



Christian Mysticism: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Approaches

Louise Nelstrop

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This book introduces students to Christian mysticism and modern critical responses to it. Christianity has a rich tradition of mystical theology that first emerged in the writings of the early church fathers, and flourished during the Middle Ages. Today Christian mysticism is increasingly recognised as an important Christian heritage relevant to today's spiritual seekers.

The book sets out to provide students and other interested readers with access to the main theoretical approaches to Christian mysticism – including those propounded by William James, Steven Katz, Bernard McGinn, Michael Sells, Denys Turner and Caroline Walker-Bynum. It also explores postmodern re-readings of Christian mysticism by authors such as Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Marion and Jean-François Lyotard. The book first introduces students to the main themes that underpin Christian mysticism. It then reflects on how modern critics have understood each of them, demonstrating that stark delineation between the different theoretical approaches eventually collapses under the weight of the complex interaction between experience and knowledge that lies at the heart of Christian mysticism. In doing so, the book presents a deliberate challenge to a strictly perennialist reading of Christian mysticism.

Anyone even remotely familiar with Christian mysticism will know that renewed interest in Christian mystical writers has created a huge array of scholarship with which students of mysticism need to familiarise themselves. This book outlines the various modern theoretical approaches in a manner easily accessible to a reader with little or no previous knowledge of this area, and offers a philosophical/theological introduction to Christian mystical writers beyond the patristic period important for the Latin Western Tradition.

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