The fundamental stance in this book is that John of the Cross is an outstanding Christian figure: "a psychologist, mystic, artist and someone who allows Christianity to dialogue with other faiths." Primary to understanding any of these aspects of John, though, is understanding him as a theologian and person of prayer, and setting this in the context of his key life experiences. Tyler therefore begins with a brief description of the religious climate of Spain at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and a life of John of the Cross, noting especially those aspects of his experience that will influence his thinking in later years. Tyler also tells of the foundation of the Carmelite Order, and shows how this ethos is worked out in John's life. Various works of John of the Cross are referred to throughout the book, and the literary influences upon him, including that of the Spanish Franciscan, Francisco de Osuna. The different aspects of John as a Christian thinker are explored in relation to his Christian faith and show how these are integrated into his prayer.

This is book is an excellent introduction for anyone interested in understanding the spirituality of John of the Cross or the Carmelite way. It is scholarly but not academic in style, with a detailed bibliography to encourage further study.

Maureen CSF