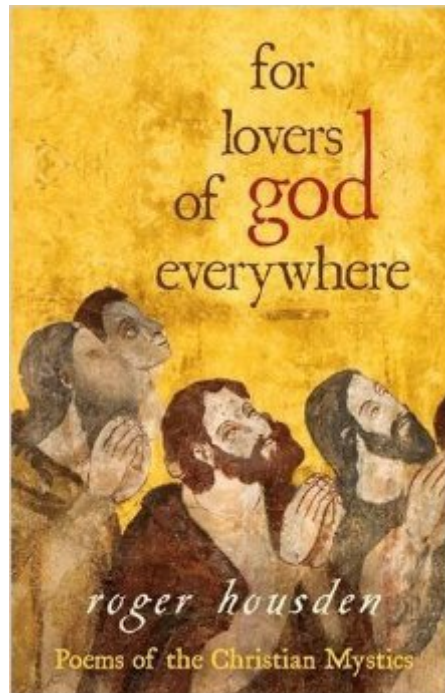


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# For Lovers Of God Everywhere: Poems Of The Christian Mystics





One doesn't have to be strongly religious or even a Christian to enjoy this book and the insight it offers into life it can help you explore. I say that easily as I am not a Christian but rather a Zen Buddhist. While the poems may be those of Christian mystics, their messages are universal. I learned of this book at a Zen monastic retreat that was led by Paul Haller, the abbot, and Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk. Often when a question came up, they would start their reply with a poem from this book which always seemed to be appropriate. And those poems would lead us into further and often deep discussion of the nature of spirituality. For each poem, Roger Housden provides his own commentary. And while his commentary is useful [particularly on the background of the poet] his readings of the poem may not necessarily be yours or mine. But this is what poetry is about: it opens your mind and gives it a general, but not precise, path for your spiritual thinking and understanding of your place in this wonderful, but troubled, world. For my many Christian friends, these poems can have, if you allow them, the same power as a Zen Koan.

This collection of Christian mystic poetry, is one of the finest books of mystical poetry of any and all kinds, I have come across. Every single poem is a jewel of (and to) the soul. I agree with another reviewer, that though it is a collection of poetry from Christian sources, it is perfectly universal in theme and flavor. The type is aesthetic and somehow illuminates the paradoxical spareness and fullness of the words of the various writers. The poems strike like brief but brilliant lightning bolts, which are easily sat with in meditative fashion. I find myself reflecting silently and wordlessly with each poem. This is unusual for me, since I tend to be rather restless and eagerly "rushing" to the next poem or page of writing. Yet this work, compiled with commentary on each poem by the author, draws one to take one's time and savor each word for what they reveal of the truth and beauty behind the words. I am a lover of the mystic poets, from Rumi, to Mirabai, to Hafiz, to St John of the Cross, but this book has a special place in my heart, to which I repeatedly return often for spiritual refreshment.

This book was recommended to me by a friend who is far better read than I, and highly educated. I confess that I was quite skeptical, because I find most poetry does not measure up to the standard set by Shakespeare, and so I discard it. For better or worse, I am a prose person. But I'm also blessed to have had several mystical experiences, and to have learned the Christian contemplative prayer techniques. This book resonates with me. The poems are well chosen, they are helpful to the reader, and they keep me engaged. I highly recommend the book, even to prose guys. In addition, I want to recommend the Kindle edition. My Kindle is the original Fire, which fits in my slacks, or in

my sport coat. Thus, I always have this poetry available, to access in all sorts of situations, for inspiration, for a resource, for simple pleasure.

Housden's subtitle, *Poems of the Christian Mystics*, seems a bit subjective, since poets are included that I have not seen in any other lists or books of mystics. That said, the poetry Housden has selected is spiritual, deep, and powerful. Further, his brief commentaries on the poems often cause me to reread the poet with new eyes. For example, "I am, oh anxious one." in one of Rilke's poems now seems to be a poem written in God's voice. If poetry speaks to you, this book is sure to delight you.

This lovely book contains exquisite poetry, written from timeless gifts of the spirit spanning the centuries. Whether penned by Saint Teresa of Avila or Saint John of the Cross, T.S. Eliot or Mary Oliver, Dante Alighieri or Denise Levertov, the poems in this collection lift spirits into a meditative, literary haven. I'm so sure you spiritually-minded readers will love it that I'd loan you my copy, but it's pasted with Post-A-Notes and scribbled with my responses to the poems. Besides -- it's time for me to read this anthology again.

I keep this in the car to dip into at the traffic lights and other delays in my schedule, some of the verses and authors are benchmarks I return to, or contain favorite expressions. This wonderful selection of poetry is alive with enlightened imagery and is very uplifting, filled with observations from 'another life and time' it is immediate and evocative, even humorous, transforming my day and my life.

Good compilation of poems, along with a brief commentary for each. I would have appreciated longer commentaries, but they were well written.

If you are a poetry lover and also have a spiritual streak this is a really nice collection. I am not Christian identified but this poetry transcends any particular religion.

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