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**VADE MECUM, VOLVENTIBUS ANNIS**

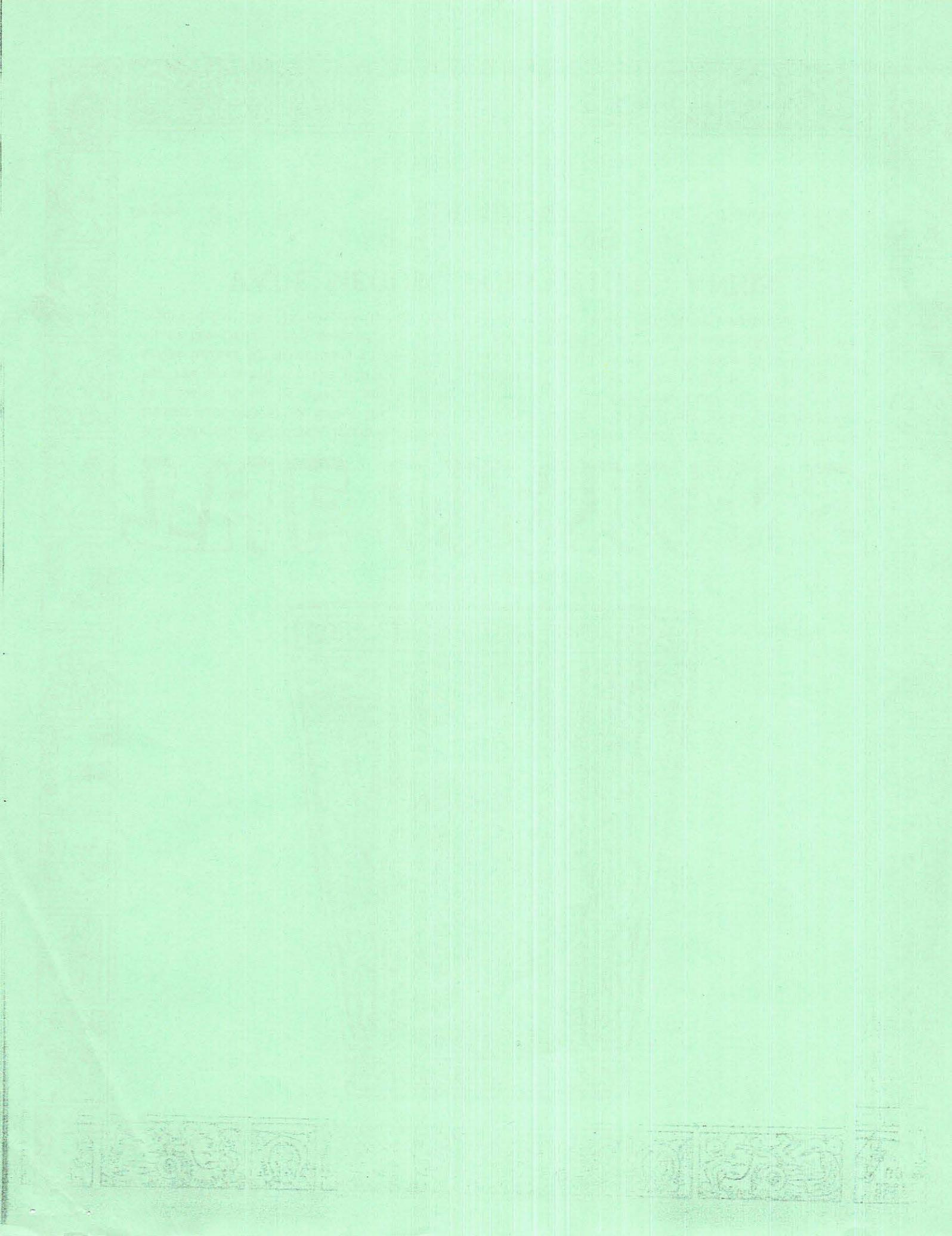
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The  
Eternal

Living Series

Mayan Revelation Number 200

The Inner Approach

Where Roads Begin

Conversation

Prayer

Reading

Study

Contemplation

Meditation

Prayer



Beloved Centurion:

Your lesson today concerns three subjects which I take great pleasure in bringing to you. They are very close to the heart of your Instructor and I delight in teaching these truths.

This lesson, which we have called THE INNER APPROACH, has to do with THOUGHT, CONTEMPLATION, MEDITATION, and that most important department of living - YOUR PRAYER LIFE.

There are many who sincerely believe that they think. They believe that they meditate; but they do not really think or meditate. They merely permit their minds to become a blank and believe that they are thinking or meditating. One of the rarest of all accomplishments is the faculty of profitable meditation - thinking which is constructive.

A man or woman of meditation is a happy person, not just for an hour or a day but all his or her life. Our thoughts have a great influence on our lives. They affect us much more than we realize. As a matter of fact, all that a man does is really the expression of his thoughts. To do his work well, he must think clearly, think nobly, and act nobly. In these days, when speed seems to be uppermost in the minds of all, too little time is given to thought and meditation.

The quality of your life depends on the quality of your thoughts. Therefore, I admonish you here to guard your thoughts accordingly and be careful to have none unworthy of you. If you find yourself thinking ill of some person or thing, remember that wrong thoughts may often destroy our health, our efficiency and our friendships.

In my years of experience in counseling, I have found that many lives have been ruined by something which started with a wrong thought and ended in tragedy. So let us have only the cleanest and happiest of thoughts. This isn't always easy but it can be done, and the more it is done the more it becomes a habit.

THE THOUGHTS AND IMAGES IN MEN'S MINDS ARE  
THE POWERS THAT CONSTANTLY INFLUENCE THEM.

Before we go into the lesson, let me say just a word about prayer. I know that you have learned the importance of prayer in your Mayan way of life. To your Instructor there is no life without prayer. It is to our spiritual life what food is to our body and we cannot survive in happiness for long without it. There are many who still do not quite understand how to pray and since this lesson is so concerned with prayer, and is important, I am sending you and all members of your class a copy of HOW TO PRAY. This is a gift from me to you. If you would like to, you may pass it along to a friend in need of guidance. I hope that the reading of it will be blessed unto you.

And now we take up the study of THE INNER APPROACH.

## The Inner Approach

### WHERE ROADS BEGIN

WE have already distinguished between the roots and the fruits of external living. The fruits are manifested on the outer or visible plane, but the roots are in the inner life. The mistake some people make is trying to begin with the fruits. Any farmer or flower grower can tell you, and you yourself know if you will stop and think, that we do not grow things that way. It is as true of external living as it is of a tree or a stalk of grain that the first necessity is the root. It is a hidden thing, but through it all the beauty and strength a plant or a life is ever to have must derive its nourishment.

Changing the figure, we might say that it is in the inner life that all roads, including this one, begin. Everything in life and the world begins as an impulse, and first takes the pattern of a thought, to be followed by action through motive and will. In other words, the roots of action are in the deep, silent, unseen chambers of the heart.

If that impulse is a prejudice, or an animosity, or a physical appetite, or an imitation of some unworthy example, its results can never bear the stamp of eternity. These things pass, for they have nothing permanent to contribute. The meanings and values of our lives pass with them, for a structure is no more permanent than the material of which it is built.

If, on the other hand, you keep your thought and emotional life exposed to the touch of him who is the source of all good, you will really be building your life of eternal values and by an eternal pattern.

Someone has told of crossing a little stream where he saw a remarkable thing. A sprig of ivy had come up in the rich, moist soil on one side, clambered across the rustic bridge, and spread out its blossoming verdure on the other side where the soil was not so rich. If you study any one of the truly great lives, those of eternal qualities and proportions, those you know can never die from memory or continued existence, you may know that while they are living in this world they are really drawing their sources of life from another. Better yet if, whoever you are and wherever and in whatever condition you live, you will undertake to build such a life, you will know that its roots are inner ones and that while you are living in the finite world you are really drawing your sustenance from the infinite one.

Too many people go through their earthly existence - one can scarcely call it a life - so disregarding this eternal soil from which life's fairest flowers must derive their strength, that they actually forget its existence. Your problem is to remember, and cultivate, and use it.

This does not mean to spend your life in an ivory tower. It means to spend it in normal human relations, but to be mindful that all that makes its visible phases worthwhile must be maintained in some hidden garden of the heart where your thoughts and attitudes are rooted deep in soil of heaven's planting.

## PRAYER

NOW let us change this proposition from the general to the particular by considering in a very practical way what some of those roots struck into the soil of eternity are. The first one we will mention is prayer.

This is the right approach with which to head the list because it is the fundamental one, the one that puts us in touch with the source of all. The person who does not pray is like a farmer expecting an unplanted seed to grow. A feeble, sickly, soon-failing start is the best it can make.

Of course there is such a thing as knowing, or not knowing, how to pray; but the most important thing is to try, to begin. No one can make any progress, nor ever know whether he is on the right track or not, unless he tries. However feebly he may go at first, he must be on the way.

The oldest and most successful practitioners of prayer would be the first to say that they have much yet to learn, but the fact that they realize this shows that they have already learned a great deal. When one begins to realize his own limitations it indicates that he has discovered how vast its scope is and that the road forward is open to him.

If you have already made steady, consistent prayer a part of your program of living, well and good. If you pray, but irregularly and uncertainly, your need is to make your praying a real part of your life and not just a matter of impulse. If you have not done either your need is to get started. Like any new thing, you have to get the feel of it and wear away the impression of strangeness, something like becoming accustomed to flying in an airplane.

You can learn the finer points as you go along. There will be times when you will feel that you have cause to plead with deep earnestness. There will be times when in happiness you come to offer heartfelt thanks. There will be times when in faith you will want to express the pattern of something yet unseen, so the creative processes of divine love and power may begin the miracle of making it real. There will be times when you will want just to wait before God in silence, understanding him and opening the hopes and aspirations of your heart for him to see. There will be times when you will feel so confused that you will not know what to say more than just to ask the Father to come into your life and straighten things out. There will be times when it will be different still. But it will all be prayer.

If what you ask is not granted at once, do not get discouraged and above all, do not be rebellious. You may have asked something that is not for the best, or it may be something that requires a time of waiting. In neither case is the effort lost.

If what you ask is granted, remember to guard against two things. Since when it happens it happens so easily, do not lose your sense of wonder at it; and since when it comes about it does it so naturally, do not cease thinking that it is a matter for gratitude on your part. Such attitudes can make it wither on the vine. Notice how Jesus, with all His familiarity with its laws, stood in reverence

before it, and how he never failed to give thanks, even for the fact that out in the silences was One who heard and cared.

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## STUDY

ETERNAL living is a technique to be learned, and it rests on definite principles and laws. These must be learned, and that takes study. It is a subject mentioned in many books, but not fully presented in more than a very few. Even so, it is greater than any or all of them. Though you do not find it covered in many modern textbooks, there are many sources. It occurs in all serious reading. It comes up in conversation, thinking, and experience; and so, like a mountain-climber or a bird learning to fly, you learn as you keep trying, failing, and trying again, doing a little better each time you try.

Eternal living is mostly a laboratory subject. You do not have a book of experiments based on present day conditions of living. You have to build your own but you will have no trouble doing so, for new things needing to be tested will come up every day. To study it on a theoretical basis alone would never yield enough benefit to pay for the trouble. Only he who puts things to the test will learn much.

The student of eternal living is not like the archaeologist or the geologist, digging out the decaying evidences of a life that once was but has long since ceased to be lived. It is more like that of an explorer, seeking out, testing, and marking trails to new and better goals for living. There is always something new and different to challenge his curiosity and excite his wonder, so his work is never dull. His is a study that is never merely a task, but always an adventure.

It is a long way from the single celled life form drifting without motility or nerve response in a pool of water to man with his intricate powers of body and mind and the far flights his intellect can make. It is an infinitely longer way from the mere conscious existence with which some seem to be content to the infinite scope of life that has cultivated enough of these lifts and reaches really to be living in eternal and infinite terms.

You are now undertaking to begin your progress from the one stage to the other. At each step you will learn more truth, and it will make you more free. You are doing what St. Paul requested of young Timothy, studying to show yourself approved, a workman that needs not be ashamed.

Do not make the mistake of thinking such knowledge is too wonderful for you, that it is beyond your reach, that you are not supposed to partake of it. Consider that all good is as much for you as for anyone, that nothing is too good to be true, that all things are possible for anyone who will realize them, and that any good thing is for any of us as far as we will meet its requirements and use it constructively.

Do not be afraid of eternity. It is your friendly home. It is just like

what we call time, except that it is complete while time is only fragmentary. Eternity fulfills what time promises and makes permanent the treasures time makes dear.

Do not be afraid that learning the secrets and principles of eternal living is going to make you any less a human being. Rather it will make you a better and more truly normal one in every real and good sense.

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## MEDITATION

ONE'S whole career in every part grows out of his thought life. Each thing he does or creates is built to the pattern of thoughts that have lingered in the silence of his mind. What one thinks he does, and what one meditates upon he becomes. Everything one does is affected in some way by what is or has been in his mind. You are carrying in your thought life now the germs of what you will do tomorrow and afterward. Anything you do, you could if you tried, trace it back to something in your thinking.

If your mind dwells on the low, the unimportant, or the temporary, do not expect eternal elements to be imbedded by it into the structure of your life or the character of your personality. If you keep it on worthy levels, you have every right to expect to find it supporting and strengthening your career and its outcome.

You have appointed times to take food for the nurture of your body. Not only that, but you have set aside those times and made provision for them and arranged for the means with which to purchase it. Should any condition threaten your appetite for this food, or your ability to digest and assimilate it, or your power to procure it, you would seek means to restore the processes to health or your purchasing power to normality. You see to it that your body does not go undernourished.

You say this is your life, and you must maintain it. It is true enough that you must maintain it, for you have use for it; but it is not your life. It is only the instrument by means of which your life expresses and develops itself in a material world. You are right about your life needing nourishment, but do not forget that it takes something more than food to do that. Your body for which you care so faithfully is only the vehicle in which you carry your life around. You feed the vehicle at the table. Do you feed the deeper powers and processes of the life itself in the closet of prayer and the hour of meditation?

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Just sitting silently in a brown study, as people say, may have its value if the subject of thought is worthwhile; but when we speak of meditation here we mean something more active, adequate, definite, purposeful, and directed than aimless reverie. We mean making use of the processes of your mind as correctly and purposefully as you do those of your body in your work, providing its food as faithfully, taking as much care of it to keep it in good condition, and using it as constructively and effectively.

Effective meditation needs first of all a theme. You may have that theme

when you begin so you can concentrate your thought upon it at once. Or you may go into silence and let your mind find its own theme as you go along, which it is likely to do. The next thing is to concentrate on that theme as intently as you could gaze at the head of a pin, or a fixed point in space, or a point on a blank wall. That helps the subconscious mind to go into action and begin working for you.

Solitude is necessary unless those with you are in silence also, in which case the intentness of each helps the others. Pentecost was achieved by a hundred and twenty people being of one accord in one place. Probably if even one had not been in accord he would have spoiled it for all the rest. You need a closet or an upper room either of walls or silence to be alone with truth and God.

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## CONVERSATION

ANOTHER approach we will note is conversation. It might seem that this would be an outer approach, and it would be if it were idle, shallow, and meaningless. But that is not the kind of conversation that is meant here. We mean conversation which is a search for truth and inspiration, just as reading, prayer, and meditation are. It is an inner approach because its effects are inner effects.

Conversation is too much neglected among us today. There is plenty of chatter and small talk, but it is not conversation. Conversation is an exchange of earnest, honest, worthwhile thoughts. This should once more have a permanent place among us.

Good conversation is teaching and learning in one of their highest and most effective forms. A great and good teacher under whom your Instructor once worked passed away recently at the age of eighty-one. The story of his fine life has lately been published, and your Instructor has been remembering the old days and recollecting the old inspirations.

Closing the book, I said, "I learned much from him. The influence of his mind transformed my life, my world, and my purpose, because it transformed my understanding. But for the life of me I cannot tell after all these years how much of it I learned in the classroom, and how much on walks, visits, from letters, and even during casual meetings on the street. Time has so blended these important moments together that they are no longer distinguishable. I do know, however, that without the quiet talks I had with him my life would have been very much poorer."

Here is a ventured word of advice. Give your life a chance to be enriched through the exchange of rich thoughts in conversation. Have some friends with whom it is profitable to talk. Give them what you have to offer, but do not try to give it all the first time, and do not fail to receive from them. Learn to be a good listener, and see that you do your share of listening. As steel sharpens steel, the impact between your mind and others will enrich the store of understanding for both.

Some years ago a religious group in England announced a meeting for the

sole purpose of conversation on the goodness of God. A number of such meetings were arranged, and they proved most profitable. If this were made a custom among us, and if the participants went out to build their new-found thoughts on some great theme into their lives and work, the benefit to civilization would be incalculable.

In a poem by James Whitcomb Riley, one of two who were then youngsters is remembering their visits to a dear old lady. They have crossed the pasture and gone through the wood to her simple cottage. The visit included many joys, but one of them was,

"The talks on the back porch in the low  
Slanting sun in the evening glow,  
And the voice of counsel that touched us so,  
Out to Old Aunt Mary's."

Know people whose voices of counsel you need and people who need yours. Trade thoughts, hopes, and ideals with them. It will help both you and them to live more in terms of eternity.

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## READING

PAST generations were advised to read much well chosen literature from the vast store of recorded thought. A large number of people did it and profited. Some did it with real understanding and discrimination and were helped on the road to greatness. The reading habit was encouraged by the fact that other diversions were few, also by the fact that books were inexpensive.

Now polluted streams have been allowed to flow into the world's literature, books are very expensive, many other diversions are available, and in some quarters a foolish cynicism concerning good reading has developed. For these reasons it seems again to be time to urge good reading as a worthy habit for all, and necessary one for those trying to find the ways of reflection and understanding that will put them in tune with the infinite and keep them so.

So we give this brief space to a renewed urging that you, as you labor to get your life off the level of fleeting fancies and onto the plane of eternal values, not to overlook the great service well-chosen and carefully considered books can do for you.

Do not pass the library and bookstore by as just places where there are more books. Do not pass great books by as so many attempts to achieve fame and make money. Do not leap to the conclusion that all books are like the ones which quite evidently are not worth your while.

Many of the works of the old masters are deathless, and at least some of those by the newer thinkers will be. In their pages by the miracle of printed communication symbols, you can walk with and share the thoughts of the greatest minds the world has ever known. This is too good an opportunity to miss, especially if you are in search of eternal truth.

The Bible is the best place to begin. Do not read it indiscriminately, nor begin with the hardest parts to understand. The gospels, epistles, prophets, and books of philosophy and poetry, may well serve as your starting point. The Book of Psalms is especially rich because its material is inspirational. It is a collection of material written for singing in public worship, which requires its content to reach high and deep. In the Psalms your spirit can explore all the directions and reaches of eternity.

Next should come the meditations of the great searchers for truth. For instance, Emerson is easy to read, and his thoughts will carry you into the very areas you need to explore. They will help you not only to have a growing understanding but also a sense of freedom and strength. In Ruskin, the ancient moralists, and the books of many newer writers you will find quite enough that is significant to occupy your time and attention without going at all into the vagaries fashioned to appeal to the mob mind.

In any case, develop a reading program, make it good, and carry it out. The prosperity and growth of your own soul will be your reward. The thoughts that have moved earth's greatest minds are in storage for you. Avail yourself of them.

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## CONTEMPLATION

LEARN and practice contemplation. By that we mean to get out of the habit of just passing things by and into the habit of looking at them, thinking about them, and trying to discover their meanings.

Read again and think deeply about Tennyson's poem on the flower in the crannied wall. Its message is that if one plucked even a little flower from a cranny in a wall, held it in his hand, looked at it, and thought about it till he understood it, he would know the secrets of both the divine and the human. Its lines of relationship reach out and bind it to every other thing in the universe.

This is true not only of a flower in a crannied wall, but also of everything else in earth or sky. Take anything whatever and trace all its lines of relationship to the end. If you could live long enough to finish the task, these lines would lead you to the discovery of everything else including both the Creator of all and the one who bears His image.

Do you not see, then, what the contemplation of things, even commonplace ones, can do for you? You are not just an isolated, unrelated identity. You are a part of the universe, a link in the chain of creation, a cell in the all-embracing organism. You realize this as you find your relation to other parts in the scheme of things, even a grain of sand, a drop of dew, or a budding leaf. Thus you gain the knowledge of things, and somewhere along your line of contemplation you find the Soul of the Universe to which you were related all the while, and never found it out.

Wordsworth fathomed much of this. You would do well to read and ponder again his "Ode on Intimations of Immortality". Also read again from him about Peter Bell, the poor sense-bound soul of whom the poet said that "A primrose by the river's brim

a yellow primrose was to him, and it was nothing more." That is the kind of person one becomes if he does not contemplate things while one who does so finds that everything is much more than it appears. It is the visible pattern of a divine thought, an effort on the part of the Creator of the world to make it beautiful and meaningful.

Have you been doing all this? If so you are wise. Keep on doing it, trying all the time to do it better and follow up its meanings more successfully. If you have not been doing it, it is recommended as a most valuable habit to develop.

You are not interested in all these minor things, do you say? One who calls anything common has not correctly valued the fruits of divine creation. There are no minor things, no unimportant things, no insignificant things. As the smallest part in a great machine is as necessary to its operation as the largest, so each little item in creation plays also an indispensable role.

Perhaps the thing needed is a stronger sense of wonder, but that will come as you begin to discover that everything is a miracle of itself and that if you find its meaning you are already treading the borderlands of infinity.

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PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, lead me through the hidden archways of my own inner life, through contemplation, out into the infinite reaches of all that was made for me and for which I was made. Amen.

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And now that this lesson may bring you a blessing, is the prayer of

YOUR INSTRUCTOR.

