



# Mysticism and Social Change: The Social Witness of Howard Thurman (Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Studies in Religion, Culture, and Social Development)

*By Alton B. Pollard III*

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Academics and activists alike have long dismissed mysticism as an «otherworldly» and escapist form of religion. Alton B. Pollard III, in a ground breaking study of the noted African-American mystic, Howard Thurman, presents an analysis of religious experience that challenges prevailing interpretations of mysticism and social change. Drawing on perspectives from sociology, phenomenology, and history, the author examines the meaning of mystical religion for the «underside» of contemporary American society. What he uncovers is significant: an activist form of mysticism, compelled by the dictates of spiritual experience, that defies social conventions and engenders social change.

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**Mysticism and Social Change: The Social Witness of Howard Thurman (Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Studies in Religion, Culture, and Social Development) By Alton B. Pollard III Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #3812167 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers
- Published on: 1992-07-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.50" h x 6.50" w x .75" l, 1.05 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 219 pages

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

«'Mysticism and Social Change' articulates Thurman's legacy in terms that promise to give needed direction to scholars, pastors, activists and believers who seek positive engagement in the African-American quest for dignity and well-being.» (Cheryl J. Sanders, Howard University)

«In a probing analysis and documentation of the sources of mysticism and of its sociological misperceptions, Alton Pollard seeks to rescue Thurman and contemporary mystics in general from the unmerited presumption of social innocuousness.» (C. Eric Lincoln, Duke University)

«'Mysticism and Social Change' is not only a creative interpretation of Howard Thurman's significance, it also offers an innovative methodology for examining biography, race relations, and the social witness of the church.» (Luther E. Smith, Jr., Emory University)

### **About the Author**

The Author: Alton B. Pollard III is an assistant professor of Religion at Wake Forest University. He is a graduate of Fisk University and Harvard Divinity School, and received his Ph.D. from Duke University. Dr. Pollard has published widely in the areas of religion and culture and is an associate editor of *Black Sacred Music: A Journal of Theomusicology*.

## **Users Review**

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