

BIBLIOGRAPHY IN CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Dave Olson, 9/21/05

GENERAL WORKS ON CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

George Appleton, ed. *The Oxford Book of Prayer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. Collection of prayers from all eras and segments of the church (and some outside the Christian church).

Beatrice Bruteau, *Radical Optimism*. New York: Crossroad, 1993. A philosophical approach to spirituality; helps the reader to see deeper meanings in spiritual writings and in one's own experience. Chapter 4, The Finite and the Infinite, discusses myth, metaphysics, and mysticism in a way that gives understanding to each and reveals the relationships among them.

Kenneth L Collins, ed. *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000. Essays on the nature of spirituality, past and present.

Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*. San Francisco: Harper, 1988. Foundational book on learning about spiritual disciplines; gives reason for practicing them and expected spiritual influences.

Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith, eds., *Devotional Classics*. San Francisco: Harper, 1993. Collection of readings from writers of spirituality; readings are short, with devotional application suggested.

Jeff Imbach, *The River Within*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998. Strong invitation to draw from the river within your own soul; with discussion of pitfalls and obstacles.

Ben Campbell Johnson, *Living Before God.. Deepening Our Sense of the Divine Presence*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000. An encouragement to pursue holiness in all of life; good discussion of some spiritual disciplines.

Andre Louf, *Teach Us to Pray*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974. The most profound work on prayer I have read; treats prayer as life, not an activity; may cause you to want to join a monastery.

Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957, also available in Luther's works and online in sources of Luther's writings. The basic definition of the Protestant position; a must for every Christian.

Robin Mass & Gabriel O'Donnel, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990. A college/seminary level course on spirituality, drawing on the whole spectrum of church traditions, with essays on the value of each.

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973. A modern classic on seeking God in His holiness.

Richard Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998. Good presentation of lectio divina for both individuals and in groups.

Don Postema, *Space for God.*, Kalamazoo, MI: CRC Publications, 1983. Guide to spirituality using writings and art, like a devotional guide.

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Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*. New York: Doubleday, 1999. A Catholic describes the need for spirituality in the church and in our lives today; practical applications that fit our lives today.

Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast. An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995. Introduction to spiritual disciplines, personalized through her own experience; practical, from a feminine perspective.

John R. Tyson, *Invitation to Christian Spirituality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Collection of readings, with brief biography of each person, covers all of church history; longer selections than in Foster and

Benedicta Ward, SLG, trans. *The Lives of the Desert Fathers and The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975. The biographies and sayings of the monks and sisters ("Abbas" and "Ammas") of the desert in the 3rd & 4th centuries.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988. Excellent introduction to spiritual disciplines, and to why they are vital to believers and to the life of the church.

ORIGINAL WORKS IN CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Thomas a' Kempis (Germany, 1380-1471), *The Imitation of Christ*. This is the most widely read book ever, after the Bible; it influenced many writers of spirituality who lived later. You will see him referenced by many others you read.

Athanasius (Egypt, 296-373), *The Life of Antony*. Both Antony and Athanasius are among the earliest leaders in spirituality. Antony (or Anthony) is called "The Father of Monks" because he was the first to go into the desert to seek only God.

Bernard of Clairvaux (France, 1090-1153), Writes passionately of love for God; all good. My favorite is "On Loving God."

John Bunyan (England, 1628-1688), *The Pilgrim's Progress*. A very popular allegory; readable for all ages.

John Cassian (Egypt, 365-435), *The Conferences of John Cassian*, Trans., Edgar C.S. Gibson. *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Edition. Recorded the wisdom of the Desert Fathers; added commentary of his own; this work shaped the monastic orders.

Catherine of Genoa (Italy, 1447-1510), Converted out of a severe depression, she gives testimony to the spirituality of such a temperament; had a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus. *The Life and Sayings of Catherine of Genoa*, Alba House, 1964, is one source for her writings and sayings.

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Catherine of Siena (Italy, 1347-1380). Catherine dedicated herself to God at an early age, refusing her family's encouragement to follow the normal course of marriage. After three years of self-imposed confinement she was directed by Jesus to act the love of neighbor which is companion to the law of love of God. She not only dedicated herself to this task but also became a counselor to religious leaders of her day.

Clare of Assisi (Italy, 1193-1254), Companion in faith and mission to St. Francis; one of the most radical expressions of the discipline of poverty out of total submission to Christ. The best source for Clare and St. Francis is *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*. Paulist Press, 1982.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Germany, 1906-1945), *The Cost of Discipleship* and other writings. A voice of conviction in our era. Reading this book in college set the course of my life.

Francis of Assisi (Italy, 1181-1226), Read his words (recorded by others and in letters), read about him; he is a true saint, for all. There are many books about him, including *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*. The best source for Clare and St. Francis is *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*. Paulist Press, 1982.

Francis DeSales (France, 1567-1622). *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Letters of counsel from a spiritual director; simple yet profound; makes the devout life seem possible and rewarding.

Henri Nouwen (Dutch, 20th c.). All of his writings are valuable (and short). Nouwen is probably the most influential writer in spirituality of the 20th century; he is read and loved by people from all segments of the church. His journals, *Genesee Diary* and *The Road to Daybreak* helped me through critical transitions in my life.

Ignatius of Loyola (Spain, 1491-1556), *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. Ignatius was founder of the Jesuit Order. The *Exercises* are rigorous, but press one into complete dedication to Jesus Christ; they are best done under the guidance of a spiritual director.

Madame Jeanne Guyon (France, 1648-1717). Writes on how to experience intimacy with God in an easy, enticing style. Her "Short and Easy Method of Prayer", now published as *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ* by Seedsowers, www.seedsowers.com, Ph. 800-228-2665, is what I consider the classic on the personal devotional life. Every Christian should read it first, and again and again.

John of the Cross (Spain, 1542-1591), *Ascent of Mt. Carmel*, *Dark Night of the Soul* and other writings. John writes poetically, so it helps to read an edition with explanatory notes. He relates how in order to come into deepest union with Christ one must go through the "dark night" in which nothing one has experienced before is any longer effective; the most advanced work on spirituality I know.

Julian of Norwich (England, 1342-1423). Her *Showings* are records of the visions she received and interpreted. An oft-quoted mother in spirituality.

Thomas Kelly (American, 20th c.). *A Testament of Devotion*. San Francisco: Harper, 1992. Quaker breathes life into the Quaker way of knowing Christ within, with a modern voice.

Brother Lawrence (France, 1611-1691). *The Practice of the Presence of God*. This is probably the most read work on the spiritual life (alongside *The Imitation of Christ*), because it is so readable and invites one into a refreshing, simple life of joy in Jesus – at all times.

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Mechthild of Magdeburg (Germany, 1212-1297). Reveals a heart in love with Jesus totally; reflects her struggles with her humanity, her mortality (in weakness and sickness), and opposition. Paraclete Press has a nice edition of her writings. She is my personal favorite.

Teresa of Avila (Spain, 1515-1582), *The Interior Castle* and other writings. Writes of coming into union with Christ through spiritual marriage, through moving deeper into the “interior castles” of the heart – she has seven levels. Her style is delightful, with light touches of humor and gentle prodding’s of her fellow nuns, yet the message is complex and can be hard to grasp.

Therese of Lisieux (France, 1873-1897). Lived a simple and pure life of devotion to Jesus, influencing many by her life, words, and writings. My favorite is *The Story of a Soul*, her autobiography.

Many of these are available in a series, *The Classics of Western Spirituality*, published by Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ. They make a great find when browsing used book stores.

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND JOURNALS

Augustine (Egypt, 354-430). *Confessions*. The classic in spiritual writing. He is philosophical, so it is hard reading in places; but contains many powerful insights and challenges which are easy to grasp – and be grasped by.

Dag Hammarskjöld (Sweden, 1905-1961), *Markings*. As Secretary General of the United Nations he gives witness to a man in a position of international exposure, visibility and power living and growing in faith and spirituality.

Thomas Merton, (America, 1915-1968), *The Seven Storey Mountain*. His own story of coming to faith and into the monastic life; compelling, contemporary, insights into modern American culture.

John Woolman, (America, 1720-1772), *The Journal of John Woolman*, a classic in American literature. Quaker who lived what he professed; example of simplicity and obedience.

POETS

John Donne (England, 1572-1631). Poet of passion, for life, love, and God. I find him more difficult than Herbert. “Batter my heart, three-person’d God” (Holy Sonnet #14) is well known.

George Herbert (England, 1593-1633). Rich insights into the spiritual life; gentle yet compelling poetry; considered one of the greatest writers of spiritual verse.

George MacDonald (Scotland, 1824-1905). *Diary of An Old Soul* and other writings of poetry, fiction and fantasy. Soothing reading, drawn from a deep knowledge of God, learned through his suffering.

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INTERNET LINKS

Collections of readings in spirituality:

General: www.ccel.org

English mystics: www.mindspring.com/~mccolman/unknowing.ht

John of the Cross: www.ocd.or.at/ics/others/cs6.html

Thomas Merton: www.acad.smumn.edu/merton/merton.html

Therese of Lisieux: www2.dcci.com/ocdokla/

Teresa of Avila: www.ocd.or.at/lit/teresa/life/main.html

John Donne: www.users.csbsju.edu/~eknuth/jd/index.html

Jeanne Guyon: www.ccel.wheaton.edu/guyon/auto/autobi.htm