Surveys & Introductory Works

1. Christian Spirituality: Surveys
2. Christian Spirituality: Reference Works
4. William James & Classic Studies of Mysticism
5. Classic Texts: Anthologies & Series

1. CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY: SURVEYS

William Harmless, *Mystics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Mystics are those who claim to have experienced God. This book introduces readers to the scholarly study of mysticism, exploring both mystics’ extraordinary lives and their no-less-extraordinary writings. The heart of the book is a set of case-studies of Christian mystics: Thomas Merton, Bernard of Clairvaux, Hildegard of Bingen, Bonaventure, Meister Eckhart, and Evagrius Ponticus. This case-study approach brings things down to earth, restoring mystics to their historical context, and helps bring them alive and let them speak with unexpected immediacy. It also highlights the pungent diversity of mystical experiences and mystical theologies. Later chapters step beyond Christianity to explore mystical elements within Islam and Buddhism. These include studies of the Sufi poet, Rumi, and the brilliant Japanese Zen master, Dōgen. The book also introduces readers to broader theoretical issues, opening with an examination and critique of William James, whose *Varieties of Religious Experience* set the terms and trajectory of modern research on mysticism, and concluding with a synthesis that helps readers follow a century-long scholarly conversation on mysticism. Finally it offers a unique, multi-sided optic for understanding mystics, their religious communities and their writings. Geared to a broad audience.

spirituality of each of the world religions; each volume has essays by leading scholars. The 3 volumes on Christian Spirituality are:


Philip Sheldrake, ed., *Traditions of Christian Spirituality* (Orbis Books, 1998- ). A recent series focused on key movements in Christian spirituality. The authors are well-known experts in their areas. These are geared to a popular audience and are meant as a first glimpse. The volumes to date are:


### 2. CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY: REFERENCE WORKS

Marcel Viller, F. Callavera, J. de Guibert, eds., *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité: Asce et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, 17 volumes (Paris: Beauchesne, 1932-1991). One of the great scholarly achievements of the 20th century. This massive study, some 60 years in the making, examines every dimension of Christian spirituality, with articles on all major figures, movements, and themes, and the articles are done by the leading scholars. Much of this encyclopedia has been done since the 1970s, and so the scholarship is generally up-to-date—but you need to be able to read French.

3. MYSTICISM: THEORETICAL ISSUES & DISPUTED QUESTIONS

The broader theoretical literature on mysticism is vast. What follows is a modest selection of works on a variety of topics. A good entry point into this sometimes complex literature is via the essay collections edited by Steven Katz. Each volume offers contributions by major scholars on specific topics, and the perspectives address questions of mysticism across the breadth of the world’s religions: *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); *Mysticism and Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983) and *Mysticism and Sacred Scriptures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Other important studies include:


4. WILLIAM JAMES & CLASSIC STUDIES OF MYSTICISM


Other classics, while sometime deficient in terms of historical scholarship on which they depend or in terms of aspects of their theoretical apparatus, still have much of value. Here are a handful of other classic studies:


Frederick Von Hugel (1858-1934), *The Mystical Element of Religion: As Studied by Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends*, ed. Michael Downey (New York: Crossroad, 1999). First published in 1908, this sprawling, diffuse, but brilliant study (some 900 pages) was pivotal in sparking the modern study of mysticism.


5. CLASSIC TEXTS: ANTHOLOGIES & SERIES

Bernard McGinn, ed., *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Modern Library, 2007). An extraordinarily valuable selection of mystical texts that uses a fresh new organizational pattern, one that rethinks traditional categories. For example, McGinn collects texts around important, but often overlooked categories: e.g. the way mystics interpret scripture; the role that liturgy and sacraments form a nexus for mystical texts; the central role of theology within the mystical; the issue of mysticism and heresy. An important contribution in itself. Also McGinn does many of the translations himself, and these are of high quality.


