

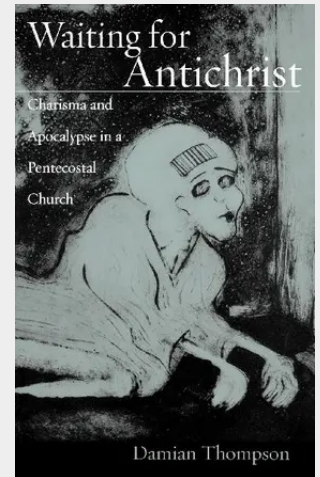
Thompson

Waiting for Antichrist

Charisma and Apocalypse in a Pentecostal Church

How can people believe that the supernatural end of the world lies just around the corner when, so far, every such prediction has been proved wrong? Some scholars argue that millenarians are psychologically disturbed; others maintain that their dreams of paradise on earth reflect a nascent political awareness. In this book Damian Thompson looks at the members of one religious group with a strong apocalyptic tradition - Kensington Temple, a large Pentecostal church in London - and attempts to understand how they reconcile doctrines of the end of the world with the demands of their everyday lives. He asks such questions as: Who is making the argument that the world is about to end, and on whose authority? How is it communicated? Which members are persuaded by it? What are the practical consequences for them? How do they rationalize their position? Based on extensive interviews as well as a survey of almost 3000 members, Thompson finds existing explanations of apocalyptic belief inadequate. Although much has been written about apocalyptic belief, Thompson's empirically-based study is unprecedented. It constitutes an important step forward in our understanding of this puzzling feature of contemporary religious life.

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129,60 €

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Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9780195178562

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-0-19-517856-2

Verlag: Oxford University Press

Erscheinungstermin: 01.03.2005

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2005

Produktform: Gebunden

Gewicht: 527 g

Seiten: 224

Format (B x H): 157 x 235 mm

