



## *Faith* in Mechthild von Magdeburg (1207–1282)

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Mechthild of Magdeburg bears comparison, in many ways, not just to other thinkers of her time, but to a wide variety of women philosophers who have written about concepts having to do with religious faith and understanding. Hildegard of Bingen, writing slightly earlier, still employs notions of the various humors taken from the ancients to elucidate her grasp of the world in *Causae and Curae*, and also, of course, describes visions as she did in *Scivias*. Writing two or three centuries later, a thinker such as Katherine Parr in *The Lamentation of a Sinner* (1547) tries to use reason to delineate how she came to see that the “number of walkers” had little to do with the appropriateness or rightness of the ways in which they were walking. In this, Parr stands in line with the Dissenters of her time. But for Mechthild, the source of her faith stems not merely from visions or experiences that might be deemed to be mystical (and certainly not from rational thought, as some later thinkers maintained), but rather from the nature of her relationship with God. Because Mechthild experiences that God has an authorial capacity that is moving in her, the term “faith” might not do justice to what it is that Mechthild actually claims to have, in religious terms. This movement of the divine within her and its production in terms of work such as *Flowing Light of the Godhead* makes Mechthild’s position on faith unusual and possibly unique. But as Bowie and others have maintained, her work is directly related to the strength of the beguine community and its overall commitments.

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