



# **Mysticism and Heresy: Studies in Radical Religion in the Central Middle Ages (c.850-1210)**

*Angus J Braid*

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This book brings together two related studies by the theologian and historian, Dr Angus Braid, which throw new light on the early development of radical and mystical religion in medieval Western Europe. The first part traces the growth and transmission of illuminist mysticism and Neopythagorean philosophy from the Islamic Middle East to both Muslims and Jews in the Andalus (Islamic Spain) and thence to Latin Christendom at the end of the 12th century. The central study of the Amalrician heresy searches for its possible sources: among the boldest of the Cistercians, in the Abbot Joachim's prophetic illustrations, in the logical philosophy of David de Dinant and in the interwoven strands of mystical Avicennism, Eriugenism and Hermeticism at the end of the 12th-century. All these thinkers share an open and inclusive outlook (not always associated in the modern mind with the Middle Ages) which puts as much weight on their own intellectual understanding as on their personal religious experience. Some extension studies are appended which may point the way towards a new understanding of the possible influence of the spiritual teachings of Symeon the New Theologian and his disciples upon the development of Bogomilism and Catharism. There is a comprehensive bibliography, as well as an English translation of an anonymous, mystical, Avicennist work of the late 12th century, the *Peregrinatio Animae*. The book begins with an impartial, non-theist (atheist) analysis of personal religion, which provides the context for this study of mystical philosophy and experience. It is to be hoped that readers will find the book helpful, not only for explaining certain historical events, but also for elucidating certain trends of radical thought, and distinguishing two fundamental types of mystical experience, which are here called pantheism and illuminism. The illustration on the cover recalls a dark November night in 1209 (or 1210), when an open fairground outside Paris was still dotted with lights, coming from the remains of many pyres, used for the public burning of the Amalrician heretics. This group of highly educated French mystics will occupy a central position in the book.

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