

Mystics of the Past Who are Influencing Today's Church

Meister Eckhart: 1260-1327

- ✚ Dominican Monk, recognized as the Father of German Mysticism

Julian of Norwich: 1342-1423

- ✚ English mystic who referred to Jesus as a mother figure
- ✚ "God also showed that sin would be no shame but an honor to man, for just as for every sin there is an answering pain in reality, so for every sin bliss is given to the same soul." –Julian
- ✚ "She seems to mean by this that sins are disguised virtues, for 'in heaven what sin typifies is turned into a thing of honor.'"
- ✚ "For in man is God, and God is in all. And I hope by the grace of God he that beholdeth it thus shall be truly taught and mightily comforted..." JoN
<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/julianofnorwich.htm>

St. Ignatius Loyola: 1491-1556

- ✚ St. Ignatius founded the Catholic order of the Jesuits, and developed a detailed program of mystical, spiritual exercises to promote spiritual discernment. These contemplative exercises have now been adopted by the modern day, Protestant Church.

St. Teresa of Avila: 1515-1582

- ✚ At age 20 or 21, Teresa secretly left home to join a Carmelite Monastery
- ✚ Through Contemplative Prayer and Meditation exercises, Teresa commonly saw visions, heard audible voices, entered into state of ecstasy or rapture, levitated, fell into spontaneous trances and had out-of-body experiences. During one out-of-

body experience, her spirit left her body for 4 days, and she had been thought to be dead. They had already poured wax over her eyelids in preparation for burial.

- ✚ Teresa believed in self-deprivation, and a practice of whipping herself in an effort to be more holy.
- ✚ She wrote a number of books on mysticism, including The Interior Castle. This book compared the seven stages you go through in reaching union with "God", to seven rooms in a castle. The stages were called: Humility, Practice of Prayer, Meditation, Quiet, Illumination, Dark Night, and King of Glory (or Union with the Divine), and correlate with the Seven Chakras found in Yoga and Hinduism.
- ✚ Teresa often found her experience to be frightening and uncontrollable, and she was accused by many contemporaries of being under Satanic power.

St. John of the Cross: 1542-1591

- ✚ St. John was a Carmelite Monk who worked in conjunction with St. Teresa to reform the Monasteries. He was declared to be the "Doctor of Mystical Theology" by the Catholic Church.
- ✚ St. John believed that being charitable makes one a Christian
- ✚ He believed our goal should be union with "God"
- ✚ John was highly devoted to Mary, as well as St. Joseph
- ✚ He built upon a composite of beliefs from Catholicism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Earth-based religions

Brother Lawrence: 1611-1691

- ✚ Brother Lawrence was French, and belonged to the Carmelite Order
- ✚ He wrote The Practice of the Presence of God, which involves a meditative state similar to that found in Zen Buddhism
- ✚ He tried to keep his mind empty of distraction and focused on "God" at all times. When his mind strayed, he claimed to be reminded by "God" and he would "sing and dance violently like

a mad man" (The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence, translated by John Delaney, Image Books, 1977, p. 34.)

- ✚ He believed that to converse properly with "God", "the heart must be empty of all other things."

Madam Guyon: 1647-1717

- ✚ She believed that God is everywhere and in all things – Pantheism
- ✚ She taught "Quietism" – We reach union with "God" upon reaching a "passive state". Our beings merge with "God's" being through a mindless, meditative state where we meet the Christ within ourselves.
- ✚ "May I hasten to say that the kind of prayer I am speaking of is not a prayer that comes from your mind. It is a prayer that begins in the heart....Prayer that comes out of the heart is not interrupted by thinking!" –Madam Guyon, Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ, p. 4

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: 1881-1955

- ✚ He was a Pantheist – God is all and in all
- ✚ He believed that all religions must join together to bring about a spiritual renovation of the earth.

Thomas Merton: 1915-1968

- ✚ Merton is given credit for bringing mysticism and contemplative prayer out of the monasteries and into mainstream society. "Thomas Merton was perhaps the greatest popularizer of interspirituality. He opened the door for Christians to explore other traditions, notably Taoism (Chinese witchcraft), Hinduism and Buddhism." (Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World's Religions – Wayne Teasdale)
- ✚ Merton merged Zen Buddhism, Hindu Vedanta, Yoga, and Taoism with Christianity.

- ✚ Merton – “I see no contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity...I intend to become as good a Buddhist as I can.” (David Steindl-Rast, “Recollection of Thomas Merton’s Last Days in the West” , Monastic Studies, 7:10, 1969)
- ✚ In an interview, New Ager Matthew Fox quoted Merton – “Isn’t it a pity that people are going into LSD to have spiritual experiences, when we have a tradition in the church [Contemplative Prayer] which no one knows anything about?”