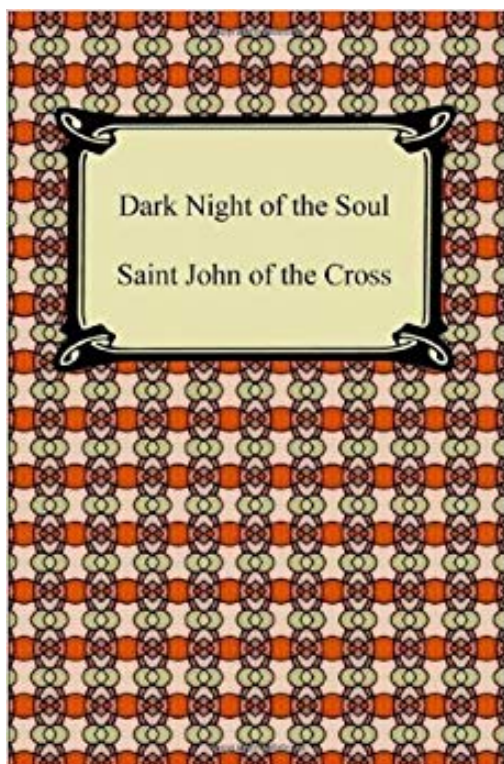


Dark Night of the Soul by E. Allison Peers, Saint John of the Cross



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Written in the 16th century by a reform-minded Carmelite monk, "Dark Night of the Soul" is a treatise focusing on the metaphor of a dark night to represent a lonely phase in one's personal spiritual life. Saint John was a Roman Catholic mystic and a Spanish poet, and this work reflects his mystical stages toward union with God. Divided into two books, the purification of the senses and the spirit, "Dark Night" describes these two phases and additionally explains the ten steps of the ladder of love, which was first expressed by Saint Thomas Aquinas. In Saint John's poem, one comes to understand his belief in a benevolent God, outside of all thought or imagination, who we can only come to know through love. A profound description of absolution, desolation, progress, and love, "Dark Night of the Soul" is a powerful poem that captures the discouragement of doubting yet believing Christians, even as it offers help through spiritual loneliness.



Reviews of the **Dark Night of the Soul** by E. Allison Peers, Saint John of the Cross

The Rollers of Vildar

I purchased this book awhile ago, and am just now offering my response to it. I LOVE this book!! It is easy to read and to understand. It is written in the most beautiful language I have read in years. I look forward to finding myself in the same situation that St. John of the Cross found himself in some day, which was in the midst of a feeling of nothingness...absolutely black, still, quiet, stagnant, nothingness....until he gradually sensed The Beloved was there in the darkness with him. John and his soul were then completely satisfied in their search for the Beloved, and their feelings of emptiness were nourished forever. It is a beautifully written current translation of a very important early spiritual document. Rarely do writers put pen to paper and produce orchestral literary music of the first water that is written in English without notations for a musical score! But Mirabai Starr has composed her work of translating Dark Night of the Soul in such fashion that it fascinates the reader with its beauty, and it's easy to understand. Such an amazing contemporary new transcription of this ancient work depicting the workings of the human spirit in its utmost range of human emotions is a collector's treasure in any reader's well-used library. For today's readers who seek to know what, when, and why, and how, this book should answer all your questions of the spirit. I recommend it!

Azago

I was introduced to this book many years ago but did not become seriously interested in reading it until I heard some programs by Fr. Thomas Dubay. He introduces you to the more difficult aspects of the contents and tries to simplify, very well indeed, difficult parts with "pedestrian" words, as he puts it. You can download these programs, called "The Great Exchange" from the website EWTN.com and click on the audible library link. Then, I think, one can be better prepared to understand some of the more difficult aspects of this masterpiece as the soul journeys toward union with God. It is called "dark night", because the soul travels in darkness being deprived of images and concepts in the faculties as it is purified for union with God, its guide being faith alone.....

Nafyn

I would not recommend this book to just anyone, but it came to me at the right time, and has had a profound effect on my Spiritual growth. That said, if you're actually experiencing some of the "dark nights" and emptying this book talks about, you know it comes thru some painful movements of God.

Still, the goal of drawing closer to God thru being drawn further out of "self" is worth all the sacrifice and struggle.

This book will shake you to the core, or rather, may God use it so in you.

Ynneig

This is the most difficult book I have read. I gained much from reading it, but there's no doubt that I missed much too, both on its face and in its depth. That's not too surprising or disturbing, for as John of the Cross says of the soul that "can free itself from the house of its sensuality:" "None can understand it, unless as it seems to me, it be the soul who has experienced it."

St. John of the Cross (1542-1591) was a Spanish mystic, canonized in 1675 and named a doctor of the Catholic Church in 1926. A Carmelite priest, he embraced poverty and, working with Teresa of Avila, attempted to reform the order. His fellow Carmelites imprisoned, starved, and tortured him. While imprisoned he wrote a brief poem, Dark Night of the Soul. He then wrote two books, Ascent of Mount Carmel and Dark Night of the Soul, explaining and interpreting the poem. Or he wrote one book doing that: the translator of this edition views Dark Night as a continuation of the Ascent rather than a separate treatise. Or perhaps he wrote no book: it isn't clear to me that he intended the manuscript for publication; it may have been his personal reflections to aid himself. It was published posthumously, nearly twenty years after his death.

In the Ascent, John wrote of the "active" night; the Dark Night addresses the "passive" night of purification of the sense and spirit to prepare the soul for union with God. By himself even with ordinary grace, man cannot be transformed totally in God. God must act on passive man.

The poem is obscure metaphor. In Dark Night, John often uses more metaphor to explain the metaphors, sometimes obscurely. He is often repetitive. Words seem to change meanings. And the book is incomplete; St. John apparently abandoned it before explicating the entire poem. (This edition contains in translation the complete text of what St. John wrote: it is the Dark Night itself that was unfinished.) I found many passages and metaphors brilliant, but was lost in others. St. John sometimes seems to struggle to explain or describe the inexplicable and indescribable, which may be the reason for the many repetitions and metaphors.

The early passages on "imperfections" relating to the seven deadly sins are a brilliant demonstration that the person free of sin still needs purgation and growth. Also very helpful are the passages in which St. John delineates tests to show whether difficulties flow from the Night and thus God or instead are from the self or the devil or the world.

The Dark Night is a difficult book. The reader will wrestle with it. Most will gain much from the book but also miss much that it tries to offer.

FailCrew

It's been a life changer for me. So many things occur in my spirit that I do not understand and do not know how to vocalize. It took me years to get through the first chapters but once I did, I felt as though St. John of the Cross was there speaking with me personally, understanding me completely.

Fato

If you are at the stage in life where you are ready to understand the contents in this book, you will it know it. You will feel a sense of comfort as you read, because you will feel as though the author completely understands you, it's like the author knows you better than you know yourself. I broke down in tears multiple times while reading, out of pure relief - "ahhhh, someone finally gets it." It made me feel less alone and it gave me a newfound sense of hope. I am reassured that I am exactly where I'm supposed to be. Highly recommend for any serious spiritual seeker who is curious about understanding themselves on a deeper level and understanding the nature of the divine. Profound wisdom.

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