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Knowledge of God in Anne Sophie Swetchine (1782–1857)

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According to Mme Swetchine, human knowledge of God is radically partial and veiled. Both the divine will and human weakness prevent the human noetic agent from knowing the essence of God: “What we understand about God is not what God is in himself but what God has wanted us to understand. The treasure of divine science is divided into two parts: the entire, complete, and supreme truth that is God’s very self and then the eternal but veiled truths God gives or, rather, imposes on the children of humanity” (1875, 81). These truths are linked to salvation: dogmas concerning what must be believed and moral rules concerning how the Christian must act. Even with the light of revelation, the Christian operates in a spiritual twilight due to the obscurity of God. Through piety, the Christian can draw closer to God, but mystical union only leads to spiritual, affective states that elude adequate expression or comprehension.

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Keywords:

essence, God, knowledge, mysticism, piety, revelation