

# Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia

*from the Librarian-General's desk . . . .*

Recommended Reading List No.5:

## Mysticism

Because mystical experience is so intensely personal, a reading guide to mysticism may seem to be inappropriate, but there is much within the compass of mysticism that cannot be fully understood without reference to the works of the mystics themselves. The purpose of this list is to provide fratres who wish to study the subject with a guide to the more important mystical texts; to histories of mysticism; and to studies of its place in world religions and its essential nature. Some of the books will be found in the High Council Library. (See Ordinance VI para 5 for rules re borrowing of these books). It should also be noted that the choice of books on this list, and all comments upon them, reflect the personal opinions of the Librarian-General and do not necessarily reflect those of other members of the High Council.

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### General Studies of Mysticism

FERGUSON, John An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Mysticism and the Mystery Religions, 1976

A good general guide, but not, alas, comprehensive.

GILBERT, R.A. The Elements of Mysticism, 1991

A brief overview of the whole subject.

HAPPOLD, F.C. Mysticism, a Study and an Anthology

An excellent introductory work illustrated with carefully chosen texts. 1963

UNDERHILL, Evelyn Mysticism, a Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness, 1930 Twelfth edition, revised (frequently reprinted). One of the great classic studies of the subject. It contains an extensive bibliography.

ZAEHNER, R.C. Mysticism Sacred and Profane. An Inquiry into some Varieties of Praeternatural Experience, 1961

A scholarly and wide-ranging work.

### The Philosophy of Mysticism

HERMAN, E. The Meaning and Value of Mysticism Second edition, 1916.

One of the few books to consider in depth the importance of mysticism in everyday life and for society as a whole.

STAAL, Frits Exploring Mysticism, 1975

An original study in which the author seeks to take mysticism out of the purely religious sphere.

STACE, W. Mysticism and Philosophy, 1961

A critical analysis of philosophical arguments about mysticism.

WAITE, A.E. The Way of Divine Union, being a Doctrine of Experience in the Life of Sanctity, considered on the Faith of its Testimonies and Interpreted after a New Manner, 1915

WAITE, A.E. Lamps of Western Mysticism. Essays on the Life of the Soul in God, 1923 (modern reprints exist)

Waite is one of the most important writers on mysticism, and although his books are difficult to read, they well repay the effort.

WOODS, Richard (Ed.) Understanding Mysticism, 1980

Thirty-six essays and extracts on all aspects of the subject.

## The Nature of Mystical Experience

BUCKE, R.M. Cosmic Consciousness. A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind. 1923 (frequently reprinted)

Long recognised as a classic of its kind, the text includes many 'instances' of Cosmic Consciousness collected by the author.

COXHEAD, Nona The Relevance of Bliss. A Contemporary Exploration of Mystic Experience. 1985

The experience analysed scientifically and philosophically.

CROOKALL, Robert The Interpretation of Cosmic and Mystical Experiences. 1969

A large number of 'mystical' experiences, collected, classified and analysed.

HARDY, Sir Alister The Spiritual Nature of Man. A Study of contemporary Religious Experience. 1979

A pioneering study that classifies and analyses all such experiences.

JAMES, William The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature. 1902 (frequently reprinted)

The most significant of earlier historical and psychological analyses of religious experience.

LASKI, Marghanita Ecstasy. A Study of some Secular and Religious Experiences. 1961

LASKI, Marghanita Everyday Ecstasy. 1961

Two important and (despite the author's agnosticism) sympathetic enquiries into all ecstatic states.

OTTO, Rudolf The Idea of the Holy. An Inquiry into the Non-rational factor in the Idea of the Divine and its relation to the Rational. 1923

(Later reprints exist)

Although the text is not limited to mysticism, this is one of the classic accounts of the mystical experience.

TART, Charles (Ed.) Altered States of Consciousness. 1972

A collection of thirty-five papers on the psychological and physiological bases of all such states.

THURSTON, Herbert, SJ The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism. 1952

A remarkable objective account of psycho-somatic and other material effects of mystical experience.

WHITEMAN, J.H.M. The Mystical Life. An Outline of its Nature and Teachings from the Evidence of Direct Experience. 1961

Many of the cases on which the author builds his interpretation are drawn from the records of psychical research.

Historical and Critical Studies of Mysticism.

BULLETT, Gerald The English Mystics. 1950

From the Medieval period to Blake and Wordsworth

BUTLER, Dom C. Western Mysticism. 1922

(frequently reprinted)

One of the best studies of Medieval Christian

mysticism

COLEMAN, T.W. English Mystics of the Fourteenth Century. 1938

COX, Michael Mysticism, the Direct Experience of God. 1983

Concerned almost exclusively with Christian mysticism

GRAEF, Hilka The Story of Mysticism. 1966

An excellent survey of Christian mysticism down to the 16th century

INGE, W.R. Christian Mysticism. 1899

(frequently reprinted)

A comprehensive survey including Platonism and Nature Mysticism

- JONES, R.M. Studies in Mystical Religion. 1909  
(later reprints exist)  
A classic study that considers early Protestant mysticism in great depth
- NICHOLSON, R.A. The Mystics of Islam. 1914  
A concise yet scholarly introduction (Re-issued 1963)
- OTTO, Rudolf Mysticism East and West. A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism. 1932  
Principally concerned with Sankara and Meister Eckhart
- PARRINDER, G. Mysticism in the World's Religions. 1976
- SCHIMMEL, Annemarie Mystical Dimensions of Islam. 1976  
A detailed study of Sufi mysticism
- SUZUKI, D.T. Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist 1957  
An interesting comparison, but flawed by the author's treatment of Eckhart as a typical Christian mystic
- ZAEHNER, R.C. Hindu and Muslim Mysticism. 1960  
A scholarly (although controversial) comparative study

Mystical Texts and Commentaries.

(1) Anthologies

- KINGSLAND, W.(Ed.) An Anthology of Mysticism and Mystical Philosophy. 1927  
A world-wide selection arranged under topical headings
- NICHOLSON, F.H.S. & LEE, A.H.E.(Ed.) The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse. 1916 (many reprints)
- REINHOLD, H.A.(Ed.) The Spear of Gold. Revelations of the Mystics. 1947  
Almost exclusively Christian, and predominantly Catholic
- VAN OVER, R.(Ed.) Eastern Mysticism, a comprehensive Anthology of fundamental Writings. 1977 2 vols

## (2) Individual Mystics

The works of many of the western mystics, both famous and less known, have been published in modern English translations, with scholarly introductions and notes, in the series **Classics of Western Spirituality. A Library of the Great Spiritual Masters.** (currently published in Britain by SPCK)

Kabbalistic and Neoplatonic texts are given in Reading Lists Nos.1 and 4.

### BOEHME, Jacob The Way to Christ

(trans J.J.Stoudt) 1907

The most readable of Boehme's many works. Most of his major works were reprinted from 17th century English translations between 1909 and 1924

### ----- STOUT, J.J. Sunrise to Eternity. A Study in Jacob Boehme's Life and Thought. 1957

The best modern work on Boehme

### COLLEDGE, Eric (Ed.) The Medieval Mystics of England 1962

Selections from Richard Rolle; Walter Hilton; Julian of Norwich; and others. Many of their works are available in Penguin editions

### DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE The Divine Names, and Mystical Theology. (trans C.E.Rolt) 1920

The most influential of early Christian mystics

### ECKHART, Meister Sermons and Treatises.

Translated and edited by M. O'C. Walshe 1979-87 3 vols

### FREAGANTLE, Aine (Ed.) The Protestant Mystics. 1964

Extracts from sixty-seven religious and secular mystics

### JEFFERIES, Richard The Story of my Heart. (Edited by S.J.Looker) 1947

The Nature Mystic par excellence

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS Complete Works. (trans E.Allison Peers) 1953 3 vols

ST. TERESA OF AVILA The Complete Works. (trans E.Allison Peers) 1947 [excludes her letters]

----- PEERS, E. Allison Studies of the Spanish Mystics. Second edition 1951-60 3 vols

LAW, William Selected Mystical Writings. (Edited by Stephen Hobhouse) 1948

RUMI, Jalal ud-din Mathnawi-i manawi. (Edited and trans by R.A. Nicholson) 1926-34 3 vols  
The principal work of the greatest of the Sufi mystics

RUYSBROECK, Jan van The Spiritual Espousals. (trans Eric Colledge) 1952  
After Eckhart, the most important of the Rhineland mystics

TRAHERNE, Thomas Centuries, Poems and Thanksgivings. (Edited M.M. Margoliouth) 1958 2 vols  
The greatest of English mystics of the 17th century

ANONYMOUS The Cloud of Unknowing. (trans into modern English by Clifton Wolters) 1961  
A sympathetic translation of this delightful work

This selection represents only the smallest fraction of mystical writings that exist in English text or translation. It is also heavily weighted towards Christian texts, and especially those of the English mystics - because they were written in English and thus convey more closely and clearly the experience of the mystic concerned. Many of the critical works listed above also contain bibliographical details of the writings of other religious mystics (Christian and non-Christian), Nature mystics, secular mystics, and mystical poets - all of whom can be read with profit.

The following Papers have been printed in the  
'Metropolitan College Transactions':-

[Unavailable from High Council but photo-copies can  
be obtained from Treasurer-General for a small fee]

**Jacob Boehme** by RW Fr. A Langdon Coburn. 1959

**Quo Vadis** - A further Essay on Mysticism

by VW Fr. C W Cresswell. 1970

**To the Mountain and the Hill** by C W Cresswell.  
1972

As yet nothing on mysticism has appeared in the Booklet  
Series.