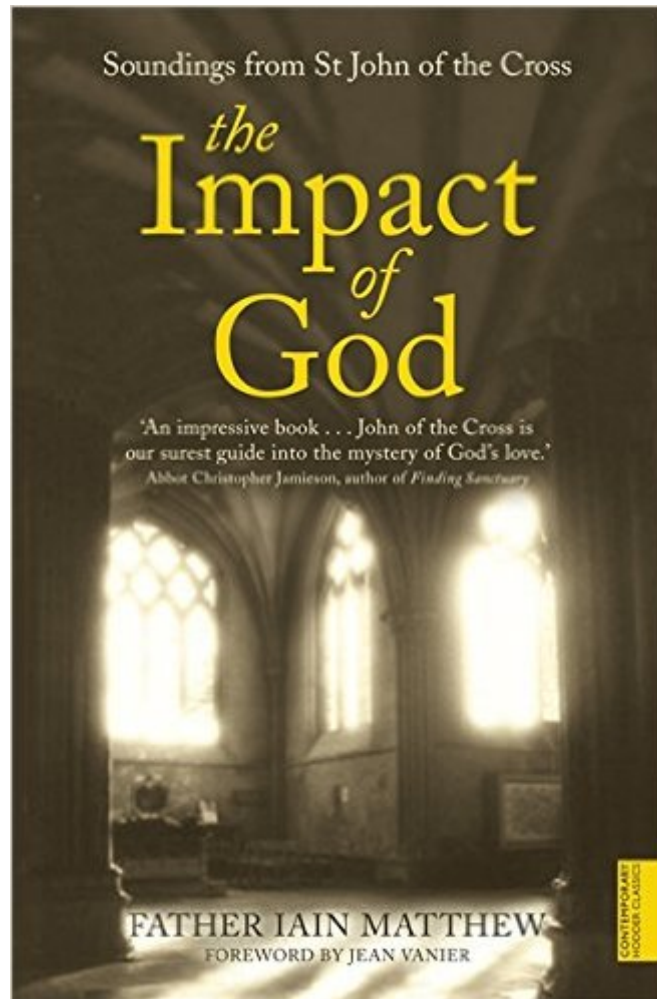


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The Impact Of God (Hodder Christian Paperbacks)



Synopsis

St John of the Cross testifies to a God who longs to meet us in our deepest need. Whilst rejection and imprisonment played their part in the life of this sixteenth-century Spanish friar, John's poetry and prose reveal the beauty and power of a wondrous God. It gives us courage to believe in the possibility of change in our own lives, however unlikely or impossible this may seem. Father Iain Matthew uses this classic inspirational Christian writing as his starting point, and offers five interpretations which make its richness relevant to the modern reader.

Book Information

Series: Hodder Christian Paperbacks

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton; Hodder Christian Paperbacks edition (September 21, 1995)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0340612576

ISBN-13: 978-0340612576

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.5 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (57 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #81,115 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #14 inÂ Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Protestantism > Anglican #58 inÂ Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Mysticism #84 inÂ Books > Religion & Spirituality > Other Religions, Practices & Sacred Texts > Mysticism

Customer Reviews

This is one of the best books I've ever read. The author includes verses from John of the Cross, then analyzes and synthesizes, extracting the heart of what John is saying. The book is not at all "heady", it is extremely useful for the spiritual life of anyone in high school-on-up. This is one of the only books I've ever read that clears the way for deep communion with God literally every time I pick it up. I've read chapters 5-8 over and over again... the author talks about blockages to our relationship with God, and how to overcome them in a practical yet powerful way. The author shows how far and how deep a relationship with God can go. Anyone who desires to make serious advances in their spiritual life needs to read this book.

Seeking the beloved makes sense to John of The Cross, the mystic. He considers such desire and

action Christian progress: "Christian progress means: searching for the one who is giving joy to my life, who seems to believe in me, who makes me alive. When I am with him, every moment is a discovery; and being without him is like dying." So the poet is quoted in the wonderful and inspiring book, "The Impact of God, Soundings from St John of The Cross" by Iain Matthew, published by Hodder and Stoughton, London, England. This work discusses the Saint, his poetry, and his doctrine. The great John of the Cross is a writer of wonderful love poetry, poetry directed at Christ, and his doctrine includes the idea that one cannot know God, for to ascend in contemplative prayer is to reach nothingness. He writes in a poem: To come to savour all Seek to find savour in nothing; To come to possess all, Seek possession in nothing, To come to be all, Seek in all to be nothing.... To come to what you know not You must go by way where you know not To come to what you are not You must go by a way where you are not. The author of this book explains this love poem, and many others, and the doctrine of the Spanish Saint. A Discalced Carmelite himself, the author is prior of a Carmelite Monastery in Dublin. As the jacket blurb aptly puts it, "John of the Cross testifies to a God who longs to meet us and to love us in our deepest need." I, as reviewer, think the writer is successful in meeting this description, and the book is very worthwhile reading before reading any of St. John's works (afterward, too, as did I). John of the Cross writes love poems out of encounter with Christ. Here is an example regarding Easter morning. Iain Matthew says it is about a visitation St. John received: My beloved, the mountains, Lonely wooded valleys, Rare islands, Thundering rivers, The whisper of love, carried by the breeze. The tranquil night At one with the rising dawn, The silence of music, The mighty sound of solitude The feast where love makes all new. (Canticle A 13-14) Jean Vanier writes a short introduction to the book (mine in paperback, and loaned to me by an Episcopal Deacon--good fortune for me to be introduced to the book). At the end of the introduction, this quote: "For some people, John of the Cross, the John of Pain and of Ecstasy, seems too austere and complicated: for others he seems too pantheistic, not sufficiently Christ-centered. Iain Matthew reveals beautifully the true John, firmly centered in Jesus, in love with Jesus, the John who through all his life and teaching shows the path to inner liberation and union with God." I found the book a lesson on John of the Cross, the liberator. An unusual thing to say, yes, but there are many lessons in this book that have helped me to value and enjoy, understand the writings and poetry of John of the Cross. One important lesson and activity of John of the Cross is clear. John of the Cross points to Jesus. As Iain Matthew writes of the Saint's dictum, "Essentially...choose the person of Christ, and get used to making him, not your feelings, your ultimate basis for action." Lots of doctrine and good thoughts in this book. Here is one of my favorite quotes from "The Impact of God: Soundings from St John of the Cross." I think this is a sounding. It

is also a strong statement on love. Love is explored in the book. I brought to this quotation a sense that the Ascension of Christ brings not only the perfected humanity of Jesus, but also the humanity of human kind. I found myself thinking about what was offered and brought my own questions right along as I read. The concepts of hunger, ache, dignity, being shaped for Christ resonated with me: "So our needs--for answers or love or solutions to our problems ache is the price of our dignity. If we are meant for this much, we shall suffer that hunger." John designates that dignity by the term 'bride'. In the Ballads, creation was intended to furnish the Son with a 'bride', a whole people who would be his own. In Canticle, the bride is found and wedded beneath the 'apple tree' of the cross, where 'the Son of God redeemed, and so betrothed, human nature, and so each soul, with himself'. This means that humankind, and each person in it, has, necessarily, a bridal shape. We are, from our origin, shaped for Christ, a capacity, a need for Christ. "That -- our incompleteness -- is our dignity, and when we feel it we are most truly ourselves. When we utter our appeal from there, we are being mature, being what we were meant to be. That appeal is prayer. For the human person, then, prayer is a supreme value." The book has Chapter names like: "Prayer, a 'Being With'," "The Gospel Has Eyes," "The Right Kind of Emptiness," "There is Somewhere to go," "It Has to be God," and "The Experience of God..." If you as a reader find the following words by the writer of the book ones that resonate with you, then by all means read this book. Regarding prayer, Iain Matthew says of John of the Cross: "But in each as the need, though real, is a symptom of a deeper need, of a craving that is as close and as vital as we are to ourselves. The mystic sounds human needs; and about the person John has said many magnificent things. But the most real thing he says about us is that we are created to need God--'infinite capacity,' for God." The book and John of the Cross speak to people who have a need, craving, vital arousal in the heart for God.--Peter Menkin, Pentecost 2008

It is not for nothing that Jesus often said 'Take heed how you hear.' Hearing or reading St John of the Cross and his doctrine for the first time can be daunting and depressing: the emphasis on detachment, nothingness, etc., seems such a forbidding way to God. And yet, and yet...innumerable people have had their lives joyfully transformed by this Carmelite and have treasured his poetry. For Iain Matthew explains why, translating his teaching in a way that is psychologically healthy and spiritually challenging: one comes away from this book--and returns again and again--thinking 'I could do this, by the grace of God, but I could do this.' Matthew speaks with authority, having lived the Carmelite life for years. It may not be easy to follow St John of the Cross but THE IMPACT OF GOD assures us it is not impossible.

i bought this book at a carmelite monastery's bookshop. it was recommended by one of the discalced friars. for anyone who wants to understand the message of st. john of the cross this is the book for you. it is beautifully written in a simple and logical way. you can refer to it daily as you incorporate st. john of the cross' message in your daily life

This is a very readable book that places John of the Cross historically and as a mystic. I've read it three times and am now starting into his original works with some confidence. We'll see how it goes.

I loved reading this book, it really brought John of the Cross and his writings into focus for me. I have long been a fan of Fr. Thomas Dubay and have read his book on contemplation "Fire Within" at least 5 times. These books go together nicely. They have both enhanced my own walk with the Lord and I am expecting they will continue to do so for years to come.

Iain Matthews has done exhaustive study. If you are interested in Christian mysticism and moving closer into connection with God, then this is your book. Matthews has some tremendous insight, although the book could have been condensed a little bit more. He gets a little redundant and tries to read a little bit too much in St. John OTC, that is only my opinion. If you have been struggling with Dark Night over the last several, several years, this book will help you on your journey, but it is not one of those ahaaaaaa, books so you can categorize and then shelve St. John OTC and park him into one of those slots that thinks, well I got that. You will continue to seek, and ask, and meditate. Good for you, and good for me.

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