calls contemplation, and which he describes as 'no other than a loving, simple, and permanent attention of the spirit to divine things.'"

The Book of English Collects by John Wallace Suter, Jr. The collect is a peculiarly useful and powerful form of short prayer. "Often it consists of one sentence; usually it expresses a single main thought, which is either a petition or a thanksgiving." A few favorite collects committed to memory can serve as a backlog and working resource in the life of prayer. This book is an outstanding compilation of collects from traditional sources.

The Book of Common Prayer. The Episcopal Prayer Book is listed here for both particular and general reference. It is understood, of course, that each one will find the greatest usefulness in the Prayer Book or books of his own particular denomination. Prayer books are prime aids in the study and practice of communion with God, incorporating as they do the wisdom of great bodies of praying men and women over the centuries.

Advanced books

Holy Wisdom by Augustine Baker. The famous book of "directions for the prayer of contemplation" written by "a monk of the English Congregation of the Holy Order of S. Benedict" who lived from 1575 to 1641. It is one of the most complete, most thorough, most respected, and most useful of all works on prayer. Although it is certainly not a beginner's book, nevertheless many beginners are able to get real help from it. As in the case of all advanced books, *Holy Wisdom* should be used judiciously and if at all possible with experienced counsel. It is among the very greatest treasures in the whole field of the work of prayer.

The Cloud of Unknowing. Anonymous. This book is included here as a basic, lucid, powerful, and traditionally revered guide in a difficult and critical area of the soul's ascent to direct experience of God: the passage from sensible and mental images of any and all kinds into the tremendous realm beyond the senses and beyond the mind wherein lies the "cloud" which is the last veil between man and his Lord. Since in our time it is very widely assumed that there are no realms of consciousness beyond the mind, this book

establishes a point of departure for a kind of inquiry and experiment much needed today if our psychology is ever to rise out of the artificial and strangulating limits it has set for itself.

The Scale of Perfection by Walter Hilton. A gentle, charming, wise, and incisive survey of the ladder of prayer. Not much is known of Hilton beyond what his works reveal. He may have been a Carthusian monk, although it seems more probable that he was an Augustinian canon. However that may be, he “occupies a central position in the small group of English medieval mystics, being third in time of its four outstanding personalities.” (The other three are Richard Rolle, Julian of Norwich, and the unknown author of *The Cloud*.)

The Graces of Interior Prayer by A. Poulain, S.J. Possibly this is the greatest work of its particular kind on prayer. It is a comprehensive, technical, detailed, meticulous, scholarly, and at the same time deeply understanding and inspired treatise on the many aspects of mystical prayer. It is exactly the kind of book which most beginners, and certainly those with any tendency toward spiritual ambition or pride, should leave strictly alone. Also it is not for anyone who is unable or unwilling to study. But for those in whom experience of God actually is developing, it may serve as an invaluable source of knowledge.

Methods of Mental Prayer by Cardinal Lecaro. Like Poulain’s book listed above, this is a technical, scholarly, and in a certain sense scientific work on prayer. It is concerned with method, degree, and structure in various Roman Catholic schools of mental prayer since the sixteenth century. It includes extensive and very helpful schemata of Ignatian, Salesian, Sulpician, and Carmelite prayer and of the prayer of St. Alphonsus and St. John Baptist de la Salle. The value of such a work as this is obvious for one whose conscious contact with God has been made and is developing, and who wishes to be guided not only by inspiration but by the most careful mental and rational use of traditional resources. For anyone else the dangers and difficulties of so highly intellectualized and strictly formalized an approach are also obvious.

The Complete Works of St. Teresa of Jesus. St. Teresa (of Avila) was a person who combined tremendous experience in prayer with great insight into her own states and encounters in divine communion, and with a talent for expression. She deals particularly with techniques, problems, and stages of prayer in “The Way of Perfection” and “Interior Castle,” both in Vol. II of *The Complete Works*.

The Ascent of Mount Sion by Bernardino de Laredo. This was the book upon which St. Teresa of Jesus leaned for help during the most critical years of her spiritual life. It is a systematic but heart-centered guide to the union of the soul with God. Bernardino de Laredo was a Spanish physician of the sixteenth century who became a lay brother in the Franciscan order.

On Contemplating God by William of St. Thierry. A short, beautiful, and intellectually limpid treatise on the deepest love of God, by a Benedictine contemplative by whom St. Bernard was influenced. This is a first translation of a twelfth-century manuscript which is a mirror of profound simplicity in the prayer of transforming love.

Of Cleaving to God by St. Albert the Great. St. Albert for his own use made this compilation, as he calls it, from the thought of such authorities in prayer as Cassian, St. Bernard, and St. Thomas Aquinas. It is an explorer’s and guide’s book on prayer which pays particular attention to abandonment and clinging to God in all the circumstances of life, in and out of the set periods of prayer. Strict and demanding but uncomplicated, warm, and genial.

Letters of Spiritual Direction by Bossuet. This brief collection of letters reflects the mastery of a man so evolved and so skilled in the inner life that he expresses his insight in terms of great simplicity. Although this is certainly an advanced book, it seems to me that many beginners might be able to use it as well as those who have been working for some years. Bossuet, who was tutor to the Dauphin at the time of Louis XIV, knew the life of prayer in juxtaposition to the life of this world as few men do, and his letters show this knowledge wonderfully.

On Prayer by J.P. de Caussade, S.J. Those who are looking for the fire and joy of Père de Caussade’s writings on abandonment will not find them in this book. Its usefulness lies in another direction. It is a careful, restrained, and balanced study of a question which greatly disturbed the time in which it occurred, the so-called quietist controversy. Anyone hoping to understand the prayer life of European Christianity in the past several hundred years should inform himself as to what “quietism” is (and is not) and why it became so hard an issue. Caussade’s work, subtitled “spiritual instructions on the various states of prayer according to Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux,” seems to me an excellent presentation of the viewpoints of those who opposed the quietists. For the viewpoints of the quietists themselves, see *The Life of Madame Guyon* by Thomas C. Upham and *The Spiritual Guide* by Michael de Molinos.

A Testament of Devotion by Thomas Kelly. This is not only a book that people who are new to prayer might find helpful; it is a beginner’s book par excellence. Nevertheless I have included it here among advanced books because that is where, in my opinion, it belongs. The gift of communication which enabled this beloved Quaker to convey his knowledge of God in terms nearly everyone can understand and accept should not be permitted to blind us to the height and depth of Thomas Kelly’s place in the spiritual life. I believe that his book is directly comparable to *The Practice of the Presence of God* in that its beauty and its simplicity serve both to reveal and to conceal a master’s experience and a master’s way of prayer. Remember that most of the writings which comprise this short book represent the latter few years of Kelly’s life, a period following a long time of hard work and struggle in prayer. In these years just before his death, he broke through into the singing, all-embracing, keen-seeing, seldom-interrupted love of God which is so powerfully and tenderly mediated in his *Testament*. For beginners, for oldtimers, for all — here is great fare, and nothing to worry about by way of reservations, unless your heart is still so hard that the very exuberance and lyric quality of this man’s song of God is unassimilable to you.

Deep-water books

Enneads of Plotinus. “It is the secret of the power of Plotinus that in him the mystic’s impulse to the finding of his own Soul and the scientific impulse to criticize and understand experience are so completely united” (*The System of Plotinus*, Shrine of Wisdom ed.). Plotinus is what Meister Eckhart would call a “heathen authority.” He was a native of Egypt (born in A.D. 205) of unknown race. He had direct, personal, experimental knowledge of the ineffable and unutterable heights of communion with God, and he had real genius in communicating, so far as is possible in words, what he knew. He is both very deep and very balanced, very sane. His influence upon the history of thought, and upon Christian experience of God in the centuries following his death, is incalculable.

The Mystical Theology of Dionysius the Areopagite. (See also *The Celestial Hierarchies* and *The Divine Names*.) Here is a man, writing obviously (particularly in *The Mystical Theology*) from direct experience, who stands as the fountainhead, the first and probably the greatest single influence, of the whole stream of Christian experiential knowledge of God, after the apostles and Jesus Christ himself. Again and again he probes the (to human eyes) dark and terrible threshold of God’s very Being and man’s experience of that Being. And he plunges beyond the level of Being into kinds of knowledge of God in which words, including the word “knowledge,” simply collapse in any of their usual senses and can be used only negatively, and doubly and triply negatively. This is very far from a speculative or semantic exercise; it is what happens to the human tongue and the human mind when they have quite literally exceeded themselves. It is what happens when God and man have entered into a relationship (which is no longer “relationship”) beyond all telling. And yet something *can* be told, and Dionysius has told it in a way that has nourished and inspired Christian God-seekers, the greatest and the least, ever since. Who he was is entirely unknown. He writes obviously under a pseudonym (that of St. Dionysius, St. Paul’s Athenian convert), and his work was done probably some time around the end of the fifth century.

The Philokalia. A very large compilation of writings of the Fathers and the greatest saints and mystics of the Eastern Christian Church, from the third to the fourteenth centuries. Books of extracts from *The Philokalia* are now available, as indicated on page 111. This basic work is listed here because it must be considered among any essential grouping of great charts of the deepest waters of prayer. The actual experience and the inspired expression of that experience among the Eastern Christian masters is of such authenticity, clarity, and power that it cannot very well be ignored by anyone who hopes to enter these waters, or who finds himself even now, by God’s leading, drawn into them.

Selected Writings of Richard of Saint-Victor. Richard is the one whom Dante described as “more than a man” in his relationship to God. He is a disciplined and profoundly experienced teacher of contemplative prayer. He is outstanding, and in his era perhaps unique, in his knowledge of the psychological aspects of deep prayer. Contemplatives of all times owe a great debt to him who first showed clearly the reasons for the infirmities and difficulties which accompany the understanding of these things. Richard often is studied from the standpoint of his influence upon later currents and schools of Christian mysticism, but our interest in him here is as a great, sound, and currently available guide in experiential knowledge of God.

On the Song of Songs by St. Bernard. The relationship of the soul to God changes (from the soul’s standpoint) at various stages of the regenerate life — from that of an outcast rebel, profligate, scorner — to that of a servant — to that of a friend — to that of a child — and finally, highest and most intimate of all, to that of a spouse. God as bridegroom of the soul is not merely a pious or poetic thought; it is a fiery and hair-raising truth at the very summit of the spiritual life. The recognition of this truth is universal; you will find it in the Old Testament (particularly in the Song of Songs), the New Testament, in the teaching of the Sufis, the Baal Shem Tov, John of the Cross, John of Ruysbroeck, and very widely elsewhere. Among the greatest of the traditional interpreters of this relationship is St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Nothing but confusion can come from a merely curious reading of his writings on the subject. But if you are beginning to come alive to the reality of the Supreme Person, and if you are being inwardly drawn to understand the awful mystery of his true relationship to your own soul, you may read St. Bernard *On the Song of Songs* with profit.

Before this area of knowledge can be touched with real insight, the intelligence first must have been purged of such sick notions as that which sees in mystical union a deviated or “sublimated” sexuality. The ignorant pruriency represented in such an attitude is very widespread and even naively respected and taught today, and it is not healed by argument. It is seen through only when the soul finally is beginning to open to the radiant and penetrating Truth.

Meister Eckhart, a modern translation, by Raymond Blakney. At first respected and beloved, and then mistrusted and rejected, in his own time (1260-1328), Meister Eckhart is one of the most deeply God-experienced and God-inspired of all Christian teachers after Christ himself. Meister Eckhart was that rare kind of man, a great scholar, a consummate and technically disciplined thinker, who at the same time was God-saturated and God-intoxicated. This condition led to a head-on encounter with the authorities of that day, but it also left one of the great intellectual and mystical teaching legacies of all time. It is said very truly that “Eckhart now emerges as a pivotal figure in the making of the modern religious mind.” And Raymond Blakney writes of the enigmatic Dominican of Cologne: “It was in his doctrine of God that Meister Eckhart went beyond the tolerance of his time and perhaps beyond the capacity of ours . . . certainly he lifted Christianity above any parochial conception and revealed its inner relation to the great, universal spiritual movements which have found expression in many forms. . . .”

Eckhart’s teaching was estimated as dangerous in his own era, and perhaps those who so regarded it were not all knaves. Maybe it was dangerous, and maybe it still is. His doctrine later was abused, and it still may be abused. But if you have got your feet on the ground, if you are working seriously in prayer, and if you are open to teaching of great originality, great boldness and sweep, great depth, and utter authenticity, Meister Eckhart is a man whose acquaintance you should make.

The Spiritual Espousals by John of Ruysbroeck. Spiritual history is full of key men named John. This one was the greatest of the Flemish mystics, born in the little village of Ruysbroeck, between Hal and Brussels, in 1293. In his long and lovely lifetime of eighty-eight years he became one of the earth’s most lucid teachers of the spiritual espousals and the spiritual marriage. From the viewpoint of clarity he is perhaps even greater than St. Bernard and St. John of the Cross in this regard. His first biographer, Pomerius, describes him as “a simple, quiet, rather shabby-looking person who went about the streets of Brussels with his mind lifted up to God.” John of

Ruysbroeck is noted above all for his direct experience in mystical communion, and then for his shrewd common sense, his great intellectual power well based in profound intellectual humility, and his transparent genius in logical, sane, methodical exposition of the deepest and highest experience of the soul in the Uncreated Light. His writings are distinguished by their order, balance, and symmetry. He was a homely, humble, wise, and kind man who loved the forest and the birds. Indeed, he lived in the forest for a longtime, and he wrote in the forest, under a beloved lime tree. This tender and heavenly man was at the same time a surgically ruthless exposé of the vagaries of the “Brethren of the Free Spirit” and other false twists in the spiritual life of his time. His very purity and sanctity are obstacles to reading him in some cases; but otherwise he is a wonderful friend and guide.

Complete Works of St. John of the Cross. (Note particularly “The Ascent of Mount Carmel” in Vol. I and “The Living Flame of Love” in Vol. II.) Juan de Yepes was born in Fontiveros, near Avila, in old Castile, in 1542. He spent all of his adult life in a strict monastic order, and he died at the age of forty-nine. He was later called St. John of the Cross. He understood communion with God as few men ever have, and he taught what he knew with a master’s skill. His teaching technique ranges from bold and ecstatic poetry of immense depth and beauty to the most meticulous and many-sided prose. He is strictly for work, not for entertainment. He may be helpful to beginners, but they must be serious, well-balanced, and not-easily-discouraged beginners, because this man wades right in where the going is tough, and he does not admit any pious prettiness before the true beauty is touched.

John’s beginners must already have reached some kind of end. Before you come to John of the Cross you must be, within your capacity, given up to God. He assumes that much, and he shows you where the path goes from there. He is particularly noted for his teaching of the “dark nights” (of the senses, of the soul, and of the spirit) through which the soul passes in her journey toward the Spouse, “the living Flame of Love.”

Like Meister Eckhart, and no doubt for some of the same reasons, John of the Cross heavily strained the tolerance of his contemporaries, by whom he was imprisoned and disgraced. His works, however, have survived to establish him as among the greatest and soundest teachers of all ages and “Doctor of the Church Universal.”

May we close with a practical note: the record (as given by Bucke) of John’s escape from prison:

“When his imprisonment was drawing to its close, he heard our Lord say to him, as it were out of the soft light that was around him, ‘John, I am here; be not afraid; I will set thee free.’

“A few moments later, while making his escape from the prison of the monastery, it is said he had a repetition of the experience as follows:

“He saw a powerful light, out of which came a voice, ‘Follow me.’ He followed, and the light moved before him toward the wall which was on the bank, and then, he knew not how, he found himself on the summit of it without effort or fatigue. He descended into the street, and then the light vanished. So brilliant was it, that . . . his eyes were weak, as if he had been looking at the sun in its strength.”