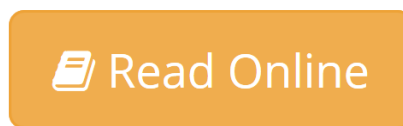


Inner Christianity: A Guide to the Esoteric Tradition

By Richard Smoley



Inner Christianity: A Guide to the Esoteric Tradition By Richard Smoley

Inner Christianity is the first introduction to mystical and esoteric Christianity for the general reader. It speaks from a nonsectarian point of view, unearthing insights from the whole of the Christian tradition, orthodox and heretical, famous and obscure. The esoteric tradition has traditionally searched for meanings that would yield a deeper inner knowledge of the divine. While traditional Christianity draws a timeline from Adam's Fall to the Day of Judgment, the esoteric often sees time as folding in on itself, bringing every point to the here and now. While the Church fought bitterly over dogma, the esoteric borrowed freely from other traditions—Kabbalah, astrology, and alchemy—in their search for metaphors of inner truth.

Rather than basing his book around exponents of esoteric doctrine, scholar Richard Smoley concentrates on the questions that are of interest to every searching Christian. How can one attain direct spiritual experience? What does "the Fall" really tell us about coming to terms with the world we live in? Can we find salvation in everyday life? How can we ascend, spiritually, through the various levels of existence? What was Christ's true message to humankind? From the Gospel of Thomas to *A Course in Miracles*, from the Jesus Prayer to alchemy and Tarot, from Origen to Dante to Jung, Richard Smoley sheds the light of an alternative Christianity on these issues and more.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

While the institutional church has frequently set boundaries limiting what ideas, beliefs, and practices could be considered Christian, Smoley, a former editor of *Gnosis* magazine, reminds readers that adventurous seekers have always borrowed freely from many sources to enhance their inner spiritual knowledge. Smoley collectively labels these disparate voices "inner" (or "esoteric") Christianity. The writings used to construct this tradition are diverse, ranging from Gnostic gospels and kabbalistic cosmologies, through late medieval alchemical theory, right up to Swedenborgian and New Age teachings. An initial chapter spells out the historical breadth of these traditions, but the bulk of the book offers a contemporary synthesis, providing insight into the deeper, mystical meaning of traditional Christian doctrines. Quotations from the sources are usually more engaging than the synthesis itself, but the author makes the case for listening more closely to an eclectic Christianity's own esoteric voices. Many readers will filter much of the material through a selective sieve of skepticism, but the book overviews a wide range of material and provides a solid introduction to esoteric Christianity for the general reader. Recommended for all libraries.

Steve Young, McHenry Cty. Coll., Crystal Lake, IL

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Review

"A wide range of material . . . provides a solid introduction to esoteric Christianity."—*Library Journal*

"Smoley traverses a vast continent of belief and practice in this lively guide to Christian esotericism, and he does so with great intelligence and style."—Philip Zaleski, editor of the Best Spiritual Writing series

"We overlook the very heart and soul of Christianity when we reduce it to rules, dogmas, and rigid moral directives. *Inner Christianity* helps correct that mistake by spelling out, clearly and thoughtfully, the subtle interior mysteries of this religion. This book could help many, Christians and others, find a new level of intelligence in Christian thought and practice. It could change the direction of your spiritual life."—Thomas Moore, author of *Care of the Soul* and *The Soul's Religion*

"In this deeply wise and important work, Richard Smoley restores the realm of inner space to the Christian tradition. Drawing upon a wide range of mystical and esoteric literature and practice, he shows how multidimensional is the Christian message, and how profound its understanding of the nature and purpose of the psyche. In a time of so much change and confusion, this potent book serves as a source of profound guidance and gnosis."—Jean Houston, Ph.D., author of *A Mythic Life* and *Jump Time*

"Richard Smoley has rolled away the rock of symbol, myth, metaphor, and obscurity and resurrected the radiant light of an inner Christianity. In clear and vibrant language, he makes the deepest wisdom of the Christian tradition available and accessible to everyone. This book is an empowerment of faith and spirit and will, I predict, become a classic for all who walk the path of Christ in the midst of their everyday lives."—David Spangler, author of *Everyday Miracles*, *Blessing: The Art and the Practice*, and *Apprenticed to Spirit*

About the Author

Richard Smoley is a graduate of Harvard College and Oxford University. He is the coauthor, with Jay Kinney, of *Hidden Wisdom: A Guide to the Western Inner Traditions* and the former editor of *Gnosis*

magazine.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

George Carter:

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