

## RECOMMENDED THEOSOPHICAL READING

A question often asked by those who have recently discovered Theosophy is: “What shall I read?” It’s a good question; the newcomer can easily get lost in the bewildering number of books falling under the broad heading of Theosophy. Longtime students will have no problem coming up with their lists of recommended reading, but those lists will vary according to individual preferences.

Before compiling such a list, I would keep in mind the advice of Francis Bacon:

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously [with minute attention]; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention.

The first category might include reference works, i.e., H. P. Blavatsky’s *Theosophical Glossary* or Geoffrey Barborka’s *Glossary of Sanskrit Terms*; also books containing quotes to be used for meditation, such as *Thoughts for Aspirants* by N. Sri Ram; and various compilations or anthologies that have been published throughout the years.

In the second category, I would place *The Key to Theosophy* by Blavatsky; *The Inner Life and Masters and the Path*, both by C. W. Leadbeater; historical books like Michael Gomes’ *The Dawning of the Theosophical Movement* and Howard Murphet’s Blavatsky biography, *When Daylight Comes*; and substantive but easy-to-read books such as *The Astral Body* by A. E. Powell and *At the Feet of the Master* by Alcyone.

Finally, the third category should include (no surprise here) *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Voice of the Silence*, both by Blavatsky, *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Barborka’s *The Divine Plan*, and a few other hearty mainstays of the theosophical repertoire.

The titles noted above are not meant to provide a comprehensive listing, but are suggestions illustrative of certain categories. Specific recommendations will vary from Theosophist to Theosophist. What holds true, I think, is Bacon’s astute observation that not all books are meant to be read in the same manner. Just as in dining, where it is best not to confuse appetizers with the main course, when it comes to reading, some books serve only to whet the palate, whereas others can provide nourishment for years and years to come.

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