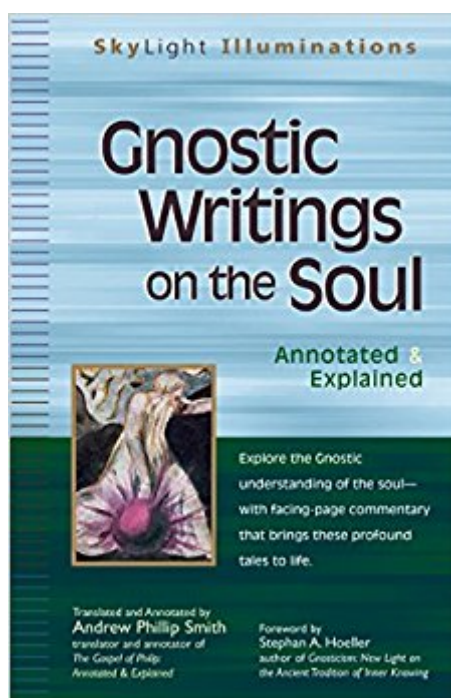


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# Gnostic Writings On The Soul: Annotated & Explained (SkyLight Illuminations)



## Synopsis

The inspiration and insight of these Gnostic writings can become a companion on your own spiritual journey. Just what is a soul, exactly? Where did the idea come from? How do we experience our souls? Two ancient Gnostic texts—The Exegesis on the Soul and The Hymn of the Pearl, both presented here in all-new translations—hold important clues to the development of the soul as a concept and reveal inspiring ways your own soul can remember and return to its unique, divine purpose. The Exegesis on the Soul depicts the soul as a feminine figure who has fallen into the corrupted world and must find her way back to the Divine. It is the story of the soul's struggle and redemption that will embolden your own spiritual pilgrimage. The Hymn of the Pearl is an allegorical story about a prince sent to retrieve a precious pearl but who soon forgets his purpose and falls asleep. It is a moving tale of the importance of remembering your soul's identity and calling and knowing that only you can fulfill your destiny. Accessible facing-page commentary explains the Gnostic writings for you even if you have no previous knowledge of Gnosticism or early Christianity. Additional material draws on ancient religions, Platonism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam and modern philosophical and psychological notions of the soul to place the Gnostic teachings in a clear historical context. By following the development of this concept through time, you will more clearly perceive and respond to the divine spark found in your own soul.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A fascinating guide to new and different ways of thinking. Smith's presentation of authentic Gnostic texts [conveys] a good understanding of Gnostic conceptions of the soul." — Stevan Davies, author of *The Gospel of Thomas: Annotated & Explained* — "One of the clearest and most accessible entry-points to the wisdom of the ancient Gnostics that I have ever seen." — Richard Smoley, author of *Forbidden Faith: The Gnostic Legacy from the Gospels to The Da Vinci Code* — "Takes us beyond the limiting literalism of much of contemporary theology. Smith opens a door for us..." — Ron Miller, chair, religion department, Lake Forest College, and author of *The Gospel of Thomas: A Guidebook for Spiritual Practice* — "Artful and erudite ... brings these allegories into three-dimensional relief, making them more memorable, accessible, and significant." — Rabbi Elie Kaplan Spitz, author of *Does the Soul Survive? A Jewish Journey to Belief in Afterlife, Past Lives & Living with Purpose* — "Smith's fine introduction and notes [reveal how] Gnosticism helped transform Western ideas about the soul.... Reveals part of our common spiritual heritage." — Tamar Frankiel, PhD, author of *Kabbalah: A Brief Introduction for Christians*

Andrew Phillip Smith has been investigating early Christianity and Gnosticism for over a decade, sharing the results in presentations and writings. He is the author of *The Lost Sayings of Jesus: Teachings from Ancient Christian, Jewish, Gnostic and Islamic Sources* — *Annotated & Explained*; *The Gospel of Philip: Annotated & Explained* (all SkyLight Paths) and *The Gospel of Thomas: A New Version Based on Its Inner Meaning*. Stephan A. Hoeller, PhD, is professor emeritus of comparative religions at the College of Oriental Studies in Los Angeles. He is a frequent lecturer on Gnosticism and other spiritual traditions, and is the author of *Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing* and two other books on the relationship of Gnosticism to Jungian psychology.

*Gnostic Writings on the Soul* consists of two works: the first is "The Exegesis of the Soul," which was discovered in the Nag Hammadi find, and the second is "The Hymn of the Soul," rediscovered in the nineteenth century in both a Greek and a Syriac version. Although different stories, both are allegories of the falling of the soul from heaven into gross materiality, and then a redemption and return of the soul to the heavenly father. The introduction to the book by Andrew Phillip Smith is excellent. His explanation of the three-part definition of the word soul in a Gnostic context should be

kept in mind when reading other Gnostic texts. The precision of his definition is in sharp contrast to the mushy commentary of the more famous Elaine Pagels and Elizabeth King in their sloppy commentary on The Gospel of Judas. The annotations are insightful; especially when they connect these Gnostic texts to the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

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