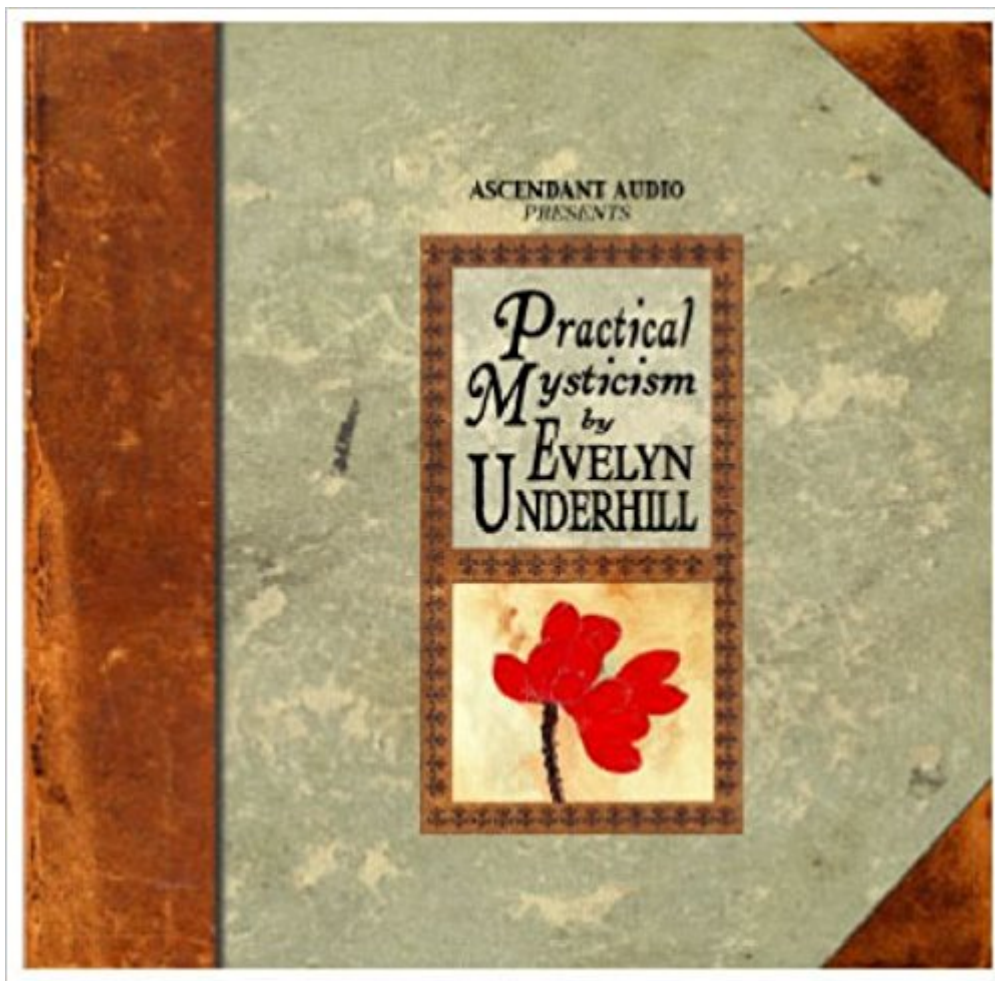


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# Practical Mysticism



## Synopsis

In *Practical Mysticism*, Evelyn Underhill distills the essential (and comprehensible) steps that comprise the process of achieving mystical understanding. Though she uses the pantheon of Christian mystics as her guide, her methodology transcends any particular faith and offers a common sense approach to self-improvement and enhanced awareness.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"God gives without stint all that the creature needs, but it must do its part. He gives the wheat: we must reap and grind and bake it." -Evelyn Underhill

In these two classics, British poet and mystic Evelyn Underhill shows herself to be one of the most authoritative modern voices on mysticism. Written on the eve of World War I, *Practical Mysticism* reviews the works of the greatest Western mystics, including Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, and Thomas a Kempis. Underhill's goal is to guide her readers on a journey toward mystical consciousness, to teach them to see the "eternal beauty beyond and beneath apparent ruthlessness." *Abba*, first published in 1940, takes as its starting point the seven phrases of the Lord's Prayer, using them as a means to propel the self toward union with God. In these important works, Underhill brings an often esoteric subject onto a practical footing, showing that the profound gifts of mysticism are not only for the few but are within reach of us all. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Evelyn Underhill (December 6, 1875 June 15, 1941) was an English author who wrote extensively on Christian mysticism and religious practice. She became prominent in the Anglican Church as a

lay leader of spiritual retreats, a spiritual director for hundreds of individuals, and a radio lecturer, always promoting the power of contemplative prayer. Underhill's greatest book, *Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, was published in 1911, and is a thick and very in-depth volume. *Practical Mysticism*; was her attempt to make available an easily accessible work of her findings.

This is a wonderfully written book on a subject that seems to be difficult for most people to understand. The writer is from another time and classically trained. Some seem to think her writing style is too flowery or too wordy. That is unfortunate, much could be learned about how to write and appreciate the English language just reading and studying this book. The author's use of the language is eloquent and beautiful. I think many of those who gave unfavorable reviews of this book just don't understand the subject matter and therefore can't get beyond being stuck in the writing style. It's easier to complain about something they can't get a grip on. I am not trying to undermine anyone. *Mysticism* is a tough subject to pin down. That being said I find this book to be enlightening and invigorating to read. Make sure you are wide awake and focused when you read it. I believe the reward is worth the effort.

A stunning doorway to the understanding of mystical consciousness, if you can be serious in applying yourself. This is nearly the simplest language that has ever been applied to mysticism, yet, if you drift away for one second you can lose the thread and your entire opportunity. The text relies on certain arcane Christian terms which will alienate many due to their modern implications of stress and strife. But, for those who will read this with focus the pathway is laid-out with precision. However, when you finally understand the nature of the preparations you will run. These steps are contrary to every single empty value beloved by 21st century man.

I first encountered this book when I was an undergraduate student taking a *Mysticism* course in a Jesuit University. At the time, the book was out of print and the instructor thought it was so valuable he photocopied it for everyone in the class at his own expense. More than 20 years later, I agree with him that this book is unique and valuable. I also think that its message is still relevant to modern people and would rank it as a spiritual classic. What makes this book valuable is that it cuts to the essence of what mysticism is and how it is relevant to everyday people living in the world. It is written in a lyrical almost poetical style, which is to say that the author has the power to make difficult concepts come alive with great impact and beauty. There are many books on Western

Mysticism, but this one is very concise and delivers the essentials in an easy to digest manner. While some of the language is outdated and the world has changed in many ways, the underpinning of man and the world have changed very little. This is why I still think Evelyn Underhill's message still applies and speaks across the decades directly to the human heart. At times, there can be a bit of a moralistic tone. However, when viewed from the mystic's side of feeling unworthy of the experience of union with God they are having, this makes sense. When looked at from the human side, it can be a bit disconcerting. However, I think its analogous to the situation where two people who are really in love with each other, don't feel worthy of each other. This is the way I try to view these sections because basically a mystic is much like a lover in relation to the divine. This book is only \$10.00 and I wouldn't hesitate to buy it if you are the least bit interested in Western Mysticism or any kind of mysticism. If you just mine the book for powerful quotes and analogies it is worth many times the cover price. I believe I own at least three copies of it because I keep lending it to people and not getting it back! With respect to my background and spiritual inclinations, I am primarily a student of Eastern Traditions. However, this is one book that I feel helps bridge the gap between these two great traditions and is accessible to anyone.

Certainly different from the self-help books of the current era that I was expecting, but it was beautifully written and highly motivating all the same.

Excellent and might I say "practical" in the specific way it explains mystical contemplation. And it is well written, even with poetical phrases.

ok

This is a "must read" for anyone whose spiritual journey has led them to writings of St. John of the Cross, Therese of Avila, Thomas Merton, other books of Evelyn Underhill, etc.

This just isn't my kind of book. I bought it as a Lenten discipline and read four or five chapters before deciding the point of it all was too elusive. Others may benefit by this book but I need something more direct and to the point.

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