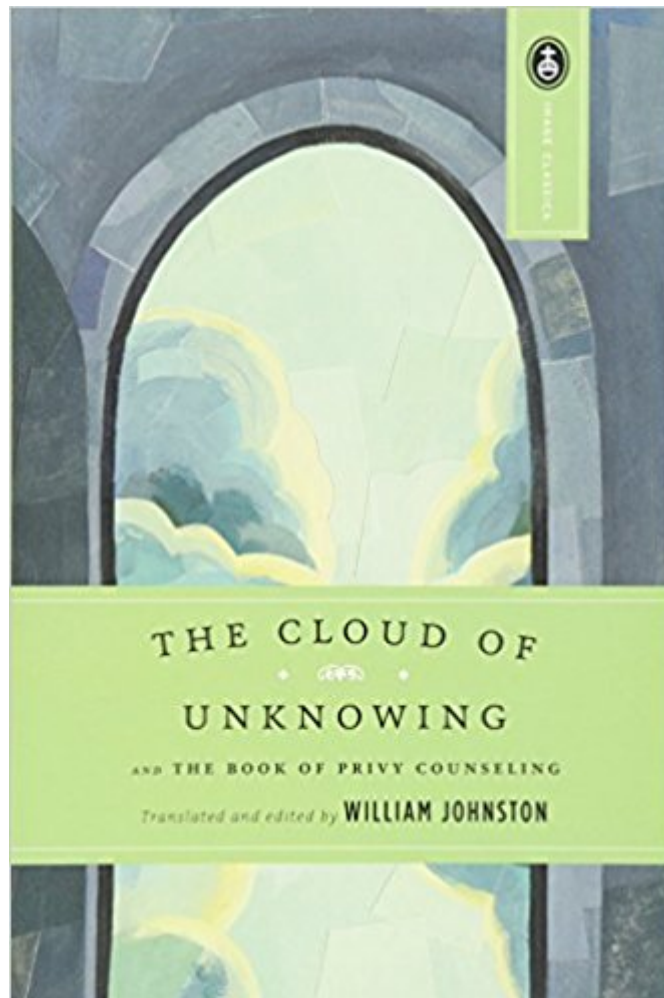




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The Cloud Of Unknowing: And The Book Of Privy Counseling



Synopsis

William Johnston--an authority on fourteenth century spirituality and specifically on the writings of this unknown author--provides a substantive and accessible introduction detailing what is known about the history of this text and its relevance throughout the ages. Also included here is the author's other principal work, *The Book of Privy Counseling*--a short and moving text on the way to enlightenment through a total loss of self and consciousness only of the divine.

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Customer Reviews

"God can be loved but he cannot be thought. He can be grasped by love but never by concepts. So less thinking and more loving." This is William Johnston's summary of the message of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Nobody knows who wrote the book, or exactly where he lived, or whether he was a member of a religious order, or even, really, whether he was part of any church at all. The text first appeared in Middle English in the 14th century, and it has inspired generations of mystical searchers (from St. John of the Cross to Teilhard de Chardin). The mysterious conditions of its composition, however, focus the reader's attention squarely on the book's message--an almost Zen rendering of Christianity, which has a great deal to teach our querulous, doctrine-obsessed churches: "And so I urge you," the author writes, "go after experience rather than knowledge. On account of pride, knowledge may often deceive you, but this gentle, loving affection will not deceive you. Knowledge tends to breed conceit, but love builds. Knowledge is full of labor, but love, full of rest." --Michael Joseph Gross

William Johnston--an authority on fourteenth century spirituality and specifically on the writings of this unknown author--provides a substantive and accessible introduction detailing what is known about the history of this text and its relevance throughout the ages. Also included here is the author's other principal work, *The Book of Privy Counseling*--a short and moving text on the way to enlightenment through a total loss of self and consciousness only of the divine.

This book contains two streams of useful, highly spiritual thought. The first part grounds you in a dedicated and devotional practice that cuts away at all the emotional and (sometimes) spiritual baggage acquired via various spiritual practices in your background. The teaching is potent and direct but not without heart. Recommendations and things to do along the way mix within the descriptive 75 brief lessons, resulting (hopefully) in understanding God better while continuing to live in the Cloud of Unknowing. The second part is geared for counseling yourself and others. Application of concepts in part one are woven into new fabric of spiritual dimension, that is, a more extrovert application than experienced in the first part. Either way this classic is a must for any serious student of religion and/or spirituality, from the most orthodox to New Thought.

Written in a very relaxed conversational style that is quite inviting and appropriate to the subject of contemplative prayer, I would highly recommend this edition. Contemplative prayer is the practice of entering into God's love. The author describes this love as the Cloud of Unknowing in which we lose ourselves in God's presence. Having stood the test of time (written in the 14th century) the Cloud of Unknowing feels quite contemporary, yet cuts through the superficial spirituality that is pervasive today to provide a robust connection with God and tradition. While I come out of the Christian tradition, I would think that the Cloud of Unknowing would be helpful to people of other faith traditions who are seeking a spiritual awareness. Its concepts and language would be quite easily adapted. I think that most people who approach the book with an open mind will find that they are drawn closer to the divine.

Well what can I say? If you are interested in the contemplative way then this is the book to read -- if you dare -- given the introduction to the book suggesting that you not read it if you are only interested in the unknown of a spiritual tradition for the sake of intellectual curiosity and not practice.

This timeless classic is a must read for anyone who is serious in their prayer practice. Written nearly

700 years ago, the author touches the mystic that transcends religion, time, creed or geography. The translation reads easily, and any modern reader will appreciate both the introduction as well as the modern English translation of the original. There are both practical and theoretical elements of contemplative prayer reviewed, and a focus on transcendence of love and perfect prayer.

The Cloud of Unknowing is not a book to be merely read and therefore taken lightly. Reading or listening to this book demands time spent in reflection. The guidance it offers for the spiritual journey is timeless. Spiritual direction is guaranteed to the one whose heart hungers for God.

This is a book you need to read and read if you feel called to contemplative prayer. Each time I read it I find something new and inspiring. It sounds like it is written for young men going into the monastery in the way past, but it is applicable to anyone led in the direction of contemplative prayer.

700 years ago this amazing book was written. Starts slow and takes a Contemplative Soul straight to the Unknown - if that is possible - and you are satisfied with the not knowing. God does exist.

Organization is great for reflecting on individual concepts without being overwhelmed. Over time the reflections come together and give rise to the truth that God is love and love of God can't be separated from love of neighbor. Do not try reading it straight through. Take one Chapter a day and take the time to reflect on how the idea presented can aid in being more open to God in daily life.

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