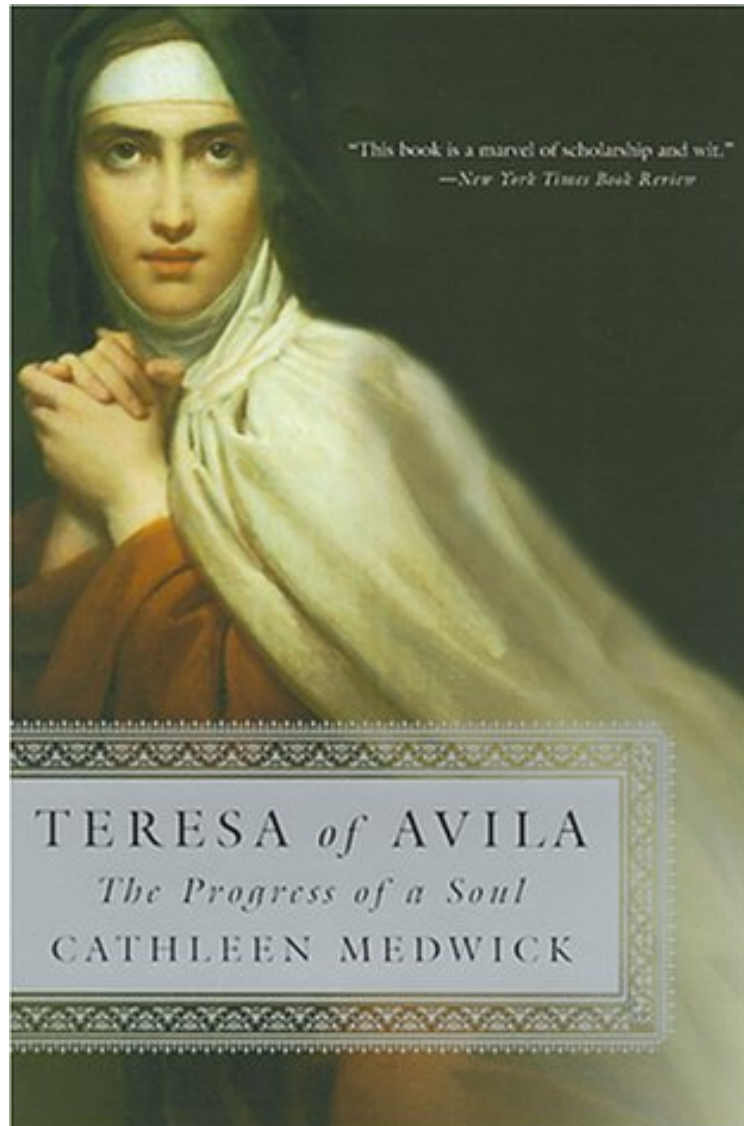


## Teresa of Avila: The Progress of a Soul

Cathleen Medwick

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#888708 in Books Cathleen Medwick 2001-01-16 2001-01-16 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.26 x .65 x 5.511, .76 #File Name: 0385501293304 pages Teresa of Avila The Progress of a Soul | File size: 38.Mb

**Cathleen Medwick : Teresa of Avila: The Progress of a Soul** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Teresa of Avila: The Progress of a Soul:

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Biography of Teresa as historical figure By frumiousBI think that Medwick may have written a book that will manage to completely please very few people who read it. While it talks about the development of her spiritual history as a historical event, it is not a book that focuses on Teresa as mystic visionary. On the other hand, while it contains much historical background and fact, it also elides and skips over much that would have been interesting-- presumably in the interest of making it a quicker read appealing to a broader

audience. While I was fine with the direction Medwick chose (there has been enough said about Teresa as mystic) I felt like some sections were frustratingly incomplete and occasionally the treatment of the background was too superficial. For instance, while a lot was said about her struggles with the church hierarchy, I found that Medwick gave surprisingly few details about the tangle Teresa had with the Inquisition. We know that the threat was hanging over her. We know that she was reported to the Inquisition. We even know the name of her enemy. However, she elides quite a bit of what surely must have been a historically interesting time in the life of Teresa as she actually faced Inquisition scrutiny. In her (successful) effort to make Teresa approachable as person, Medwick at times nearly lifts her out of history. It takes more than interpersonal relationships and anecdote to make a historical biography. I am sorry to begin the review with criticism. I am sorry because, while I see the flaws with the book, I still feel like Teresa of Avila is a loving and obviously well-researched treatment of a subject which is very difficult to approach in a neutral way. Medwick is to be commended for the effort that she put into it, and the way in which she managed to make readable very alien customs from a very different age. The book is very interesting indeed when she places Teresa in the context of Spain and the Spanish culture. She does a very good job of communicating why Teresa is one of the two patron Saints of Spain. Medwick talks in her introduction about how long she has been researching this book and her notion of Teresa as a soul in progress. Both points are interesting. If I had to guess, I would think that many of the gaps were unintentional and that Medwick had so much material that it was edited down at a certain point to try to make it more readable for a popular audience. Too bad, whatever happened. Truthfully, this book is more a three star book, but I am rating it for four stars both because of the fascinating subject matter and because I truly believe that the flaws should not dissuade you from reading the book if you have interest in the Saint. It is still a readable and admirable effort, whatever else.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Significant biographical and historical look at the Saint. By Book Glutton Although his only skims the surface of Saint Teresa's interior life and mystical experiences, this book provides a well-researched biographical look at the saint. Although I have studied the saint time after time over the years, this book revealed many unknown aspects and historical facts of her life. It was an interesting read. It was noticeably more biographical and historical look at Teresa, instead of spiritual. I think that this was good, because it provides sense of balance, from other than pious sources, to add to the composite picture we have of the great woman of Avila.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating woman. By cynthia merrill This biography of St Teresa of Avila brought to life a very fascinating and complex woman who overcame both personal and cultural obstacles to become one of the leading figures of all ages. She is a Doctor of the Church and has been admired for five centuries as a leader in prayer and writing and the reformation of the Carmelite Order. I found the book to be detailed and accurate as well as enjoyable to read and I will recommend it to many people.

A refreshingly modern reconsideration of Saint Teresa (1515-1582), one of the greatest mystics and reformers to emerge within the sixteenth-century Catholic Church, whose writings are a keystone of modern mystical thought. From the very beginning of her life in a convent, following the death of her mother and the marriage of her older sister, it was clear that Teresa's expansive nature, intensity, and energy would not be easily confined. Cathleen Medwick shows us a powerful daughter of the Church and her times who was a very human mass of contradictions: a practical and no-nonsense manager, and yet a flamboyant and intrepid presence who bent the rules of monastic life to accomplish her work--while managing to stay one step ahead of the Inquisition. And she exhibited a very personal brand of spirituality, often experiencing raptures of an unorthodox, arguably erotic, nature that left her frozen in one position for hours, unable to speak. Out of a concern for her soul and her reputation, her superiors insisted that she account for every voice and vision, as well as the sins that might have engendered them, thus giving us the account of her life that is now considered a literary masterpiece. Medwick makes it clear that Teresa considered her major work the reform of the Carmelites, an enterprise requiring all her considerable persuasiveness and her talent for administration. We see her moving about Spain with the assurance (if not the authority) of a man, in spite of debilitating illness, to establish communities of nuns who lived scrupulously devout lives, without luxuries. In an era when women were seldom taken seriously, she even sought and received permission to found two religious houses for men. In this fascinating account Cathleen Medwick reveals Teresa as both more complex and more comprehensible than she has seemed in the past. She illuminates for us the devout and worldly woman behind the centuries-old iconography of the saint. From the Hardcover edition.

.com Saint Teresa (1515-1582) is widely considered one of the greatest mystics and woman reformers of the Renaissance. Author Cathleen Medwick (a former editor at Vanity Fair and Mirabella) clearly invested an enormous amount of research into this impressive biography of a brazen and complicated woman. Although she broke many of the social rules for nuns and even women of her day (for instance, she slept under the stars, traveled at whim, and spoke her mind freely), it was her ecstatic raptures that made her so controversial. "Sometimes she dropped to the floor and was frozen in position for hours, unable to speak," writes Medwick. "At other times she conversed with God directly, a dangerous practice, the Inquisition often having its ear to the door." Readers will find a fascinating character in this fully flawed and charismatic Spanish saint. More delightfully, readers will appreciate Medwick's strong

narration and sense of story that sustains us through Teresa's trials and tribulations--and expertly leads us to her final rapture. --Gail Hudson  
From Publishers Weekly  
A fascination with what she calls the "journey" of the 16th-century Spanish saint sustains Medwick's disappointing biography of Teresa of Avila. The saint was both a profound searcher of the self who succumbed to rapturous interludes and a harried organization freak who struggled to bring about her vision of cloistered community while buffeted by illness and accusations. Medwick, a former editor for Vogue and Vanity Fair, rightly characterizes Teresa as "a daughter of the church," but her laudatory effort to situate her subject in the religious culture of contemporary Spain falls short of its objective. Medwick's Teresa is domesticated and ahistorical, disconnected from the world in which she lived. Medwick eschews analysis for summary, resulting in a rather superficial portrait of the saint. Far too often, also, it is unclear whose voice we are hearing, Medwick's or Teresa's. Unfortunately, the "journey" that Medwick recounts here is far less complex and penetrating than Teresa's actual one, as revealed by her life and writings. (Dec.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Library Journal  
A dozen biographies on Spanish reformer and mystic St. Teresa of Avila (1515-82), were published in English in the 1990s testifying to her enduring attraction. Tracing the indomitable Teresa's own writings, Medwick (an editor at Vogue and House Garden) recounts the Carmelite nun's efforts to establish new convents throughout Spain while dealing with misunderstandings, illnesses, politics, and treachery. Clear writing in a modern idiom marks this well-researched biography, unencumbered by heavy footnoting. The author's long admiration for her subject is evident in her deft handling of the saint's many complexities. A map and chronology would have enhanced the text, and the occasional slip (Teresa would not be "saying Mass") is easily overlooked in the wealth of seamless information provided. This is a good introduction to a fascinating personality by a non-Catholic who leaves others to probe Teresa's spirituality and theology more deeply. Recommended for general collections.  
AAnna M. Donnelly, St. John's Univ., Jamaica, NY  
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