

## **How To Approach a Spiritual Writing**

Focus on the present moment with a beginner's mind!

(Questions presented by Carl McColman

based on *Meditations on the Tarot*)

### **Some suggested perspectives:**

#### **1. As a Student:**

What can I learn from this book/material?

What can I learn from this author's viewpoint?

In what ways can it help me personally?

How can this help me to better understand spirituality/theology?

How can this help me to become a more dedicated contemplative?

How does this book/material challenge me?

#### **2. As a Theologian/Teacher:**

What is the author saying about God?

How is it unique?

What do I agree/disagree with in the material?

What would I say differently?

How does it fit into Christianity as a whole?

What does it say about interfaith dialogue?

What is there to learn from any sense of Paradox in this material?

How is it relevant to today?

#### **3. As/like a Monk?**

Can this book/material assist me in prayer?

Is this suitable for Lectio Divina?

Am I reading it for formation rather than information?

How can it help me to meditate or reflect?

How can it inspire the words/focus of my prayer?

How does this text invite me into silence?

#### **4. As a Spiritual Director?**

What is the author's image of God?

What is the author's image/sense of Self?

How does the author relate to God?

What signs of growth does the author share?

Is the material leading somewhere?

How is God leading the author?

Does the material help me to guide others?

Where can others find God in this material?

5. As a Poet?

How does the author use language as a creative art?  
How does the author "play" with words (lyricism, etc.)?  
How does the author use imagery, metaphor, and the senses?  
What layers of meaning can I discern—How?  
What is beautiful about this material?

6. As a Magician:

What is the author creating, channeling, harnessing?  
What is the author asking us as reader to create?  
What is being revealed?  
What is surprising or unusual?  
How can this reading lead me to transformation?  
How is it innovative or revolutionary?  
What is being evoked or called into meaning?  
How does the author use Energy, Sacred Scent, Sacred Magic?  
Does this material evoke my imagination—take me on a journey?

7. As a Mystic:

What is the material's relationship with Silence?  
Where is the Silence hidden?  
How does this material cultivate Wonder?  
(Why or Why not?)  
Where is God present in these words, phrases?  
How does the material call us into contemplation?  
(Is the call intentional, or implied?)  
How does the material cultivate a sense of Divine Presence?  
How does this material invite me into the mysteries of my faith?

Other Perspectives:

As a Psychologist? As a Lawyer/Scientist (presentation of evidence?)  
Can I distance myself from the text as an objective observer? Is that my goal?

Making sense/clarity from many perspectives will directly shape your experience and your discovery of implicit or explicit meanings. If you struggle with a text, try a different approach. Learning different ways of reading a spiritual text has implications beyond the book, and can help with challenging materials and use of vocabulary, and syntax.