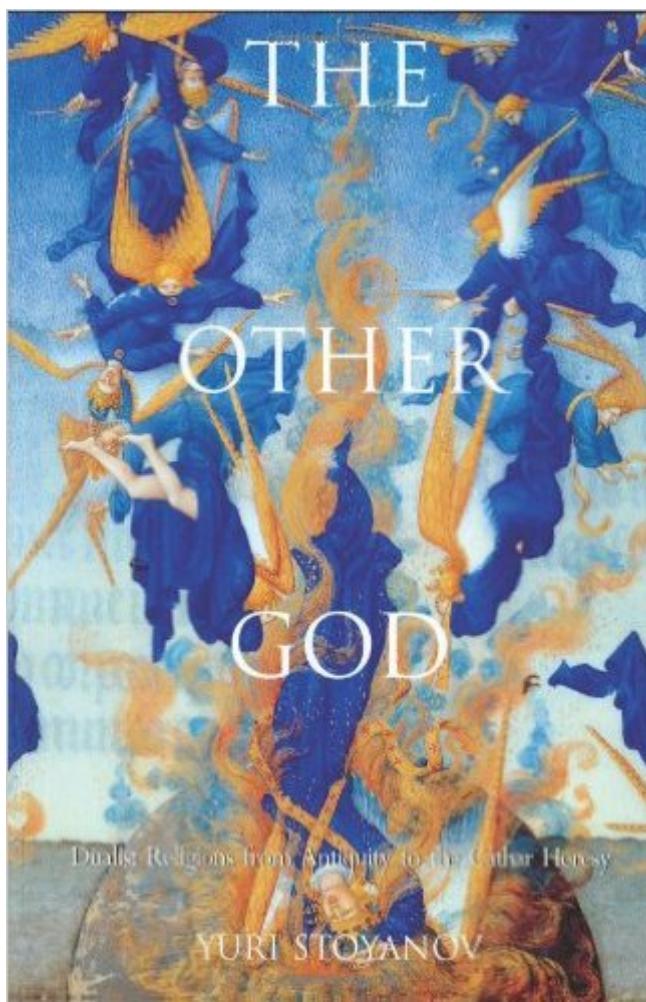


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The Other God: Dualist Religions From Antiquity To The Cathar Heresy (Yale Nota Bene)



Synopsis

The Catholic and Orthodox Churches regarded dualism as a heresy that had been transmitted in secrecy from late Antiquity; dualist heretics believed that it was Christianity as it was intended before the Church corrupted it. In this complete reworking of the author's previous work (*The Hidden Tradition in Europe* 1994), Stoyanov widens the scope to trace the transmission of the movement through Egypt and the Near East and to examine the growing development between magic and heresy. Dualists believed that behind the known public God there was another with power over the world to come; Stoyanov searches for the identity of this god through the ancient beliefs of the Near East, through Byzantium and the Crusades to Catharism in Languedoc, culminating in the fall of Montsegur.

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Customer Reviews

The "Da Vinci Code" was largely fiction. In "Holy Blood, Holy Grail", it wasn't clear what was fact and what was fiction. But "The Other God" is just fact (and some interpretation) and yet as fascinating as the other two works. Based on some other reading I'd done in this area, I had low expectations for this book. As I read it, the beginning didn't grab me. I didn't see where it was leading. But every new 50 pages seemed better than the preceding 50, not because the preceding 50 wasn't good, but because the latest 50 tied all the earlier pages together. It just kept getting better and better. If you like reading about the Cathars, "The Other God" is even better. It shows the roots of Catharism, way back to Armenia and before. It tells the Cathar history. It discusses the Cathar beliefs. It's all very

scholarly, with the main 294 pages backed up by 126 pages of footnotes and a select bibliography of 32 pages. Items that get alluded to in other books on the Cathars get discussed in depth here, such as the contribution of the Bogamils to Catharism. Not to mention the earlier contributions of Zoroaster, Mani, and Mithraism. Stoyanov is thoroughness incarnate. If you've read the "Da Vinci Code" or "Holy Blood, Holy Grail", you'll recall the claim that Mary Magdalene had been Jesus's wife. You might have read discussions about that without hearing where it originated. Stoyanov points out that the Cathars introduced that belief (which isn't found in Bogamilism). No evidence it was based on fact (just as a lot in the Bible doesn't have factual support) but the belief did have a function: it at the least gave a higher status to women, something that many women who read the "Da Vinci Code" resonated with. What I'd realized by the time I finished this book is that religious dualisms wasn't isolated nor odd: it started a long time ago and developed meaningfully in many branches. It feels like orthodox Christianity would like us to believe it was occasional and short-lived (and thanks to orthodox Christian persecution there's some truth to that), but "The Other God" shows how widespread it has been and the important issues it has raised and provided answers for. Stoyanov isn't biased. He is scholarly. Since he's careful to support his positions you'll find many references to other works you can follow if you want to learn more, although I suspect for many readers "The Other God" will seem quite sufficient. Read this book and you'll understand why people going back to the ancient Egyptians struggled to render our lives meaningful by developing myths that made more sense to some of us. Here, then, is a God some of us can believe in: not the one the authorities try to control us with, but the Other God.

In a superb and scholarly work Yuri Stoyanov charts the descent and evolution of Dualism (the idea of cosmic conflict between good and evil) from the revelations of Zoroaster and the Orphics, via the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Mithraic mysteries and the great Gnostic teachers, to its revival in medieval Europe. It reveals a mass of political and religious undercurrents that lie beneath the surface of official history, touching on the Knights Templars, the Rosicrucians and the early Freemasons. This is by far the best book available in English on the movement that became known, in its last major European incarnation, as 'Catharism'.

The history of secret societies and sects will not be the same after the publication of this book. The amount of new and frequently astonishing information concerning ancient and medieval underground societies is so great and so well-documented that one will need to read the book again and again to select the section of history he wants to explore and understand. The book fortifies with

some dramatic new evidence the all-pervading importance of stellar myths and correlations in ancient Egypt, Babylonia and Iran, as emphasized in some recent books, and then traces these and related esoteric trends in late antiquity and the Middle Ages. Stoyanov's final discussion of Cathar secret doctrines and myths, including the teaching of a marriage between Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene ('described as a 'great secret') and their sources is a tour de force and one has the feeling that he does not reveal all the material at his disposal, hinting that it is reserved for a book yet to come for which I will wait with some impatience.

This book offers an astonishing amount of information on very little known religions and heretical secret movements from ancient Egypt to Siberia. Wide-ranging and very well documented, it is also very well-written and readable. To the lay reader most of the information synthesised in this fascinating book will appear not only new but intriguing and even sensational. A must for the fans of historical mysteries and secret sects narratives.

This is the most comprehensive summary of dualist religious topics I have come by so far. Where alternative religious theory/history is a popular subject these days, this book does a fine job in exposing the reader not only to mainstream thought, but every branch and vein possible. The author has truly done his research. I found it the most informative book on the subject matter yet and have learned more than I had expected. Yes, there is a lot of detail, but that is what makes this book so fascinating.

An excellent round-up of dualism from Egypt to the Cathars and beyond. Stoyanov mentions various flavors of Manichaeanism, Gnosticism, Zurvanite Zoroastrianism, Bogomilism... if you're looking to understand how Orphism and mystery religions interfaced with Essene teachings or how the sweep of empires contributed to the blossoming of a strict good/evil division, this is the book for you. Highly recommended, very useful, a great resource with excellent chapter notes.

Books like this are real treasures: at once fascinating and scholarly. Usually if you find a book on Mithraism, the Gnostics, Manichees, and Cathars, it's mostly nonsense. But this one is the highest level of scholarship. I was never bored while reading this; every page is full of information about obscure movements and heresies that anyone who studies the history of religion, especially religion in the Classical world or pre-modern Europe, will love to know. If you suspect you'll enjoy this book, I guarantee that you will. Of course if you want to read about Nicholas of Cusa, you'll be

disappointed, but otherwise, you'll love it.

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