

living. The mystic lives in a world of imagery and apprehension of the aesthetic as opposed to a pragmatist who lives in a world that works and functions by principles and laws. It is popular in reformed theology to deride mystics but one must use care,--mysticism is not confined to any one theological mooring and often shows up in the least expected places.

Mystical Monastic Groups

There are a number of smaller monastic orders who can qualify for this listing but the major ones are the Friends of God and the Brethren of the Common Life. They were situated largely in the Teutonic states and associated with Meister Eckhard (d. 1327) and John Tauler (d. 1361) The groups were similar and concentrated on the mystical union of the believer with the Lord. Contemplative discipline and meditation were strongly maintained. They attempted to move away from worldly standards without going to the monastic extremes and so developed what might be called in our day the victorious life approach. They operated within the disciplines of the existing church and continued for some time. The Brethren of the Common Life had a pronounced effect on Luther some years later. Their spiritual readings and writings are still in print and modern pietism, etc., have a lot to owe them.

Catherine of Sienna (d. 1380)

A godly feminine mystic who spent time in and out of favor with the established church, Catherine was trenchant in her criticism of worldliness and fleshly practices in the church. Her emphasis on emotional realities was very pronounced. She attained canonization later and many churches are named for her today. There seems to have been among her followers a sense of true appreciation for spiritual values and an awareness of a true christology.

Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471)

Famed for the work IMITATIONS OF CHRIST...a work that has gone through more than 2,000 printings and one that is still good reading for all. Thomas was a German mystic of the Augustinian order.