

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in the Philosophy of Religion

edited by

Yujin Nagasawa

*University of Birmingham*

## RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Amber L. Griffioen

*University of Notre Dame*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India  
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108742252](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108742252)  
DOI: 10.1017/9781108699952

© Amber L. Griffioen 2021

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2021

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-108-74225-2 Paperback  
ISSN 2399-5165 (online)  
ISSN 2515-9763 (print)

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

## Religious Experience

Elements in the Philosophy of Religion

DOI: 10.1017/9781108699952  
First published online: November 2021

---

Amber L. Griffioen  
*University of Notre Dame*

**Author for correspondence:** Amber L. Griffioen, [amber.griffs@gmail.com](mailto:amber.griffs@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** This Element looks at religious experience and the role it has played in philosophy of religion. It critically explores the history of the intertwined discourses on mysticism and religious experience, before turning to a few specific discussions within contemporary philosophy of religion. One debate concerns the question of perennialism versus constructivism and whether there is a “common core” to all religious or mystical experience independent of interpretation or sociohistorical background. Another central discussion concerns the epistemology of purportedly “theophanic” experience and whether a “perceptual model” of religious experience can provide evidence or justification for theistic belief. The Element concludes with a discussion of how philosophy of religion can productively widen its treatment of religious experience in the service of creating a more inclusive and welcoming discipline.

**Keywords:** religious experience, mysticism, religious epistemology, perennialism, constructivism

© Amber L. Griffioen 2021

ISBNs: 9781108742252 (PB), 9781108699952 (OC)  
ISSNs: 2399-5165 (online), 2515-9763 (print)

## Contents

Prologue	1
1 Religious and Mystical Experience in Historical Context	1
2 Experience, Interpretation, and the Question of Perennialism	9
3 Religious Experience as Perception of God: Theistic Approaches	21
4 Challenges to the Perceptual Model	29
5 Expanding Experience	46
References	62