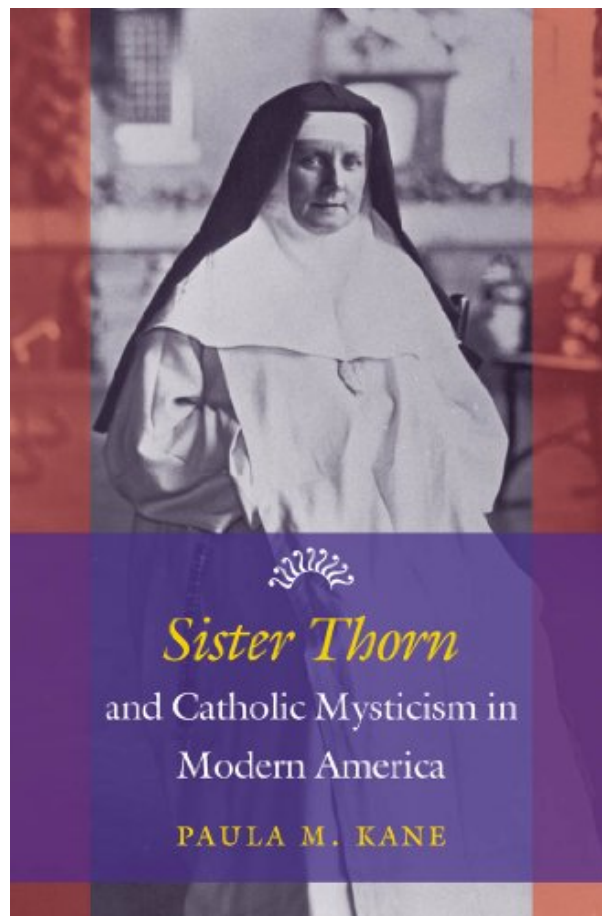
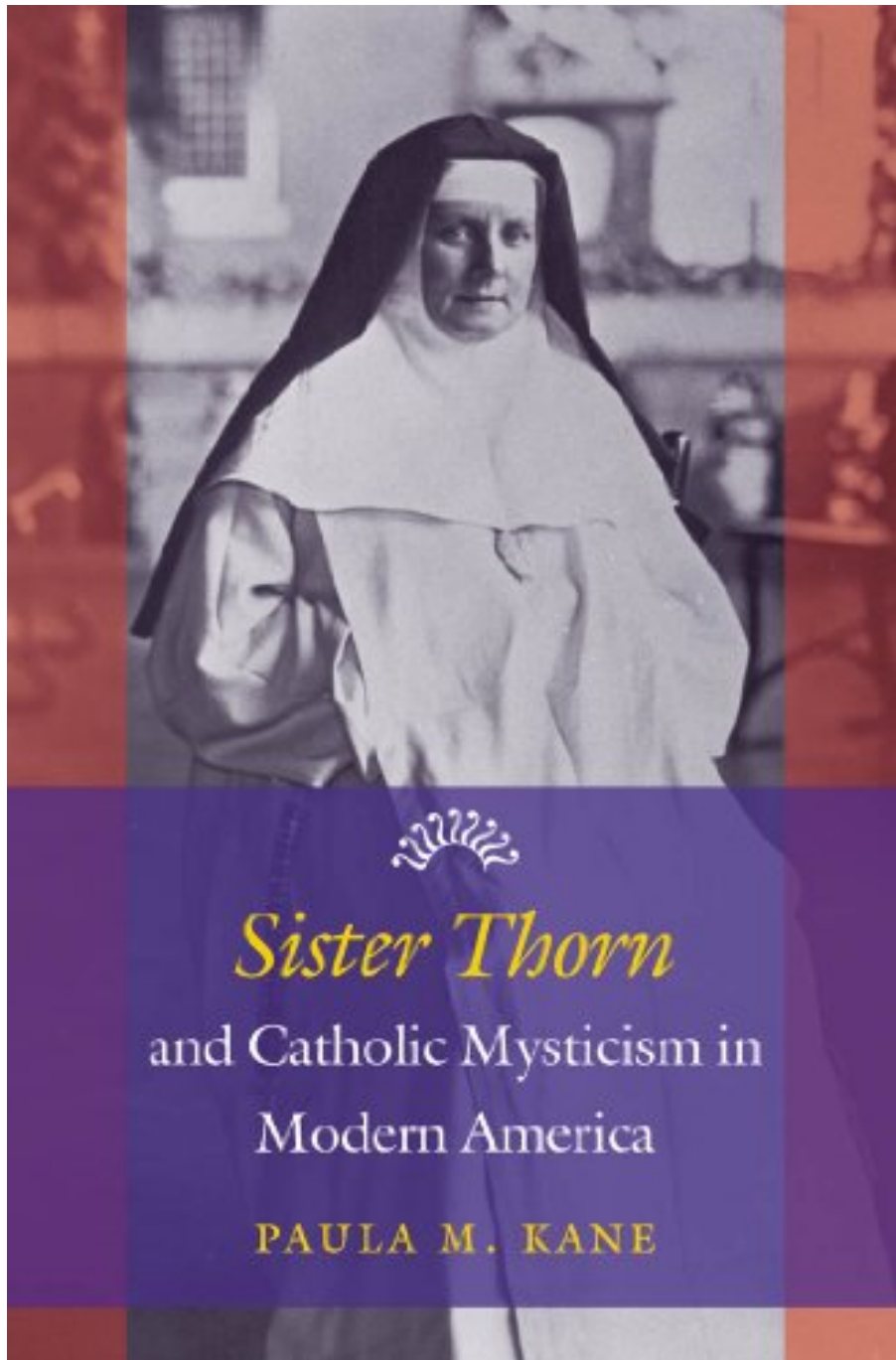


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MYSTICISM IN MODERN AMERICA BY  
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**SEEKING MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING**

By Thomas Patrick Hull

I was reared in Akron, Ohio in an Irish culture. In those days, the fifties of the past century, the memory of Sister M. Crown of Thorns was operative among some, having been affected by a certain prophecy she

purportedly shared in the early twenties of that century. I found this superior study to be an illumination.

I was not expecting "spiritual reading," as such; and I did not find that genre at all. Instead, I found a hermeneutic of the very notion of mysticism, as well as ideas about how and why diverse people receive or seek union with the Divine. Sister Thorn was the presenting-problem, to borrow a descriptive term from counseling psychology, not the total focus of of the author's deeper message. This work is not intended, it seems to me, to be a pious story, but an academic study of a few significantly gifted souls who seem to be experiecing the unitive way under special circumstances.

In my opinion, the fine author, Dr. Paula Kane, maintained objectivity

With completion of the book, I had a totally renewed sense of the meaning of mysticism, especially in America. It would be negative and bold to assert that there are no longer mystics in the US of A, but the phenomenon has taken a new form, especially related to living the christ-life in our post modern era..

Of necessity, to speak of Sister Thorn involves some understanding of consecrated religious life. In our time, many religious and lay people experience the Crucified One, for example, in the poor, abandoned, homeless, sick, margined and wondering aimlessly. In those, many find the Christ in distressful disguise, an image shared by Teresa of Calcutta. Those servants of the needy note the divine presence of Christ in all people, and all creation, thus providing service, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness to all in need because of their prayer, because of their personal attempt to find union with God, because of their awareness that it is the just thing to do to renew peace on earth, goodwill to everyone. Those same servants experience the wounds of the Crucified, as it were, in suffering humanity and all creation. They proclaim a loving and present God to the Anawim of our daily encounter.

As a result of reading Dr. Kane's book, I have new insight about myticism. I have renewed focus on the living action of Triune Love, led by the fire of the Spirit, the "sweet anointing from above," active among us, suggesting that we know far more mystics than we may understand. These are, like Sister Thorn, imperfect disciples, but atuned to the sufferings of our universe in our midst. I need to quote a verse from Psalm 95: "That today you would hear God's voice, do not harden your heart."

I have the good fortune to know a woman who is tireless in speaking out for justice, especially regarding the ethics of guns, in her "preaching" on Facebook. Her similar messaging regarding ths suffering of the sick and emotionally disturbed betrays a deep inner life regarding her search for Divinity. I have the grace to know a man who is in constant search for Truth in each person, in every faith tradition (not religion) and lives out that search in magnificent kindness to others, including plants and wrens. Yet another companion serves the needs of ordinary people in a small town in Alabama, sends messages to encourage others daily, and finds the God of Mystery in the ordinary round of loving living. Another friend of many years is so in touch with suffering, especially of those committed to serving others through institutions of learning and service to others -- community life, agriculture, retreat work, health care. In my mind, each of these folks are not only contemplative, but mystics.

If you seek the imitation of Christ, divine encounter, and allow Truth to impale you with generous giving, this may be the book to inspire you. If not, this may be an insightful tome, a fine academic study of a seldom discussed topic. While this work is obviously focused on catholicese, it clearly inspires a reader to discern how mysticism is present in all spiritual traditions. Great thanks to Dr. Kane!

Thomas Patrick Hull,  
Chicago



8 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

A serious muddle

By Gabriel B. O'Donnell

The author is preoccupied with "strategies," a word overused throughout the text. Her own strategy, shaped by the hermeneutic of suspicion and the projection of often ignoble motives on to persons and institutions that are so wide-ranging as to leave the reader breathless. Kane attempt to parlay the figure of a little-known would-be mystic of the 1930s into a critique of generations of the Catholic hierarchy, religious orders, medical consultants and "the Vatican" with so little nuance that one is left wondering whence comes such mean spirited "scholarship." This is a book that gives the genre of feminist and women's studies a bad name because of it runs roughshod over persons, organizations and institutions without providing sufficient evidence for her judgments. She relies too much on her own "perhaps" and "maybe" accounts of the past.

5 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Like nails on a chalkboard !!

By Munderwho

Really! Angela Brazil reads this account like a mean girl whose gotten ahold of an innocent person's diary! Ugh! Her tone is malicious and mocking. If Paula Kane has anything good to say about Mary Riley it's lost in the condescending lilt in Ms. Brazil's voice. I tolerated it for five of the unbelievable 14 hours. Don't bother.

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