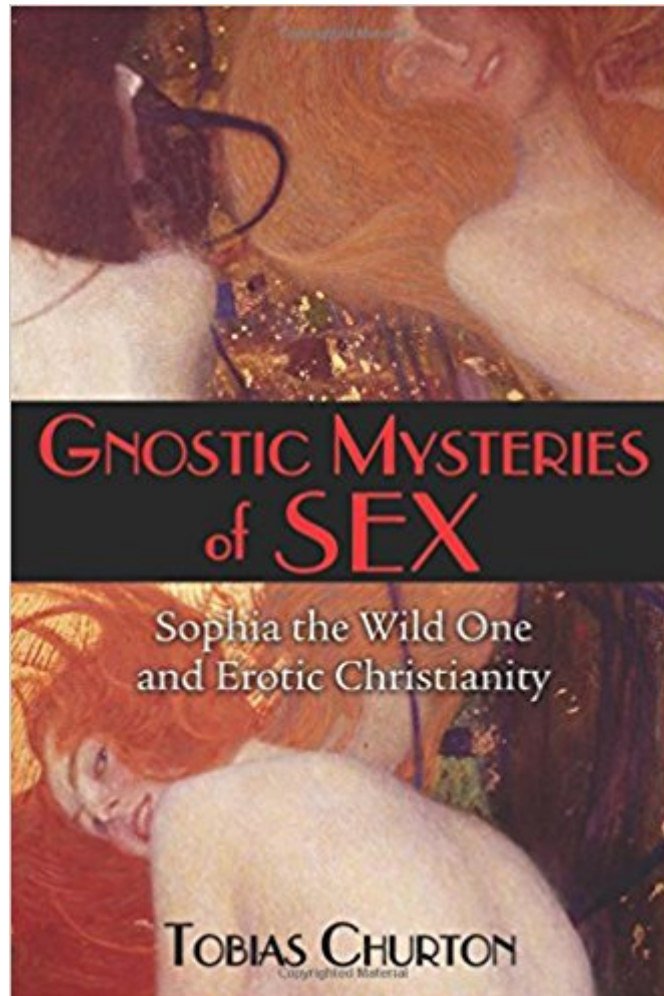




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# Gnostic Mysteries Of Sex: Sophia The Wild One And Erotic Christianity



## Synopsis

An exploration of the sexual practices and doctrinal secrets of Gnosticism – Reconstructs the lost world of Gnostic spiritual-erotic experience through examination of every surviving text written by heresiologists – Investigates the sexual gnosis practices of the Barbelo Gnostics of the 2nd century and their connections to the Gnostic Aeon Sophia, the Wild Lady of Wisdom – Explains the vital significance of – “the seed” – as a sacrament in Gnostic practice Examining every surviving text written by heresiologists, accounts often ignored in favor of the famous Nag Hammadi Library, Tobias Churton reveals the most secret inner teaching passed down by initiated societies: the tradition of sexual gnosis--higher union with God through the sacrament of sex. Discovering actual sex practices hidden within the writings of the Church’s authorities, he reconstructs the lost world of Gnostic spiritual-erotic experience as taught by initiated masters and mistresses and practiced by Christian couples seeking spiritual freedom from the world. Churton explores the practices of the “first Gnostic,” the historical Simon Magus, and explains the vital significance of – “the seed” – in Gnostic practice, showing it to be the sacramental substance par excellence. He illuminates the suppressed truth of why the name – “Valentine” – came to be associated with ennobling erotic love and reveals profound parallels between sexual gnosis and Tantra, suggesting that gnosis lies at the root of the tantric path. Solving a millennia-old riddle regarding the identity and secret symbol of Sophia, the mysterious Gnostic – “Aeon,” Churton investigates Sophia’s connections to Barbelo, also known as Pruneikos, the Wild Lady of Wisdom, and the central focus of the Barbelo Gnostics of the 2nd century, whose religious sex practices so shocked orthodox Christian contemporaries that they were condemned, their cults of spiritual gnosis and – “redemption by sin” – driven underground. Churton exposes the mystery of Sophia in the philosophy of the medieval Troubadours and explores William Blake’s inheritance of secret Renaissance sexual mysticism through the revolutionary English poet Andrew Marvell. Showing how Blake’s sexual and spiritual revolution connects to modern sexual magic, Churton also examines the esoteric meaning of the free-love explosion of the 1960s, revealing how sex can be raised from the realm of guilt into the highest magical sacrament of spiritual transformation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Gnostic Mysteries of Sex takes us on a wild ride through the secret, enigmatic and heretical world of Gnostics, medieval troubadours, the visions of Blake, and the counterculture of the 1960s--all united in their quest for union with God. The reader should not be fooled by Tobias Churton's inimitable style of writing, because beneath his humor and provocative statements, there's a profound understanding of one the greatest mysteries of all time--the power of sexual gnosis.” (Henrik Bogdan, associate professor in religious studies, University of Gothenburg)

“In Gnostic Mysteries of Sex, Tobias Churton works to heal Western civilization's deepest wound--the millennia-old divorce of sex and spirit. Revealed herein are the dangerous and radical sexual secrets that the Church could not eradicate, kept hidden by the occult underground through long centuries of persecution, torture, and crusade. And here is the radical message of the Gnostics, as shocking and critically important now as it was in the second century--that sex is the gateway of liberation, and the kingdom of heaven is within.” (Jason Louv, author of Generation Hex and coauthor of Thee Psychick Bible)

“Churton brings to this frank and deeply insightful study a surprisingly personal and moving narrative. The late scholar of Gnosticism Ioan Couliano once said the Gnostics were the champions of free thought--asserting a freedom to explore every logical possibility of their complex demiurgic estrangement from God and nature. It's not so surprising then that sexual metaphysics and practices in all of their permutations were explored, along with the big questions they pose, and the gnosis they transmit. As Churton observes, “The new heaven and new earth result from an improvement of sensual enjoyment. There was, and is, need of it.” (Stephen J. King (Shiva X ), Grand Master, Ordo Templi Orientis)

“Readable and hugely informative, Churton

makes a solid case that explains the Christian teachings on sex as reactive to the non-canonical texts. As Churton writes, sex is the "essential battleground between heresy and orthodoxy." I suspect this may be a totally new branch of scholarship. (Vanilla Beer, artist) "An erudite view of a fascinating subject. Highly recommended." (Donald Traxler, translator of the works of Maria de Naglowska) "Churton (The Mysteries of John the Baptist) takes readers on a historical tour of available writings on sexual gnosis. ...Churton's scholarship seems to be both deep and broad..." (Publishers Weekly, October 2015) "If you think the last word has long since been said on the subject of sex, then you need to read this book. The question of how to reconcile sex with spirituality has long preoccupied the religious culture of both East and West. Churton explores how the Gnostics had their own approach to this issue, an approach that he traces down the centuries through the Rosicrucians and the work of poets such as Andrew Marvell and William Blake. Their message, Churton shows, points the way to a glorious synthesis of the sexual and the spiritual." (Christopher McIntosh, Ph.D., Honorary University Fellow and Western Esotericism lecturer at the Univ) "One of the world's greatest scholars of what Blake calls the 'excluded' tradition, Tobias Churton brings together a profound knowledge of Western esotericism with extensive new research to weave a rich and multifaceted tapestry detailing the long-hidden mysteries of sexual gnosis. Including in-depth analysis and detailed commentary on select sacred and heretical texts from Epiphanius, Hippolytus, Valentinus, Blake, Crowley, and more, Gnostic Mysteries of Sex is an illuminating volume filled with passion, truth, fascinating detail, and dynamic historical perspectives." (John Zorn, musician)

Tobias Churton is Britain's leading scholar of Western Esotericism, a world authority on Gnosticism, Hermeticism, and Rosicrucianism. An Honorary Fellow of Exeter University, where he is faculty lecturer in Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry, he holds a master's degree in Theology from Brasenose College, Oxford, and is the author of many books, including Gnostic Philosophy, The Invisible History of the Rosicrucians, and Aleister Crowley: The Beast in Berlin. He lives in England.

In this book, the mystery of sex, a subject often avoided, glossed over, maligned or made to look dirty, is brought out of the closet and treated with the honesty, respect and awe it deserves. Tobias Churton dares to go to the seed and the root of the subject of Gnostic sexual practices. When understood and seen with esoteric vision it is much like the eastern practice of Tantra Yoga, which

can be practiced by a master to be lifted to the sacred union with the Divine, which is also the nature of true Self. I was surprised to learn that the Christian Gnostics knew of this practice as well, so long ago, and were not afraid to lift sex out of the shadow, where the church would have liked to have kept it. Churton has addressed this subject with leonine courage, treating the subject of sex and the Gnostic Tradition with honesty, flair and wit. The author digs up ancient clues. He examines long forgotten manuscripts, allowing him to reconstruct the lost world of Gnostic spiritual-erotic experiences as taught by initiated masters and mistresses. Although a scholar, Tobias Churton works with the diligence of a historical detective, which makes this book like most of his work educational, inspiring, refreshing and very liberating. Sophia, Lady Wisdom, seems to know that true wisdom is more of the heart than the mind. A fascinating book!

Radical Gnostics! I had the pleasure of previewing this title by religious scholar and Crowley biographer, Tobias Churton, for the publisher Inner Traditions. This is the "Radical Gnosticism" (or "Erotic Christianity") you don't encounter too much of in formal academic Gnostic scholarship, is barely there in the primary Nag Hammadi texts, and which subsequently, has suffered all sorts of distortions, misinterpretations and misappropriations from the second century right through to the New Age plague and occult ghetto. If you really want to explore the brethren in all of their doctrinal diversity that Aleister Crowley felt his OTO Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica claimed heirship of, communion with, and benediction from, this would be a valuable, comprehensive and accessible start. Very readable, compassionate, funny, insightful, and even when conjecture and hypothesis, deeply, deeply thought provoking. I have to confess I have a real soft spot for the Radical Gnostics. Read the sources quoted in this book, and you will know why! Highly recommended for the library of any self-respecting Gnostic Catholic. IAO. Every now and then comes a book that really matters. This is one. I hope it changes the world.

We have always suspected that the real Christianity contained practices using sex to raise Kundalini energy, but that the Church hid the knowledge of those teachings to exert firm control over its constituents in order to maintain the authority of the priesthood as the intermediary between its followers and Deity. If, indeed, there was a Jesus Christ, and if, as many believe, he traveled to the East as a young man, he would have been exposed to Tantric teachings. The problem in proving such a theory has been the dearth of information available to Biblical scholars. With the burning of the library at Alexandria and later the Papal Inquisition, very little documentation from early Christianity survived. British scholar Tobias Churton has done us a very great favor in pursuing the

truth of the matter. He has diligently and very thoroughly investigated the writings of the Church's Apologists of the 2nd to 4th Centuries C.E.--- those who accused the early Gnostic Christians of heresy and blasphemy against Church orthodoxy. Called the Patristic Heresiologists, these notably include Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Eusebius, and Epiphanius. Most of their writings have survived the centuries, but those writings are extremely critical of the Gnostics, accusing them of engaging in atrocious, scandalous, lustful, licentious, and unclean behavior, typically using both derisive as well as sarcastic remarks as means of ridicule. However, it soon becomes evident that the early Apologists were ignorant of the sex practices hidden right under their noses in the very descriptions they convey of the ones they called "heretics". It was not until the disclosure of the Bruce Codex and the Askew Codex containing the Pistis Sophia in the late 18th Century that scholars were able to decipher the first actual Gnostic literature itself. Discovery in Egypt of the Nag Hammadi Gospels in 1945 that were translated into English and published in 1977 gave a wider public a look at books that must have been purposely excluded from the New Testament when it was formed in the time of Emperor Constantine. Churton quotes from these and other Gnostic texts, and proceeds to give us a much more balanced look at what the practices were of the early Christians. It seems reasonable to assume that much was inherited from the ancient Egyptians, and from the later Greeks and Romans. Egyptian Coptic writings and even Kabbalistic teachings are not ignored, and our author brings us right up to the modern era with quotes from prominent 20th Century popular personalities in music and the arts that echo the knowledge of sexual secrets. They point to the existence of an erotic side of belief and practice that has come down to us from pagan times and been assimilated, though often disguised, into all religions and sacred traditions. Now we can read both the Old and New Testaments with a new and expanded meaning. That is not to say that there aren't other levels of meaning in sacred scriptures, but it does give us pause to consider the distinct possibility that the erotic side of religious teaching was, indeed, a vital part of worship and practice. Our author gives us a taste of such interpretation beginning with the Adam and Eve story of Genesis. If, for instance, we look at the serpent not as an evil doer but as the means of conveyance of real and useful knowledge given to the first humans, we receive a whole new angle of understanding for what is written. We know that Kundalini or Shakti is also called "serpent energy", and we know that metaphor comes from a very ancient appreciation of the enlightening results of moving "la force vitale" up the spinal column through the various chakra points. Combine that concept with the symbol of the apple, and we obtain an "aha".

moment of realization for what the Adam and Eve story is really about. This is just a small sample of what our author exposes to us, and I predict you will sit back and nod your head in agreement after you read his interpretation of that and many other symbols and metaphors in Judeo-Christian teaching. Churton's book includes a greatly enhanced definition of the name Sophia, also called at other times by other names such as Barbelo, Prunicus, Prouneikos, Helena, Wisdom, Mary Magdalene, and Holy Spirit. We are given tasty morsels of insight into the esoteric and alternative significance of terms such as evil angels, watchers, wood, tree, cross, olive, archons, baptism, seed, saving and transmission of seed, logos, androgyny, Grail stone, virgin and holy whore, Eucharist, New Jerusalem, fruit, coy mistress, and many others. And, we receive insight from such luminaries as William Blake, Carl Jung, John Lennon, Aleister Crowley, Isaac Newton, Paracelsus, St. Paul, Nietzsche, and Swedenborg. Perhaps most interesting are the valuable perceptions of lesser known, but not less important, scholars of Gnosticism such as Hans Jonas, Joseph P. Blavatsky, Denis de Rougemont, the late Gilles Quispel, and especially 17th Century poets like Andrew Marvell, Samuel Butler, John Hall. We see also the Rosicrucian/Hermetic connection through its proponents such as Johann Valentin Andreae. And I found Churton's attempt to directly tie the medieval troubadours to the Cathars via their subtle eroticism most interesting. Attention is given early in the text to the apocryphal Book of Enoch, and a great deal is said about Simon Magus and Valentinus, as it should be. Above all, Tobias Churton has given us comfort in realizing the stigma the Church has so long endeavored to put on the sex act beyond procreation is a disservice to our intelligence and to our liberation. Eroticism, itself, could be and should be a vital part of individual sacrament. It must be brought back into the lives of all those who seek to find a gateway to the Divine, without guilt and without remorse. Above all, the message of this book makes it imperative that we recognize and reinstate the sexual component of personal worship, whether it be within Christianity or any other of the great religions of our time. This review first appeared in New Dawn magazine, Issue 154

Tobias Churton pulls back the curtain covering up the sexual dimension of Gnosticism and shows how Christianity declared it heresy. He describes a wide range of Gnostics and their metaphysics. Despite their often divergent but overlapping perspectives on Jesus and the creation of humanity, the Gnostics were united in their view that sexuality or Eros was central to recovery of the original nature of Adam, Eve and Eden. The early Church fathers roundly condemned Gnostic sex and any effort to produce what Churton calls an erotic Christianity. The Church fathers were victorious in this battle of ideas. Consequently, Christianity developed a sex-negative attitude toward the human

body and erotic sexuality. This is better known today as *“the madonna and the whore,”* where the division of feminine sexuality into those two categories has led, both within the Church and outside it in society, to oppression of women and subjugation of wives to husbands. Churton calls for a Gnostic perspective to help undo the oppression and to develop an understanding of sexuality which, as in Tantra, can be employed ritually, as it were, to raise awareness of the divine and to invite the erotic sexuality as a pathway to spiritual unity.

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