



# The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality

By Evan B. Howard

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Evan Howard provides a solid and comprehensive overview of spiritual formation in the Protestant, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox traditions in *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*. In short, Howard desires to answer the following question for readers: "What does relationship with God look like for Christians?" The book is interdisciplinary in its approach, drawing from fields such as theology and psychology. What makes this book especially accessible are its chapter outlines and objectives, sidebars, focus boxes, charts, pictures, cartoons, chapter summaries and questions, and glossary, all of which present the material in an easily digestible format for the curious layperson.

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## The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality By Evan B. Howard Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Howard has managed to produce a systematic and accessible survey while maintaining a lively and distinctive authorial voice--a remarkable achievement. . . . The result is perhaps the most robustly ecumenical treatment of Christian spirituality by any single author to date. . . . Howard's thoroughly researched and cogently written volume successfully bridges the gulf between the academic study of spirituality and the practical work of spiritual formation." Arthur Holder, *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*

#### From the Inside Flap

"Here is a rich quilt work of biblical, theological, and philosophical reflection on the rich dynamics of the with-God life. Howard's book arguably is the most comprehensive treatment of spirituality from an evangelical perspective in the English language."--**Bruce Demarest**, Denver Seminary

#### From the Introduction

I tend to be a "big picture" kind of guy. My students tell me that they get the most out of my teaching when I show how a number of different things fit together. And while I constantly face the dangers of a distorting totalization, I find that my preoccupation with big pictures often helps students see things in a new light. I hope to accomplish something of the same in this text. So, in order to make this book illuminating, I have incorporated a couple of elements characteristic of my own study and teaching of Christian spirituality.

First, this text draws from a variety of different resources. . . . The study of Christian spirituality--as an exploration of the relationship between God and human persons--necessarily involves both theological categories (requiring biblical, dogmatic, and historical study) and categories from the human sciences (requiring psychological and sociological study). Furthermore, the exploration of Christian spirituality involves both formal academic research and informal personal experience. Prayer, for example, has been explored not only by the saints and mystics of history, but also by medical researchers, cognitive psychologists, anthropologists, and philosophers of religion, as well as by people like you and me. What insights might these diverse resources bring to our understanding of Christian prayer? My aim is not to provide a comprehensive coverage of any single discipline . . . but rather to point to the key questions, figures, and ideas that shed light on the general survey of Christian spirituality and to illustrate how an interdisciplinary approach to Christian spirituality might look.

Second, this text provides a survey of Christian spirituality within a single coherent framework (the "big picture"). My goal is to give some insight concerning how various traditions, practices, and perspectives can be comprehended as a whole. To this end the text will develop, though not defend, a way of looking at the God-human relationship that helps make sense of a number of details regarding the spiritual life. The chapters are designed to present this framework piece by piece and then to apply this framework to the practical dimensions of Christian spirituality as the book progresses. For this reason the book moves from the more difficult material to the easier, progressing from method to theology to dynamics to practice.

#### From the Back Cover

Christian spirituality is in vogue in the postmodern twenty-first century. Both colleges and seminaries now offer courses--even advanced degrees--on spiritual formation and spiritual disciplines; for this reason, a straightforward, comprehensive textbook is needed. Enter *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality*.

This book offers a broad-minded approach that covers Protestant, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox traditions. In addition, it is interdisciplinary in its approach, drawing from fields such as theology and psychology. This informative, illuminating, interesting, and ecumenical book is especially accessible given its many user-friendly features:

- chapter outlines provide a general orientation to the flow of the chapter
- chapter objectives explain the tasks readers should be able to perform upon completing the chapter
- sidebars summarize materials in the text or provide brief quotes from primary sources
- focus boxes offer portraits of historical figures and movements or essays on key issues in Christian spirituality
- charts, pictures, and cartoons provide helpful visual illustrations and highlight key information
- a glossary defines unfamiliar terms or terms that are used distinctively in the text
- exercises near the end of each chapter ("Practicing Christian Spirituality") allow personal application of the material presented
- chapter summaries offer a helpful overview of the chapter's content
- questions for consideration prompt readers to tease out the key points of the chapter
- a list of works titled "Looking Further" helps readers identify resources for further exploration

"With a unique format and comprehensive approach, *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* is an essential read for all who seek to experience Christian faith and practice in its fullness."--**Richard J. Foster**, author of *Celebration of Discipline* and *Streams of Living Water*

"Evan Howard has provided us with a clear and comprehensive overview of Christian spirituality. He pays attention to the breadth of Christian spirituality in a way that is fair and at the same time does not leave the reader merely overwhelmed with options. The book is masterfully organized and readers will appreciate the sidebars with charts, summaries, case studies, and a comprehensive glossary. The intention of the book is to provide an overview of Christian spirituality, but the volume contains the elements necessary for a comprehensive program of Christian formation."--**James C. Wilhoit**, Wheaton College; author of *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered*

"Evan Howard has written a truly foundational work on Christian spirituality. To answer the question: 'What does relationship with God look like for Christians?' Howard moves systematically through the basic issues that undergird the study and practice of Christian spirituality, illustrating each topic from the breadth of the Christian spiritual tradition. This book will be in the hands of my students as soon as possible!"--**Elizabeth Liebert**, San Francisco Theological Seminary

"Here is a textbook that makes a new kind of course possible. Even better, it offers the church's wisdom about what makes transformed lives possible. May it turn our seminaries and sanctuaries into schools for conversion and give substance to the next Great Awakening."--**Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove**, author of *Free to Be Bound* and *New Monasticism*

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