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The Satisfied Life: Medieval Women Mystics on Atonement

Jane Ellen McAvoy

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Faithful Christians have often wondered what salvation means and how we come to be saved. Traditional theories of atonement for sin have rested on the importance of Christ's sacrifice as the means of human salvation. This theology implies that it is somehow natural, particularly for women, to imitate Christ's suffering through sacrifice that has become increasingly oppressive.Jane McAvoy has constructed a feminist theology of atonement that draws on the insights of six medieval women mystics -- Julian of Norwich, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Hildegard of Bingen, Margery Kempe, Hadewijch of Brabant, and Catherine of Siena -- whose early Christian writings reveal alternatives to a theology of oppression. For them, salvation meant experiencing the death and resurrection of Christ not as life-denying, but as a life-affirming celebration of God's Iove for us through the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. From these women we are given a sensuous, experiential, graceful theology -- one that leads to a satisfied life.

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