



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

*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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