

J. has woven together an extraordinary array of historical details, a tapestry of both well-known facts and auxiliary insights that illuminate the human circumstances out of which a particular version of the BCP emerged. The historical material, though abundant, never overwhelms the book's narrative flow. J. has focused the text generally by placing complementary historical data in valuable notes that no reader should overlook. This book is an important contribution to prayer-book literature.

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The Complete Introduction to The Devout Life. By Francis de Sales. Translated from the French by John Julian, O.J.N. Paraclete Giants. Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2013. Pp. xxix + 389. \$26.99.

This book, an undeniable classic of Christian spirituality, often ranked as the third most popular spiritual book of all time behind only the Bible and *The Imitation of Christ*. Its chapters are brief and offer practical spiritual advice on prayer, virtue, temptation, and perseverance in holiness. While some parts do not translate well into the 21st century, most of this 400-year-old text retains its relevance and provides a window into the spirituality of a bishop who was able to relate closely to the challenges and aspirations of his flock.

With 16 other editions drawn from five different English translations currently available, one might question whether a new edition of the *Introduction* offers anything that we do not already have. In addition to the text, the Paraclete Press version contains a useful introduction that placed Francis de Sales and his work in historical context; a chronology of de S.'s life with helpful references to noteworthy people and events of the times; a six-page bibliography; and extensive commentary typeset so that the notes fall on the left page and de S.'s text on the right.

The clear strength of this volume lies in its notes and commentary. In addition to numerous scriptural citations, the *Introduction* is replete with references to Pliny's *Naturalis historia* and the spiritual writings of the saints, including several not well known today. The translator has provided a tremendous service to those with either a scholarly or devotional interest in Salesian spirituality by providing over a thousand textual notations that elucidate both meaning and context. As for the translation itself, the stated commitment "to avoid modernizing or remodeling de S.'s often elegant language" (xxviii) sometimes results in a wordy or formalized English rendering that fails to stir the heart or appeal to the reader's aesthetic sensibilities. De S. excelled in those areas, and other English translations more gracefully evoke that Salesian quality. Nevertheless the notes in themselves make an invaluable contribution, leaving this reader hoping that a similar treatment of de S.'s *Treatise on the Love of God* will be forthcoming.

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