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Mysticism Before Mysticism

TEACHING CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM
AS A HISTORIAN OF RELIGION

April DeConick

Where does mysticism begin in the Christian tradition? Traditionally it has been conceived to begin in the fifth century with (Pseudo-)Dionysius the Areopagite who taught the *apophatic* way, where the soul escapes the created order to unite with the unknowable God (Louth 1981, 159). So conventional courses in Christian mysticism and the books on which they are based foster the idea that Christian mysticism is a relatively late Platonic and philosophical product of patristic theology. The first generations of Christianity and their foundational memories and narratives are casually brushed aside as "background" to a mysticism arising later, from Christianity's fusion with neo-Platonism (Louth 1981; Cohn-Sherbock and Cohn-Sherbock 1994).¹

My pedagogical goal is to challenge this understanding of Christian mysticism by tracing the growth of mysticism in early Christianity as a distinctive expression of an already developed tradition of Jewish mysticism. I have named the course appropriately, "Mysticism Before Mysticism." It is a seminar for upper-class undergraduates and graduate students in Religious Studies at Rice University. It meets once a week for fifteen weeks in three-hour sessions.

The seminar progresses diachronically and dialogically, exploring mysticism in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity, a period prior to the Kabbalah and Dionysius the Areopagite. Materials covered include Jewish and Christian scriptures; pseudepigrapha; Dead Sea Scrolls; and Gnostic, Hermetic, Patristic, neo-Platonic, and Hekhalot literature. Ancient astrological and magical traditions are also discussed.

Primary and secondary readings are assigned for each session. Each week, one student is responsible for leading the discussion by covering the primary materials in review. The other students are responsible for providing an oral overview of one book or set of articles from the required readings for that

among the members of the seminar about the history of Christianity and its relationship to Jewish, Egyptian, and Greek expressions of

A Contextual-Comparative Approach

The traditional definition of *mysticism* as it is applied to Christianity (and other religious traditions!) was fashioned from medieval monastic sources. Mysticism within the Christian tradition was identified with the spiritual life of the monk and nun who worked to purify their souls of darkness. Eventually, they undergo a spiritual death and upward journey to unite with a god who is described as "love" (cf. Underhill 1911; Egan 1991, xvi-xxv). This framing of the subject has resulted in privileging the monastic devotional experiences and practices, at the expense of other forms of mysticism.

Consequently, the problem of definition does not just involve semantics. It also involves comparativism and the distortion of history that can result when the point of comparison is not selected carefully. When historians of Christianity developed the language of mysticism, it was done with the medieval Christian monastic descriptions of immediate and direct contact with the divine as the yardstick. So mysticism became analogous to the experience of the monastic devotee. If this later developed concept becomes the point of comparison for the earlier period, then the earlier period becomes "background" with no mysticism to be found within it. This approach values and privileges the Christian monastic experience while failing to recognize the existence of mysticism in the earlier period.

So the problem of definition is not simply an academic exercise that I discuss with my students to launch my course. It is a question with profound implications, because the definitions we impose on our subject ultimately determine what we see and what we take away with us from that experience. If our definition of Christian mysticism is what medieval Christian mystics relate, involving a *unio mystica*, then Paul was not a mystic, nor was Jesus or any of Jesus's Jewish contemporaries. Christian mysticism, in fact, would begin with (Pseudo-)Dionysius the Areopagite, as the historical introductions to Christian mysticism suggest. The same problem can be tracked in the secondary literature about Jewish mysticism, which is conventionally defined from the point of view of the later Kabbalah, so that in the earlier centuries, Judaism is devoid of mysticism.

Yet, from the beginning, Christianity understood itself as a "revealed" religion, as a religion that was not only disclosed through direct and immediate divine-to-human communication, but whose dogma reveals to humans the hidden God and his will. With this self-identity, mysticism can scarcely be far away. Although it is true that a particular strand of Christianity fused with neo-Platonism produced the type of mysticism taught and practiced by

(Pseudo)-Dionysius, it is also true that long before (Pseudo)-Dionysius lived, there was a rich tradition of Christian mysticism already in place, a mysticism that grew out of even older Jewish mystical traditions as I have described elsewhere.² It was this Christian brand of early Jewish mysticism that eventually yielded a pliable branch for a neo-Platonic graft to take hold, such as it did in the teachings of (Pseudo)-Dionysius.

So what are we to do? I suggest a three-fold solution. By making these three shifts in approach, the discussion will no longer privilege the later monastic sacred experiences and route to the divine, but it will open up the exploration so that the texts of the early Christian period, rather than the conventional definition, will be allowed to circumscribe the specifics of the phenomenon.

First, I recommend beginning by working from a flexible understanding of mysticism that transcends cultural and historical relativism, such as *mysticism is the solicitation and participation in a direct immediate experience of the ultimate reality*. I would distinguish mysticism from *the mystical experience itself, which is the direct immediate experience of the ultimate reality solicited or not*. Working with this type of definition as a starting point has the advantage of controlling the problem of privileging certain religious traditions and their practices over others.

Second, to avoid the imposition of later developed views of mysticism on the earlier period, I suggest that we shift our point of comparison to the study of traditions closest to the early Christian texts, to move the discussion of mysticism to the materials that were produced by the Jews and Christians during the formative years of their religions. Christianity in this period is a form of Judaism that is beginning to self-identify as an entity distinct from Judaism. Even more complicated is the fact that Judaism is in its own process of self-definition in this same period. What we have is a situation in which two competing religions are emerging simultaneously, while claiming allegiance to a common scripture and history. Although Christianity eventually self-identifies as a distinct religion, its scripture, ideologies, and practices remain connected to its sibling through its common scripture and history. So to speak about early Christian mysticism means that it is impossible to talk about it without reference to Jewish traditions. Jewish mysticism and Christian mysticism are two sides of a single coin.

I have found that to study early Christian mysticism successfully, the Christian story needs to be integrated with the Jewish story. It is most enlightening when the course includes the study of Jewish and Christian materials simultaneously so that the one informs the other. This approach will not only identify certain characteristics of early mysticism held in common by the Jews and Christians, but it will also allow the students to identify those characteristics that are unique to Christian mysticism. Common features include a priestly cosmology based on foundational Jewish texts, particularly but not exclusively

centerpiece of this cosmology is the belief that God has a "body," called the "Glory" or *Kavod* of YHWH that could be viewed. The celestial realm was perceived to be the heavenly equivalent of the Jerusalem temple (and vice versa). The heavens themselves are *hekhalot*, shrine rooms or sanctuaries within the temple. The highest heaven is the holy of holies where the Glory resides, seated on the *merkavah*, the throne-chariot. Certain communities of Jews and Christians thought that it was possible for "prepared" humans to enter these sacred zones even before their deaths in order to participate in heavenly worship or to glance upon the Glory. This process often resulted in their transformation, for instance, when they would become "glorified," "exalted," or "angelic." These journeys were often solicited through "ritual" speech, hymning, asceticism, dream incubation, or participation in special liturgies.

In terms of distinct features of early Christian mysticism, the Glory is identified with Jesus Christ.⁴ Because of this, the mysticism of early Christianity is strikingly Christocentric. It focuses on the "revelation of Jesus Christ," which is understood to be the disclosure of the mystery that has been hidden with God for the ages. This mystery is Jesus Christ as the Power and the Glory of God. The other unique feature of early Christian mysticism is the belief that *all* Christians experience this revelation. The experience was made "democratic" through a series of initiation and communal rituals, beginning with baptism when the Christ indwelt the initiate as the Spirit. The Christ/Spirit is regularly experienced in the life of the community and the other sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, where Jesus Christ is consumed by the faithful and thus taken directly into their bodies. This revelation of Jesus Christ results in *(apo)theosis*, where the believer morphs into Christ as God's image and (eventually) achieves the "lot" of immortality.

Third, I use a second point of comparison, carefully chosen, to provide further context and dialogical insight: contemporaneous non-Jewish and non-Christian traditions within the same cultural and historical locations, such as Greek mystery religions and neo-Platonic traditions. This comparative group helps us distinguish unique features of Jewish and Christian mysticism. At the same time, studying this data set allows us to see how the Greek ideas and practices become integrated into the Christian mystical tradition. From this, the integration can be mapped.

The Social Dynamic

Mysticism even within the "same" religious tradition may look very different in different social contexts. For example, the liturgies and mystical practices put into place by the Dead Sea Jews who "imaginatively" entered the heavenly tabernacle as a community of "angels" through the verbalization of Sabbath liturgies are quite distinct from the shamanistic practices of the Hekhalot Jews

who individually descended to the chariot. The Gnostic Christian who rehearsed the names of the archons and underwent multiple baptisms and anointings in order to ascend out of this universe is doing something different from the Catholic Christian who undergoes a one-time initiatory baptism for his or her redemption. Even though all these groups reference similar themes (e.g., temple, glorification, gods of light, celestial beings, visions, ascents, angelification, spirit possession) and practices (e.g., water and anointing rituals, scriptural study, prayers, liturgies, incantations, hymning), the way in which these themes and practices emerge and develop within specific social contexts are strikingly different and idiosyncratic. When examining the historical development of mysticism, the social dimension and group dynamics cannot be overemphasized.

This appears to me to be a straightforward historical observation that does not require extensive philosophical discussion. So I am consistently asking my students to be aware of geographical, chronological, social, and cultural contexts of the historical and literary data and to map these as the course unfolds. I probe my students to consider the history of a specific group and to try to reconstruct group dynamics whenever possible. How do particular social dynamics affect the development of mysticism within that context? Who are the author's dialogue partners? What do we discover when we read the text against the grain?

In this way, the course challenges students to think not only in dialogical terms, but it asks students to read texts as a repository of a group's memory of the growth of its traditions. Students are made aware of the interactive and responsive nature of religious traditions. As they study different texts and the groups that created them, they begin to see that hermeneutics shift, meanings flip, and ideas invert as memories and traditions are passed along generationally and become part of a "new" group's cognitive reservoir.⁵

I have found that mysticism in the early Christian period develops a common "core." It is Christocentric, understanding the goal to be a vision of Christ or an experience of possession where Christ's spirit enters the person and "abides" within. Christ is perceived to be the Glory of God, the manifestation of the father God. This is the hidden secret of the eternal ages. The Christian mystical praxis involves water, oil, and eating rituals, as well as hymning, prayers, incantations, studying scriptures, and participating in liturgies. I cannot emphasize enough how central the Temple is to the mysticism that the early Christians develop. They understand their invasion of the celestial realms to be the journey of a priest into the sacred rooms of the Temple.

Clearly the mysticism that the early Christians develop is part of a coherent conversation that engages Judaism and certain Egyptian and Hellenistic traditions from the same period. Whether this identifiable "core" is comparable across a wider religious and chronological data set is beyond the scope of this

that transcends culture, is a question that requires a more thorough philosophical discussion, should this become one of the goals of the course.

Empathic Reading

The contextual-comparative approach means that the students ought to be made aware of the necessity placed on historians to consciously distance ourselves from *etic* definitions. *Etic* definitions are those that we impose on our subject. Because they are secondary and can grossly distort the subject by misunderstanding and misrepresenting it, we must continually evaluate those *etic* definitions that do inform our thinking. Whenever possible, students ought to read the ancient texts on their own grounds and dialogically, that is, in relation to each other. They should attempt to assume the worldview of the ancient Jew and Christian, and read out the ancient *emic* understandings of the mystical whenever possible. What do the ancient people tell us about their own framings of the mystical?

Such an approach means that I am asking students to no longer be complete strangers to the old textual traditions, but to enter into them, to assume them for a moment, and to look at the world through the author's eyes. This is a precarious position for the historian, to be neither an insider nor an outsider, but to adopt a liminal view as an interloper. It is the position that emerges from empathy, rather than sympathy or antipathy. This position, however, should not be perceived as one that collapses critical distance. The historian should never be an apologist. Nevertheless, it is necessary to enter the "mind" of the authors in order to appreciate and understand what these texts have to say about the subject. To accomplish this successfully, students will need to be trained in ancient worldviews and belief systems as different texts are assigned and discussed.

What the student discovers from empathic reading is that the ancient Christians do not favor the word *mysticism* and its cognates, which derive from the Greek word *myeō*, "to be initiated." Although they do sometimes speak of the revelation of "mysteries" or "divine secrets" (*mystēria*), the first Christians call their direct immediate pre-mortem experiences of God "apocalypses" (*apocalypseis*) or "revelations." They write about these revelations as "rapture" events as well as "solicited" events for which they prepare through a prescribed praxis. They speak of the events as waking visions, dreams, trances, and auditions, conceiving of them as events that often involved spirit possession and ascent journeys. The development of the sacraments (*mystēria*), baptism, and the Eucharist resulted in the democratization of the mystical. They were the moments in the life of the faithful when Christ and/or the Spirit were encountered and embodied, and (progressive) transfiguration resulted. But in this early period, the transfiguration is not described by them in terms of the *unio mystica* of

medieval mysticism. Rather it is perceived to be a transformative event, which, for example, delivered heavenly knowledge, or resulted in membership in the angelic choir, or enthronement, or a shining glorified body. In this way, the mystic's sacred transformation reflects the hopes and promises of the Eschaton, the conventional moment of bodily transfiguration and paradisaical rewards. This is a Jewish story, not the Platonic one in which the hope was very different: the reunification of the immortal soul with the One, the Good.

What about Religious Experience?

As historians who study mysticism, we are plagued with the problem of religious experience. Put simply, in-and-of-itself religious experience cannot be studied from a historical-critical perspective. This problem has led to a disturbing undercurrent in our discussions, an undercurrent that hinders our investigation. Scholars have become divided over whether texts that relate stories of mystical experiences and practices assume genuine mystical experiences and practices or not. If not, what do they represent? Creative imagination? Hallucination? Trickery? Exegetical gymnastics?

It is unfortunate that scholars have structured their analyses along these lines. By doing so, the veracity of religious experience (something that cannot be empirically observed or described) has overwhelmed and impeded our otherwise critical conversation. I imagine that this argument was originally generated to offer a rational explanation for the irrational. Because the supernatural does not exist in modernity, some scholars tried to account for the ancient descriptions of mystical experience in rational ways, as hallucinations or exegetical enterprise. But this move to dismiss the "supernatural" conversation by rationalizing it has not increased our knowledge of ancient mysticism, although it does speak to modern perceptions that mysticism cannot exist.

The problem of modern mysticism—that the mystical experience cannot exist—appears to me to factor into the philosophical discussions and the contemporary constructivist approaches of Steven Katz (1978) and Wayne Proudfoot (1985) who take issue with the classical view that there is some pure ineffable experience that is described in a variety of fashions by a variety of mystics. Katz argues that there is no pure unmediated experiences because all our experiences are processed and shaped by our ways of knowing, and these are culturally derivative and dependent. Even similarly described experiences may reflect very different experiences. Proudfoot argues that the prevailing religious traditions create and simultaneously interpret the religious experiences of the mystics. The ineffable, he says, cannot be communicated (1985, 126). I wonder about these approaches. Should the different cultural manifestations of mysticism be used to challenge the veracity of the mystical experi-

does not recognize the veracity of mystical experience due to its connection to the supernatural. Although we might be able to plainly see that mysticism looks the same and different across cultures and times, and that all experiences are processed or perceived, it is quite another to conclude from this that pure mystical experience does not exist or cannot be communicated.

My historical solution to the problem is simple. It involves two straightforward observations. First, because the ancient people we are studying had a profound belief in the reality of the supernatural, we will learn more about their understandings of mysticism if we allow the supernatural to continue to exist for them. In other words, whether or not any of their claims to religious experience represent genuine encounters with God is a discussion that misses the historical-critical point. Our prime observation ought to concern the perceptions of the ancient people themselves, something that we can empirically recover from the literature.

The ancient people who read the scriptures and para-biblical texts that described the mystical journeys and experiences of the ancestors and heroes believed that these texts reported actual experiences with God. The same can be said about those who, such as Paul or John of Patmos or Hermas, wrote about their mystical experiences. The scriptures and para-biblical texts served as templates for their own mystical hopes, dreams, and practices. Study of the texts and their exegesis became integral to the development of their mystical practices. The images in these texts deeply affected the way in which the early Christians described and interpreted their own experiences.

This takes us to my second observation that a distinction ought to be made between "religious experience" and "religiously interpreted experience" (Segal 2006, 27–40). The former cannot be empirically known or observed. The latter can. I can never know whether or not John of Patmos saw a glorious angel, one like a son of man, with hair white as wool and eyes like fire, and if he did, whether or not Daniel 7 influenced his vision (Revelation 1:12–16). What I can discuss, however, is how and why John of Patmos interpreted his experience (whatever it may have been) to be an experience with great religious significance, even comparable to the vision of Daniel related in the scripture. I can discuss how this frame served John's purposes and what it might tell me about John's religious location, ideology, and expectations.

When the problem of religious experience is reframed in terms of "religiously interpreted experience," the door swings open for critical analysis, especially given the fact that it is the religious community that controls the hermeneutical process rather than the individual. It is the community that ultimately decides whether an individual's experience represents an "authentic" mystical encounter or not. If so, the community will shape the retelling of the experience to meet its criteria for authenticity and religious legitimacy. If not, the experience is cast as a demonic encounter or one with no religious relevance.

Course Delivery and Syllabus

Given the way in which I have schematized the subject, I have found that the most successful approach is the adoption of a chronological approach. This allows the Jewish, Christian, and other ancient religious materials to overlap in terms of content delivery and hermeneutic. This provides an optimal comparative lens as well as historical contextualization and localization. Jewish and Christian forms of mysticism can be discussed in relationship to each other and successfully compared with other contemporaneous religious traditions. The following syllabus represents a generic syllabus along with some suggestions for readings. Although the primary readings are stable, the secondary readings are more flexible and should be altered to fit the goals of the particular course. I include in the syllabus those secondary readings that I consider essential or classic, references that students will come across consistently in the scholarly discussions of the subject.

Christian mysticism can be studied from a historical-critical perspective and successfully taught from the point of view of the historian of religion. It is a rich and rewarding field, and an emerging field at that. Reframing the definition of mysticism with an eye toward the *emic*, shifting the point of comparison to literature contemporaneous with the early Christian, and reading empathically with a social orientation reveals a rich tradition of Christian mysticism in the foundational period. This mysticism reflects the Jewish story, not the Greek one. It becomes the ground for Platonic ideas about a union with the One to take root and develop later into the more familiar monastic expression of Christian mysticism. But that is a story for another class.

Syllabus

Week 1: What Is Mysticism?

- 1.1 Primary literature: Genesis 1-3; Exodus 24 and 33; Ezekiel 1, 8, 10, and 40-48; Isaiah 6; Daniel 7; 1 Chronicles 28:18.
- 1.2 Secondary literature: DeConick (2006), 1-24; Segal (2006), 27-40; Rowland, Gibbons, and Dobroruka (2006), 41-56; Sanders (2006), 57-79.

Week 2: Early Jewish Pseudepigrapha

- 2.1 Primary literature: Charlesworth (1983-1985); 1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, Ezekiel the Tragedian, Ascension of Isaiah, Joseph and Aseneth, Life of Adam and Eve, History of the Rechabites, Apocalypse of Abraham, Apocalypse of Adam, Testament of Levi, Apocalypse of Zephaniah, 3 Baruch

- 2.2 Secondary literature: Boustani and Reed (2004); Davila (2006), 105-126; Dean-Otting (1984); Flannery-Dailey (2006), 231-248; Fossum (1999), 348-352; Halperin (1988a), 47-67; Himmelfarb (1993); Morray-Jones (1992), 1-31; Orlov (2007); Rowland (1979), 145-150, and (1982); Segal (1980), 1333-1394; Stone (1976), 414-451.

Week 3: Philo of Alexandria

- 3.1 Primary literature: Winston (1981); *On the Contemplative Life*, the *Giants*, and "selections" from Philo.
- 3.2 Secondary Literature: Borgen (1997); Chadwick (1966), 286-307; Deutsch (2006), 287-312; Goodenough (1969); Smith (1968), 315-326; Winston (1981), 1-37, and (1982), 15-39.

Week 4: Hermetic Literature, Magic, and Astrology

- 4.1 Primary literature: Copenhaver (1992), *Corpus Hermeticum*, Asclepius; Scott (1993), *Extracts of Stobaeus*; Robinson (1988), *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, *Prayer of Thanksgiving*, *Asclepius fragment*; Meyer and Smith (1994); Salaman et al. (2000), *The Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius*; Betz (1992).
- 4.2 Secondary literature: Barton (1994); Bohak (2008); Van den Broek and Van Heertum (2000); Van den Broek and Hanegraaff (1998); Fowden (1986); Segal (1981), 349-375; Von Stuckrad (2000a) and (2000b), 1-40; Trachtenberg (1974).

Week 5: Dead Sea Scrolls

- 5.1 Primary literature: García Martínez (1994).
- 5.2 Secondary literature: Davila (2000), 249-264; Dimant (1996), 93-103; Dimant and Strugnell (1990), 331-348; Elior (2006), 83-104; Fletcher-Louis (2002); Morray-Jones (2006), 145-178; Newsom (1985), 1-83; Popovic (2007); Schiffman (1982), 14-47; Smith (1990); Schäfer (2006), 37-66; Strugnell (1960), 318-345; Wolfson (1994a), 185-202, and (2003), 177-215.

Week 6: Synoptic Gospels, Acts, Johannine Literature, Thomasine literature

- 6.1 Primary literature: Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts, John, 1 and 2 John; Robinson (1988), *Gospel of Thomas*, *Dialogue of the Savior*, *Book of Thomas the Contender*; Elliott (1993), *Acts of Thomas*.
- 6.2 Secondary literature: Barker (1995a) and (1995b), 31-67; Daniélou (1962); DeConick (1996, 2005, 2011); Fletcher-Louis (1997); Fossum (1995); Hurtado (2000), 183-205; Johnson (1998); Kanagaraj (1998); Odeberg (1974); Rowland and Morray-Jones (2009); Smith (1981), 403-429.

Week 7: Pauline and Deutro-Pauline Literature

- 7.1 Primary literature: Paul's letters, Colossians, and Ephesians.
 7.2 Secondary literature: Ashton (2000); Bowker (1971), 157–173; Francis (1975), 163–195; Gieschen (1998); Morray-Jones (1993a), 177–217, and (1993b), 265–292; Segal (1990), 34–71; Schäfer (1984), 19–35; Schweitzer (1998); Tabor (1986).

Week 8: Hebrews, Revelation, Shepherd of Hermas, Montanists

- 8.1 Primary literature: Hebrews, Revelation, Shepherd of Hermas
 8.2 Secondary literature: Afzael (2006), 195–210, and (2008); Aune (1983); Barker (2007); Bauckham (1993); Draper (1983), 113–147; Gieschen (2003), 115–158, and (2006), 341–354; Rowland (1980), 1–11; Tabbernee (2007).

Week 9: The Mystery Religions

- 9.1 Primary Literature: Grant (1953); Meyer (1987).
 9.2 Secondary Literature: Beck (2006); Burkert (1987); Kerényi (1976); Mylonas (1969); Reitzenstein (1978); Ulansey (1989); Witt (1971).

Week 10: Second and Early Third Century Gnostics

- 10.1 Primary literature: Robinson (1988), Valentinian (Prayer of the Apostle Paul, Gospel of Truth, Treatise on the Resurrection, Tripartite Tractate, Gospel of Philip, 1 Apocalypse of James, Exegesis on the Soul, Interpretation of Knowledge, A Valentinian Exposition, Gospel of Mary), and Sethian (Apocryphon of John, Hypostasis of the Archons, Gospel of the Egyptians, Apocalypse of Adam, Three Steles of Seth, Zostrianos, Melchizedek, Thought of Norea, Marsanes, Allogenes, Hypsiphron, Trimorphic Protennoia). DeConick (2007), translation of the Gospel of the Judas.
 10.2 Secondary literature: DeConick (2007), 26–46, (2001a), 225–261, and (2003), 307–342; Deutsch (1995, 1999); Fossum (1985); Gruenwald (1988); Mastrocinque (2005); Morray-Jones (2002), 138–172; Quispel (1980), 1–13, and (1992), 1–19; Stroumsa (1996), 46–62; Wolfson (2007), 234–271.

Week 11: Alexandrian Fathers: Clement and Origen

- 11.1 Primary literature: *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, writings of Clement of Alexandria and Origen
 11.2 Secondary literature: Barker (2003); Bucur (2006), 251–268; Chadwick (1954), 15–39; Christman (2005); Dillon (1996); Halperin (1981), 261–275; Lilla (1971); Roberts (1979); Stroumsa (1996),

Week 12: Plotinus and Neo-Platonism

- 12.1 Primary literature: Enneads
 12.2 Secondary Literature: Bussanich (1988), (1994), 5300–5330, and (1997), 339–365; Dillon (1986), 55–70, and (2002), 278–295; Dodds (1986), 230–249; Jonas (1969), 315–329; Kenney (1997), 315–337; Meijer (1992), 294–333; Rist (1964); Majercik (1995), 38–61; Thesleff (1980), 101–114; Wallis, (1976), 121–153, and (1986), 460–480.

Week 13: Hekhalot Literature

- 13.1 Primary literature: Charlesworth 1983–1985, 3 Enoch; Janowitz 1989, Maaseh Merkavah; Smith 1963, 142–160, Hekhalot Rabbati; Schäfer 1991–1995, German translation of Hekhalot literature.
 13.2 Secondary literature: Arbel (2003); Chernus (1982), 123–146; Dan (1986), 289–307; Elior (1993/1994), 3–53, and (1997), 217–267; Gruenwald (1973), 63–107, and (1980); Halperin (1988a); Himmelfarb (1988), 73–100; Lesses (1988); Morray-Jones (2002); Orlov (2005); Schäfer (1992) and (2009); Scholem (1955), 1–79, and (1960); Swartz (1996); Wolfson (1994b), 13–187.

Weeks 14–15: Student Research Presentations

Notes

1. Although McGinn does not wish to neglect the Jewish origins of Christian mysticism, his treatment of the Jewish materials hinges on fourteen pages before turning to a discussion of the Greek materials and never looking back: McGinn (1992, 9–22). In part, this minimal treatment may be due to the definition of mysticism generated by McGinn, which views mysticism as a “part” of a religion (following Friedrich Baron von Hügel). It reflects a “way of life” as well as the mystical experience of God’s presence, abandoning the idea of “union” in favor of “presence” (following Joseph Maréchal). McGinn states that his definition was borne from close readings of the texts that have been accepted as mystical classics in the history of Christianity (McGinn 1992, xv–xx).

2. For a treatment of the major characteristics of early Jewish and Christian mysticism, see DeConick (2006, 1–24).

3. For an overview of common features, see DeConick (2006, 1–24).

4. On these unique features, see DeConick (2011).

5. On this approach to tradition-history, see DeConick (2005, 3–37).

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