

**THE LIFE OF THE  
SPIRIT AND THE LIFE  
OF TODAY**

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The life of the spirit and The life of today by Evelyn Underhill

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**EVELYN UNDERHILL**

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THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT  
AND  
THE LIFE OF TO-DAY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

MYSTICISM: A STUDY IN THE NATURE AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF MAN'S SPIRITUAL  
CONSCIOUSNESS. 8TH ED.

THE MYSTIC WAY

IMMANENCE

JACOPONE DA TODI

THE ESSENTIALS OF MYSTICISM  
AND OTHER WORKS

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AND  
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BY  
**EVELYN UNDERHILL**

SECOND EDITION

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**IN MEMORIAM**

**E. R. B.**





## PREFACE

THIS book owes its origin to the fact that in the autumn of 1921 the authorities of Manchester College, Oxford, invited me to deliver the inaugural course of a lectureship in religion newly established under the will of the late Professor Upton. No conditions being attached to this appointment, it seemed a suitable opportunity to discuss, so far as possible in the language of the moment, some of the implicits which I believe to underlie human effort and achievement in the domain of the spiritual life. The material gathered for this purpose has now been added to, revised, and to some extent re-written, in order to make it appropriate to the purposes of the reader rather than the hearer. As the object of the book is strictly practical, a special attempt has been made to bring the classic experiences of the spiritual life into line with the conclusions of modern psychology, and in particular, to suggest some of the directions in which recent psychological research may cast light on the standard problems of the religious consciousness. This subject is still in its infancy ; but it is destined, I am sure, in the near future to

exercise a transforming influence on the study of spiritual experience, and may even prove to be the starting point of a new apologetic. Those who are inclined either to fear or to resent the application to this experience of those laws which—as we are now gradually discovering—govern the rest of our psychic life, or who are offended by the resulting demonstrations of continuity between our most homely and most lofty reactions to the universe, might take to themselves the plain words of Thomas à Kempis: "Thou art a man and not God, thou art flesh and no angel."

Since my subject is not the splendour of historic sanctity but the normal life of the Spirit, as it may be and is lived in the here-and-now, I have done my best to describe the character and meaning of this life in the ordinary terms of present day thought, and with little or no use of the technical language of mysticism. For the same reason, no attention has been given to those abnormal experiences and states of consciousness, which, too often regarded as specially "mystical," are now recognized by all competent students as representing the unfortunate accidents rather than the abiding substance of spirituality. Readers of these pages will find nothing about trances, ecstasies, and other rare psychic phenomena; which sometimes indicate holiness, and sometimes only disease. For information on these matters they must go to larger and more technical works. My aim here is the more general one, of indicating first the characteristic