

# “Between the Clouds” USER’S MANUAL

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## PREFACE

Selections in this “Rudder” should provide the praying Christian with a rich source of seasoned and proven *Guides* whose personal Journals will help shape the contemplative journey. In the loose format of a Breviary, there are 124 “Hours” (i.e. 31 Days x 4 “Hours” each day). Scripts stretch back to those of ancient Christian contemplatives and span forward to the graphic insights of present-day Mystics / Contemplatives.

True spiritual experience lies beyond the arena of words and thoughts: “We constantly have to remember that all the words we use to speak of The Ultimate are only *pointers* to what is totally beyond.” (Bede Griffiths)

Between the Clouds is designed / intended to be a virtual *guard-rail* for the contemplative path that inexorably ascends to the heights. As Brother Roger of Taizé once mused,

“Sometimes contemplation is like balancing on the edge of a razor blade, with a meadow full of wildflowers on one hand, and madness on the other.”

**Matins** is composed of selections from the classic, Cloud of Unknowing, and its sequel, The Book of Privy Counseling. Both masterpieces were written, anonymously, in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. The Author is recognized, universally, as offering bedrock wisdom concerning contemplative labor. His basic theme (?): “Only love, wrapped in contemplation’s *fire of silence and stillness*, can pierce *the cloud of unknowing*, wherein God dwells.”

**Lauds** is composed equally of writings the legendary 4<sup>th</sup> Century “Desert Fathers”. (These “Fathers” lived in contemplative solitude in the deserts of the Near East). Syriac Christianity is expressed in a manner characteristic of the Semitic - and Biblical - world. Selections have been drawn from some 353 pages worth of the most prominent writings of *The Fathers*.

**Note:** Elsewhere, the Editor (“+J”), as one whose nose, metaphorically, is pressed against a window on the other side of the Father’s *Desert*, has attempted to gather important themes (otherwise set-aside due to a problem with an original document’s rambling style) into a present-day, fresh and incisive, vernacular.

**Vespers** is comprised entirely of writings of John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. These writings run the gamut ... all the way from Night of Sense to The Transforming Union ... with candid, self-effacing counsel for those dubbed “Proficients” scattered in-between.

“**Teresa of Avila** far exceeds all writers that preceded her on the subject of Contemplation.

In their descriptions, those prior to her confided themselves to generalities. Before her time, hardly anything was described except ecstasies and revelations. After St. Teresa, the first place (for careful observation of these matters) belongs to **St. John of the Cross**.

Teresa and John of the Cross are also greatly superior to subsequent authors, who have been satisfied to repeat them, with comments.”

(Catholic Encyclopedia)

**Compline’s** 31 “Hours” are a blend of the wisdom of Contemplatives from both past and present. Here, you will find shards and pieces of both the glory and the agony of a contemplative journey... transformed into mirror-like words by which we might see ourselves.

Finally, these selections are alternately educational and inspirational. In *Hours* that are predominantly educational, inspirational epigrams are injected as a sort of counterbalance (focal point) for the contemplative labor of the present moment. Educational portions are vital, for ...

*contemplation’s labor can be hazardous.*

## Letter to a first-time User of "Between the Clouds"

Hello, Anne:

I am very pleased to receive your communication. I feel moved to respond to the following portion of your letter: **"Everything I have read so far looks so rich, I don't know how I will go about teaching during the day with any focus but on morning prayer."**

Your words trigger my own recall of the following *navigational coordinates*:

- 1) "The gaps – in a sense, more so than the formal time of 'contemplation' – are the thing. The gaps are the spirit's one home. Stalk the gaps!" (see Vespers / Day 28);
- 2) You may wish to jump-ahead / read the eleven entries on Dark Nights (they begin, I believe, at *Day 15*). This should help you better understand just what you are (or will be) encountering / *suffering-through* as you persevere;
- 3) **It is in no way intended that one would "meditate" on the selections during the time of *Consecrated Silence***. Remember: *God is only known by a process of unknowing*, by a "negative knowledge". These selections (rich-as / the treasure-that they are) must not negate that vital and laborious journey over a very dark path to ... *The Unknowing*;
- 4) "The *hinge* ... is fidelity and regularity of commitment ...", not keeping a scorebook of "good" and "bad" meditations (see Day 28 / Lauds)

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You write that, "It all looks so rich". By way of counter-point ...: All that you will find in the Breviary is meant to be *instructional and directional* (if a distinction can be made between those two concepts).

**"Instructional"**: there are writings that will serve as a virtual **"lamp unto your feet"**. You have set out on the longest journey in the world ... [the journey] from "head" to the *deep, solitary core of your being*.

**"Directional"**: the thrust for many of the writings (especially those from "Cloud of Unknowing") are there to assist in a forward movement of the heart ... "driven only by your love for God."

**(Personal aside**: I have come to understand that Cloud of Unknowing's oft-mentioned "gentle stirring of love" must begin as a smoky fanning of kindling wood, complete with the inner discomfort that can bring to the eyes of the spirit !! – You must, nonetheless, begin with your *first waking moment*, you ought not wait for a Time of Quiet to *stir* that love!)

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Finally, Anne, to sum up: "Between the Clouds" is designed to be **an affirmation** of what God (the Chief Worker in this calling, this labor) is asking of you / doing with you. "Clouds" was, from the outset, intended to be a virtual Spiritual Director (on the assumption that most Contemplatives are not able to find a proper, an understanding {"tuned-in"} Spiritual Director).

## Contemplatives and Spiritual Direction

- ❖ “In my lecture and retreat work, at home and abroad alike, I meet everywhere the persisting question: ‘Where can I find a priest who really understands contemplative prayer? **There is none I know-of in this area.**” (Thomas Dubay, S.M.)
  
- ❖ “How often is God anointing a Contemplative with some very delicate unguent of loving knowledge, serene, peaceful, solitary, and far withdrawn from the senses ... when a Spiritual Director will happen along who, like a blacksmith, **knows no more than to hammer and pound with the faculties ...**” (John of the Cross)
  
- ❖ “What is wanting, if anything is wanting, is not writing or speaking – but **silence and work** ... Once a person knows what has been told him for his benefit, *he no longer needs to hear or speak*, but to put it into practice, silently and carefully and in humility and charity and contempt of self.” (John of the Cross)

### Quoted\* Spiritual Directors and their Publishers:

\* Publishers of the extraordinary writings of Richard Rohr and Thomas Dubay (each of whom have been quoted at length throughout ‘Between the Clouds’) have formally granted the Editor *Permission to Use*. Each author’s books may be obtained by going to the Publisher’s Web Site. A request for “Permission to Use” Dr. Gerald May’s material was ade on 2 / 27 / 04.

➤ Fr. Thomas Dubay, S.M. / Ignatius Press, San Francisco

[www.ignatius.com](http://www.ignatius.com)

➤ Fr. Richard Rohr, O.F.M. / St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, OH

[www.AmericanCatholic.org](http://www.AmericanCatholic.org)

➤ Gerald G. May, Ph.D. / Harpers San Francisco

**Note:** Dr. May is a Psychiatrist and ardent student of the writings of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. His treatment of the connection between Darkness and Spiritual Growth is both practical and pragmatic ... merging, with seeming indifference to interplay or disparity, the psychological and spiritual dimensions... of mystical experience.

## Contemplation to Consecration: Holiness of the Third Christian Millennium.

Contemplation inexorably brings one to a profound desire for Consecration. (Beyond this stage, in accord with the writings of Teresa and John, lies that of Transformation.)

Scattered throughout "Between the Clouds" are eleven Locutions of Jesus to *Exemplars* of this "New and Divine" holiness. The Locutions are gathered together in Hugh Owens' 188 pg. book, "New and Divine", published by the John Paul II Institute of Christian Spirituality\*.

\* P.O. Box 7845 / Jacksonville, FL 32238 / {904} 389 - 7313

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"According to the Gospel, the purpose of human life is transformation into the interior likeness of Jesus Christ. ... This sharing in the interior life of Jesus has been experienced and written-about over the past century by a number of Catholic servants of God.

**"This new work of the Holy Spirit in our day ... pushes the limits of possible mystical union with Jesus to new heights."**

(Introduction / Hugh Owen)

### Profile of Three Exemplars

**Dina Belanger** (1897 – 1929) Canadian / entered the religious life after studying music for several years / "from the beginning of her Postulancy, Dina suffered much from interior trials."

**Conchita** (1862 – 1937) Mexican / wife, mother and mystic / inspired five religious associations approved by the Church, including a Congregation of Priests.

**Faustina** (1905 – 1938) Polish / oldest daughter of a stern Polish farmer / after working as a domestic for several years, she entered the religious life in 1925 / during her Novitiate, Sister Faustina experienced *The Dark Night of the Soul* .

## Polarity \*

\* **“Positive / Negative interaction that moves an invisible electron which, in turn, creates energy.”**

+

**(Positive)**

“For, Contemplation is nothing other than a secret and **peaceful**, loving inflow of God.”

Teresa of Avila

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**(Negative)**

“ My mental faculties were so scattered and distracted that I couldn't help myself, and **I began to envy those who live in deserts**, and to think that, since they don't hear or see anything, they are free of this wandering of mind. I heard:

**' You are greatly mistaken, daughter ... Be patient, for as long as you live, a wandering mind cannot be avoided.' ”**

Teresa of Avila

## Optimal Usage of “The Rudder”

Use of this structured (i.e. thematic\*) Anthology should find the Contemplative stealing but a brief and occasional glance at the hi-lited phrases from the selection for a given *Hour* (of a given day).

\* “thematic”: Matins & Lauds are designed to be thematic; Vespers is a *stand-alone*, the varied selections themselves are designed to be thematic; Compline is always a “stand-alone” (not “thematic” to the Day’s selections).

Compline is designed -- per its value to the Contemplative -- for “timed release” in one’s understanding. (It ought not be meditated on: after many months of seeing a given selection, a light will go on!

Between the Clouds is a *rudder*, not a *crutch*:

**“We constantly have to remember that all words we use to speak of The Ultimate are only *pointers* to what is totally beyond.”**

Bede Griffiths

## Praying for Others the Quaker Way

" Mary, the mother Jesus, recognized that there is no need to dictate predetermined solutions to God. At the wedding feast in Cana, when she realizes the wine is gone, she does not *micro-manage* Jesus. Mary simply brings the problem to his attention. **'They have no wine'**, is all she says, perhaps with a loving, trusting look in her eye. She shows her complete confidence in his ability to remedy the situation when she turns to the servants, saying, **'Do whatever he tells you.'**

" In Quaker Spirituality, the image of light represents the mysterious presence of God. *Friends* might describe the light as the Holy Spirit, the inward light, 'Christ in you,' or 'that of God in everyone.'

" To hold someone in the light is to seek, through prayer, to bring that person into deeper contact with the Divine Presence. Some Quakers imagine that person for whom they are praying actually bathed in a beautiful, gentle light, or picture then surrounded with a halo-like quality.

" Noted Quaker writer, Douglas V. Steere, describes it this way: 'I hold up persons before God in intercession, loving them and seeing them with God, longing for healing and redeeming power to course through their lives. I hold up certain social situations, certain projects. At such a time, I often see things that I may do in company with, or that are related to ..., this person or this situation. I hold up the persons in the meeting and their needs, as I know them, to God.' "

" Holding someone in the light means different things to different people. Not all use their imaginative faculties; some use a few words, and others do not. 'There is nothing formulaic about holding someone in the light,' noted Joseph Landsberger, a Web site developer for the [University of St. Thomas](#).

" Praying for each other bonds us together with cords of love. As Steere writes, 'For when we hold up the life of another before God, when we expose it to God's love, when we pray for its release from drowsiness, for quickening of its inner health ... only then do we sense what it means to share in God's work, in his concern; only then do the walls that separate us from others go down , and we sense that we are, at bottom, all knit-together in a great and intimate family. There is no greater intimacy with another than that which is built-up through holding him or her up in prayer.' "

Julie McCarty, M.A.T.  
(With Permission)

## ASSEMBLING 'BETWEEN THE CLOUDS' TO *BOOK FORM*

**Note:** This suggestion is intended to supersede the (labor-intensive and costly) directions that are listed on the following page.

The simple ("EZ") and inexpensive method would be to:

- cut each page, allowing for a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " margin
  
- gather / paste ea. page into an attractive ring-binder notebook\* of appropriate height, width & thickness\*\*.

  - or hard-cover [spiral] (e.g. a "Premium Journal")

\*\* i.e. "thickness" per # of pages required ... approx. 40 pages if you paste to front and back per each day's script)

## Appendix: Transferring PDF Pages to a 3-Ring Binder

- **STANDARD 3-RING NOTEBOOK:**

- Suggest pages "A" and "B" of each day be pasted back-to-back.
- Use standard dividers for each week.
- Employ a bookmark to render ready reference to the current day.

- **DAY-RUNNER NOTEBOOK:**

- Each page has been formatted for use as 5.5 x 8.5 pages in a "Day-Runner" (or similar product) 8 x 9 (outside cover) 3-Ring Notebook.
- Pages are best cut to size\* using a standard paper-cutter.

\* From the original 8.5 x 11 page:., cut Top at **9 7/8"**; Right side at **6 3/4"**; Bottom at **8.5"**; Left side at **5 9/16"** ... per adjustable grid on a standard paper cutter.

**Note:** Advise [prior] experimentation on proper use of these measurements.

- The pages are best pasted back-to-back, using a blank page from the *Day Runner* in between / in center to strengthen the pages.
- Thirty-one tab pages (sold with a *Day Runner*) should be used to identify (by labeling) the Sun. – Sat. arrangement of Breviary (per ea. Week.)
- To create separation of each of the Four Weeks (and the Half Week), a manila-folder (w / tabs), cut to size, will work best. (You can then affix "Week One" etc. to the tabs.)
- On using a hole-punch to create the three holes per page, pre-set the punch template at the "5 1/2 inch centers" per the adjustable grid at back of a standard hole-punch.

## Scriptures That Allude to Contemplative Prayer

### Psalms:

27:14; 37:7; 42:7; 62:1,5; 63:1; 131

### Ecclesiastes:

3:11; 4:6

### Song of Solomon:

5:2

### Isaiah:

30:15 (b); 40:31; 55:6; 65:24;

### Lamentations:

3:25, 26

### Hosea:

2:14

### Habakkuk:

2:20

### Zephaniah:

1:7

### Zechariah:

4:6

### Mark:

6:31, 32

### Luke:

5:16

### Romans:

8:26

### I Corinthians:

3:16

### II Corinthians:

3:18

### Galatians:

4:6

### Ephesians:

3:16-21

### Philippians:

4:7;

### Colossians:

1:27; 2:3; 3:2,3; 3:10

### Hebrews:

4:10; 11:1