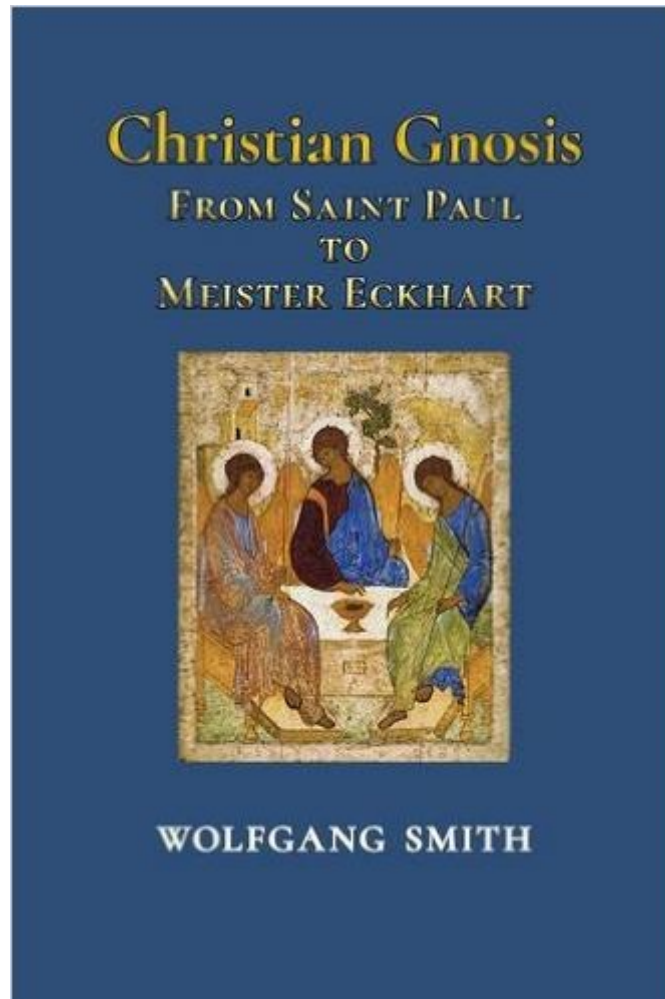


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Christian Gnosis: From Saint Paul To Meister Eckhart



Synopsis

Basing himself principally upon the teachings of Saint Paul and the Clementine Stromata, the author begins the present treatise by distinguishing the idea of gnosis in nascent Christianity from its Gnostic counterfeit. He then considers the implications of authentic gnosis for cosmology, a question that connects intimately with his earlier studies, notably his ground-breaking work regarding the interpretation of quantum theory. The same considerations, however, which invalidate the cosmology, have bearing on the theological notion of creatio ex nihilo as well; it is this crucial recognition that leads the author to consider alternative formulations within the Judeo-Christian tradition: from Christian Kabbalah to Jacob Boehme and Meister Eckhart. What emerges are the outlines of a Trinitarian nondualism definitive of Christian gnosis. Wolfgang Smith broaches a vast range of subjects with a mastery that bespeaks an immense culture. "Here is that rare person who is equally at home with Eckhart and Einstein, Heraclitus and Heisenberg!" "Wolfgang Smith is as important a thinker as our times boast." "Huston Smith After graduating from Cornell University at age eighteen with majors in physics, mathematics and philosophy, Wolfgang Smith took an M.S. from Purdue, following which he spent three years at Bell Aircraft Corporation as an aerodynamicist. During this period he gained recognition for his pioneering papers on the effect of diffusion fields, which provided a theoretical solution to the so-called re-entry problem for space flight. After receiving a Ph.D. in mathematics from Columbia University, Dr. Smith pursued a professorial career in that field. Soon however his center of interest shifted from the pursuit of science to the critique of scientism and the rediscovery of metaphysics as a theological discipline. He has authored six books and numerous articles, and is today widely recognized as a leading authority in these twin fields.

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Customer Reviews

In this book, Wolfgang Smith, a genius who solved the philosophical issues with quantum theory, tackles the issue of Christian Gnosis. All of Wolfgang Smith's previous books (Cosmos and Transcendence: Breaking Through the Barrier of Scientistic Belief, Teilhardism and the New Religion, The Quantum Enigma: Finding the Hidden Key, and The Wisdom of Ancient Cosmology: Contemporary Science in the Light of Tradition) have been confined to the realms of empirical science and Christian philosophy. In those fields, Wolfgang Smith is truly the definitive authority. I have nothing but adulatory praise of those books. I have never so clearly understood the boundaries between Newton, Augustine, and Aristotle as after I read those books. In this book, he delves into theology. This book has some real strengths. It delves into the history of Christian mysticism from St Paul to St Clement of Alexandria to Lutheran theosophist Jacob Boehme to German Dominican Friar Meister Eckhart. The book hinges on the theological distinction between exoteric doctrines (for Christians at large) and esoteric doctrines (doctrines that pertain to the domain of Christian gnosis or Christian mysticism). Many of the distinctions that Wolfgang Smith makes are brilliant. In the final two chapters, he sets about trying to defend Meister Eckhart, the German Dominican some of whose teachings were critiqued by the papacy. With his distinctions, he makes clear that the Thomistic theologians hostile to Eckhart were "knowing" from a creaturely perspective whereas Eckhart was "knowing" from a divine perspective. As a result, the two parties were speaking past each other. Much of Smith's argument is undoubtedly true.

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