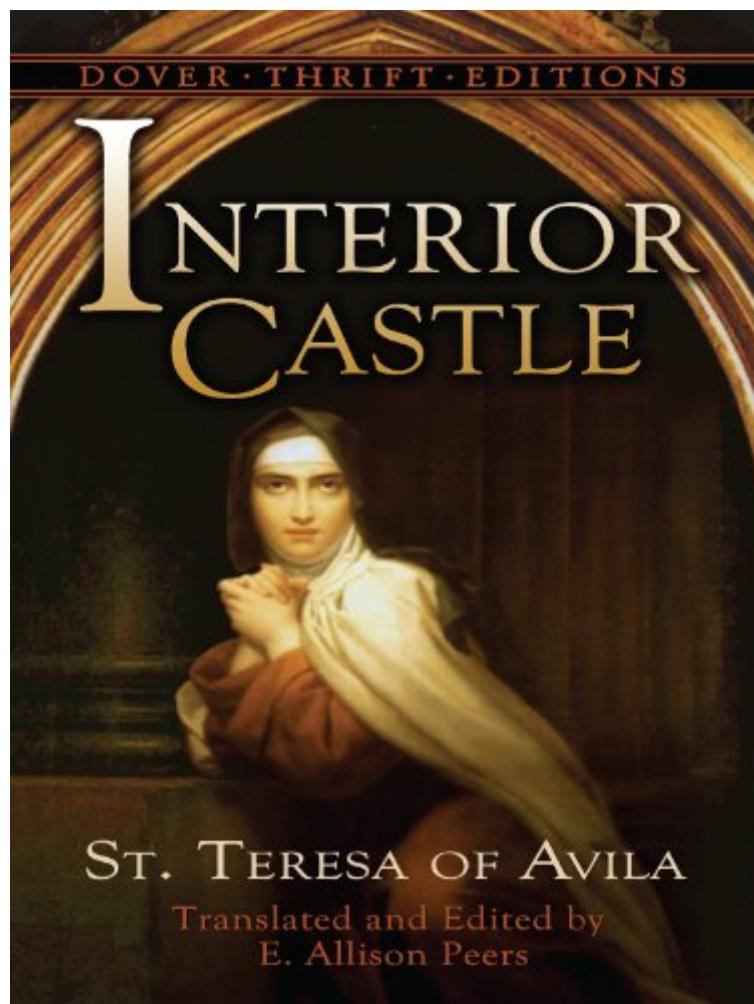


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Interior Castle (Dover Thrift Editions)



Synopsis

While I was beseeching Our Lord today...I began to think of the soul as if it were a castle made of a single diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in Heaven there are many mansions. " St. Teresa of AvilaA masterpiece of spiritual literature, this sixteenth-century work was inspired by a mystical vision that came upon the revered St. Teresa of Avila, one of the most gifted and beloved religious figures in history. St. Teresa's vision was of a luminous crystal castle composed of seven chambers, or "mansions," each representing a different stage in the development of the soul. In her most important and widely read book, St. Teresa describes how, upon entering the castle through prayer and meditation, the human spirit experiences humility, detachment, suffering, and, ultimately, self-knowledge, as it roams from room to room. As the soul progresses further toward the center of the castle, it comes closer to achieving ineffable and perfect peace, and, finally, a divine communion with God. A set of rare and beautiful teachings for people of all faiths desirous of divine guidance, this meticulous modern translation by E. Allison Peers breathes contemporary life into a religious classic.

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Customer Reviews

Teresa of Avila was a Carmelite nun living in the 1500s who wrote the "Interior Castle" (known as "The Mansions" in her native Spain) at the request of her confessor. A mystic who communed intimately with God, she had experienced a vision of "a most beautiful crystal globe, made in the shape of a castle, and containing seven mansions, in the seventh and innermost of which was the King of Glory, in the greatest splendour, illumining and beautifying them all. . . outside the palace limits everything was foul, dark, and infested with toads, vipers and other venomous creatures." This castle became Teresa's metaphor for the soul. "Interior Castle" explores each of the seven mansions in great detail. Her intended audience were the sisters who made up her cloistered religious community, however her insights offer much to the world at large. Teresa wrote reluctantly and felt that she had little to offer that had not already been said. She believed that "Our Lord will be granting me a great favour if a single one of these nuns should find that my words help her to praise Him a little better." She focuses on the beauty of the soul and laments that we spend so much attention on our physical body and so little on the divine spark that is within. Teresa focuses on gaining self-knowledge, but not in the way we in the 21st century interpret that term. For her, self-knowledge means coming to know the soul within. It means understanding our dependence on God and gaining humility by acknowledging that we are nothing without Him. The route to self-knowledge and entry into the interior castle comes through prayer and meditation. As one progresses through the mansions, one comes to know and long for God more and more and to reject the world and its attractions.

Teresa of Avila is one of the more remarkable figures in the history of Christianity. Living in a perilous time, when the Roman Catholic church was suspicious of anything that might develop into Protestant heresies and schisms, she walked a fine line between obedience to the political structure and obedience to God. It is often the case that mystics and spiritual giants are at odds with church structures of the day (this is rather ecumenical, reaching across Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant lines). Teresa lived at time shortly after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain (which occurred in 1492). Her own family was a converso family; hence, there were different dimensions to the wariness of the powers in the culture toward her activities. Being a woman at the time didn't help matters, either, as she defied the stereotypes in several ways, by seeking education and leadership opportunities, all the while being part of the discolced Carmelites, who strive to cultivate humility and poverty. Teresa's life was not an easy one; she suffered physical ailments and political difficulties. However, she was also a sought-after advisor, spiritual leader, and fairly prolific author. Her various

writings made her famous in her own day, but the towering achievement that has lasted over time is without doubt 'Interior Castle'. This text shows a spiritual journey on the inside, developing different walks through aspects of spiritual life and prayer developed in seven stages, or mansions. The life of prayer is the castle, with seven stages of development. The first three stages are pieces that humankind can practice with their own efforts; the final four stages are those which are given from God, and God alone - no human effort can reach these places.

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