



The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works

Anonymous , A.C. Spearing (Translator)

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works

Anonymous , A.C. Spearing (Translator)

The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works Anonymous , A.C. Spearing (Translator)

Contains The Cloud of Unknowing, The Mystical Theology of Saint Denis, The Book of Privy Counselling, and An Epistle on Prayer. Against a tradition of devotional writings which focussed on knowing God through Christ's Passion and his humanity, these texts describe a transcendent God who exists beyond human knowledge and human language. These four texts are at the heart of medieval mystical theology in their call for contemplation, calm, and above all, love, as the way to understand the Divine.

The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works Details

Date : Published August 30th 2001 by Penguin Classics (first published 1399)

ISBN : 9780140447620

Author : Anonymous , A.C. Spearing (Translator)

Format : Paperback 208 pages

Genre : Philosophy, Spirituality, Religion, Theology, Occult, Mysticism, Classics

 [Download The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works Anonymous , A.C. Spearing (Translator)

From Reader Review The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works for online ebook

Liz says

Started off reading this book with a jaundiced (Protestant) view of Christian mysticism. However, I really liked it. I have read John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila and while I didn't anticipate enjoying this book, I thought it was really relevant and quite wonderful. The introduction was excellent. As I have not read other translations it is tough to comment, but the book was entirely readable. This edition also includes the Mystical Theology of St. Denis, the Book of Privy Counselling and An Epistle on Prayer. Overall an excellent work on contemplation and wanting to know God.

Matthew Prydden says

A fascinating read. This isn't the place to critique its theology, but its the type of work that even when you've put the book down and go on to do something else it remains at the forefront of your mind. I can understand why it had the impact it did on Tozer.

Diane says

Anonymous medieval mystical work on knowing God through accepting His total mystery in the "cloud of unknowing." Although the work is written for contemplatives, it has much to teach any serious Christian. The book focuses on God's grace and its necessity in finding Him, a somewhat unusual theme for a medieval work.

Eric Marcy says

This is a phenomenally thought provoking book by a Medieval mystic. His insights into pursuing God wholeheartedly above all else and entering a contented cloud of unknowing, being satisfied in the ultimate transcendent mystery and nature of God, are fascinating. Some great thoughts on prayer as well, on pursuing humility and God above all else, and keeping our finite sinful selves from polluting our view of his being. A bit dense, but fascinating stuff.

James says

For me, the title of this substantial book suggestive initially: the cloud of unknowing by Anonymous fascinated me. I found it to be brilliant religious writing of the late 1300's, not the magical story I expected.

After the useful introduction by the translator A. C. Spearing, we delve into the mystical theology of St. Denis. He prepares us for

The Cloud of Unknowing by Anonymous (the English Author) by describing things we can not say about God: that He (gender?) lives is good, is father or son or spirit; whether He exists or not, is God; and, that we cannot know him, and He does not know any other things as they are in themselves. "There is an absolute fissure between God and everything human '(37).

I was ready for the next part of this four-part volume, The Cloud of Unknowing.

This passage fascinates me: "And if you should ever reach this cloud [of unknowing], and dwell and work in it as I am telling you, then, just as this cloud of unknowing is above you, between you and your God, so you will need to put a cloud of unknowing beneath you and everything that was ever created" (191). These operating assumptions about the above and below are inconsistent with my God-centeredness. As I read, the concept of the gap [in being?] became very clear and distinct from my life.

What I do have in common with the English Author is God as Cause.

Satisfied that I learned what I came for in the 74 chapters, I did not read parts 3. The Book of Privy Counselling and 4. An Epistle on Prayer.

Mark Thomas says

Very liberating ideas about accessibility to God. The plan of establishing a "cloud of forgetting" between you and everything that was ever created. Then to work on piercing through a "cloud of unknowing" which separates from truly knowing God as He exists within Himself.

This theology is very appealing and quite extraordinary in coming from an author assumed to be a Catholic monk as the author describes the process as being a personal journey, "free from any intermediaries".

The author leads the reader through a plan toward the contemplative life where one might learn to put the world behind them, their own good works and aspirations out of their memory, and to seek God without any conceptions at all...to be truly free to see God as he is.

It is good to have this work in volume with the The Mystical Theology of Saint Dennis, as the Cloud of Unknowing shares some theological foundation with this work.

This book is very good in encouraging the reader toward a very deep contemplative life with a tremendous potential to experience God in a very profound way. It was placed among Renovare's list of "25 Books Every Christian Should Read" and it well belongs among them.

Haley Hixson says

Solid advice on meditation and contemplation mixed with a healthy dose of fear and shame-based religion. The author intentionally takes focus off of Jesus and towards a bigger picture of God with tips on how to empty your mind of thoughts and sensations in order to be more receptive to a relationship with the divine.

Michael says

Despite having been written in the Middle Ages, no other texts I've read collapse the distance between one's self and whatever one considers to be infinite so well. Using language, they try to strip away the conventions of language to bare experience. Because the period in which they were composed is distant, it is much easier to peel off the Medieval Catholic theology in which they are imbedded and begin to grasp what the words are actually pointing at than it would be if the same were presented in contemporary cultural context. Like a koan or haiku, though, you either get it or don't.

Greg says

very solid and interesting book. I definitely recommend it to anyone with any theological interest. You have to be dedicated and committed to reading it, but it without a doubt pays off and is an interesting and thought provoking read.

Susan Steed says

This is a book written by an anonymous Christian author in English in the 14th Century.

The title comes from an idea that there is a cloud or fog between human language and the transcendence of God. The book is essentially a 'how to' guide for how to meditate or get closer to God. The book allows a much wider interpretation of God, and of concepts like heaven/hell, than I had ever associated with Christianity.

Some people have argued it is closer to Buddhism, and Aldous Huxley used it as an example to show common routes and features of all main religions (it's citation in his book *The Perennial Philosophy* led me to read it).

Whichever religion or non-religion you wish to categorise it as; reading this book, and knowing that somebody wrote these beautiful ideas in the 14th Century made me happy.

Heather Tomlinson says

What a lovely little book. A medieval monk, who is anonymous, shares his wisdom about contemplative prayer / meditation with a novice. It's a great book for anyone wanting greater intimacy with Christ, and seems entirely Biblical to me.

I've written a little blog post summarising some pearls of wisdom from the book:
<https://heathersmag.wordpress.com/201...>

Ariadne Deborah Fassel says

I can well see why this book is a classic of the genre. It is all I was hoping for when I was listening to sermons. This is the meat they always promised but never quite delivered, at least that I realized as a teen. It perfectly echoes the Buddhist teachings I have been learning except for a few differences in terminology. Definitely worth at least one re-read.

M. says

One of the best things to quote back at people who quote Julian of Norwich at you.

Jeremy Manuel says

In reading other books and articles I have often come across the idea of the "Cloud of Unknowing". This concept seemed fascinating to me, as it had always been connected to the idea that we as humans can't fully know God or understand everything about him. From what I could understand the idea of God being behind a "Cloud of Knowing" came from this work by an unknown author who is believed to be an English monk.

Upon reading it, I was a little disappointed. The idea is there and set in the idea of contemplation of God, which I have no trouble with, but his advice on how to achieve that contemplation felt unattainable. I felt this was mainly due to the author's rather dualistic way of looking at the world. In order to achieve contemplation of God we have to forget all our past and even our physical experience in the world to focus all our love and yearning for God in order to pierce this cloud of unknowing. This just feels off to me. If the author is a monk, then this makes sense, as I struggle with the monastic understanding of life and interaction with the spiritual and the material.

Even if this idea fully presented is a bit of a disappointment, I do still like the idea that no matter our learning or our natural intelligence there is no way to fully understand God. While I may not go so far as to say we need to forget all our learning, our past, and our experience to be able to contemplate God, but I do think that the idea that we're not going to understand God fully and completely by reading more books or our learning. We may not even actually experience God or know God through these means. There is truth here, even though I may not agree with all the details the author puts forward.

The other works tend to have a similar flavor as well. They aren't as long as the "Cloud of Unknowing," but are similar in presenting a rather dualistic view of the world and seeking the kind of contemplation that he outlines in "Cloud of Unknowing".

Overall, it's an interesting book. I didn't really agree with it enough to recommend it. The author warns the reader from the outset of his work to only read it if you're truly committed to the contemplative life. This is a fair warning a good glimpse of the kind of writing you're going to be dealing with. Maybe I'm just not the target audience here, but I can still appreciate some of the ideas presented.

Toby says

Not being a terribly contemplative person I am immediately condemned by this book, which the anonymous author is at pains to point out is not to be read by the casual observer or by anyone with a passing interest in the subject. For such a reader, this book is a pearl cast before a swine.

That being said, I did rather enjoy this rather entertaining piece of Fourteenth Century pastoral theology with its injunction that to truly know God we enter a cloud of unknowing before us with a cloud of forgetting behind us. Sounds like dementia to me. But joking aside, this is practical mysticism rather than simply a series of uninterpretable visions, and you really get the impression that this is a master of his art speaking down to the aspiring pupil. I was surprised by the strong emphasis on a physical resurrection and the refusal to accept a literal view of multi-storied universe with heaven "up there" somewhere. Clearly my views on popular medieval views of the afterlife need adjusting somewhat. His view on salvation also seem far more "Lutheran" than I would have expected with a definite emphasis on saving faith rather than religious duties (two words we need in prayer - "sin" and "help!"). Perhaps the author had some sympathies with his contemporary John Wycliffe? Or perhaps, there again, my prejudices about the medievals need addressing.

And yes, reading it does make me long for a closer union with God even whilst acknowledging that my temperament is ill-suited to the life of mysticism.
