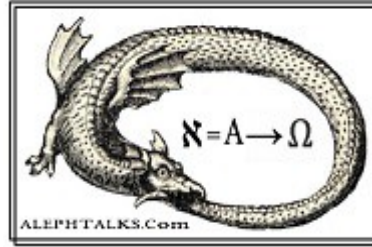


Mysticism: Where Science, Art and Religion Meet

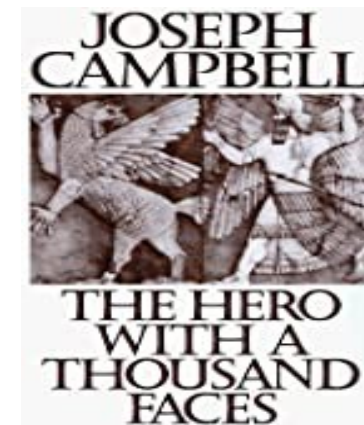
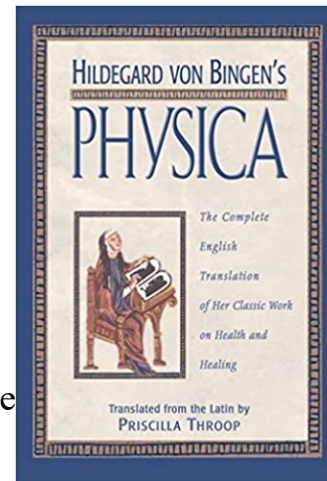
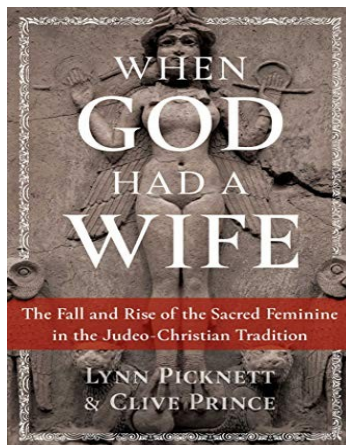
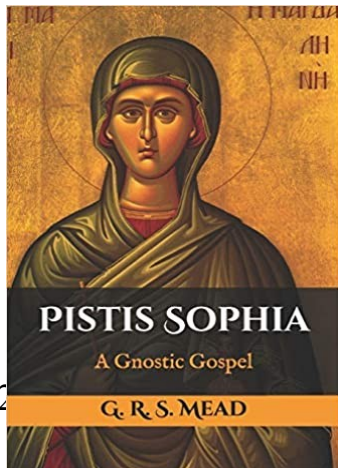
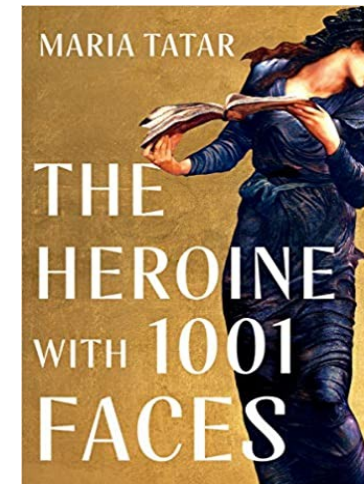
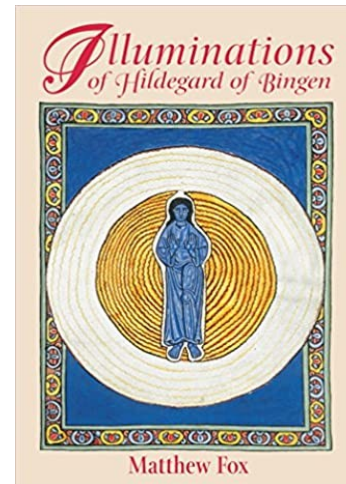
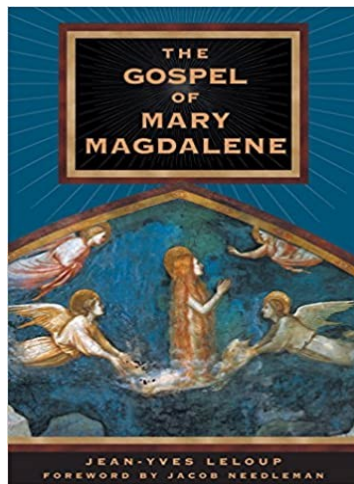
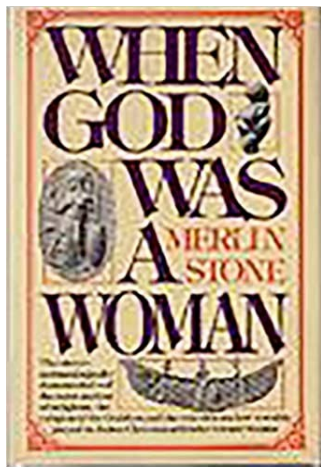


Subject Four
Mysticism East and West
Mysticism and the
Eternal Feminine
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22 December 2021



Information Sources

- Wikipedia, Huffington Post



When God Had a Wife

- The Precession of the Equinoxes: every 2160 years a new North star as the North Pole precesses about its axis. People experience a change of roughly one half degree in a full lifetime, but this observation was passed down orally from generation to generation.
- In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* the title character says: “But I am constant as the Northern Star, of whose true fixed and resting quality there is no fellow in the firmament” *i.e.* he was a flaky unstable chap.
- **The Age of Leo** (11050BC-8890BC), Leo comes out of the Age of Virgo, the Sun rules Leo, this leads to idea of Virgin birth of the Son, the Male is dominant, and the creation of Gobekli-Tepe in Turkey.
- **The Age of Cancer** (8890BC-6730BC), the Moon rules Cancer, the Moon rules the Mother and the Family, the Feminine is dominant, agriculture starts, and the Flood occurs.
- **The Age of Gemini** (6730BC-4570BC), Mercury rules Gemini, which rules thinking and communication, the male is dominant, the Age of written language (cuneiform) and mathematics

When God Had a Wife

- The Torah tells of El, the God that was worshipped along with his wife Asherah, and many other deities such as Baal
- El had 700 wives and 300 concubines
- El blessed 70 different tribes of Man that scattered over all the Earth, one of which was the Hebrew tribe led by Yaweh
- The Hebrew tribe had several factions, one led by Ephraim, a second led by Judah; the group led by Ephraim was dominant, the group led by Judah overtook and became dominant
- Moses was told by Yaweh to worship only Yaweh; this is because the Hebrew tribe worshipped Baal and Asherah and other deities
- Asherah was symbolized by a tree (cf the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in Eden)
- The Torah does not reflect the role of Asherah

When God Had a Wife

- Provides historical and archaeological evidence for an earlier form of Hebrew worship with both male and female gods, including a 20th-century discovery of a Hebrew temple dedicated to both Yahweh and the warrior goddess Anat
- The Hebrew pantheon of goddesses, including Yahweh's wife, Asherah, goddess of fertility and childbirth
- Shows how both Jesus and his great rival Simon Magus were attempting to restore the ancient, goddess-worshipping religion of the Israelites

Gobekli Tepe



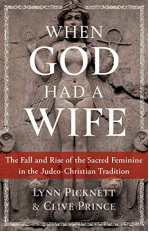
- Göbekli Tepe (Turkish: [gøbec'li te'pe], "Potbelly Hill"; known as Girê Mirazan or Xirabreşkê in Kurdish) is a Neolithic archaeological site near the city of Şanlıurfa in Southeastern Anatolia, Turkey.
- Dated to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic Age, between c. 9500 and 8000 BCE, the site comprises a number of large circular structures supported by massive stone pillars – the world's oldest known megaliths. Many of these pillars are richly decorated with abstract anthropomorphic details, clothing, and reliefs of wild animals, providing archaeologists rare insights into prehistoric religion and the particular iconography of the period.
- The 15 m (50 ft)-high, 8 ha (20 acres) tall also includes many smaller rectangular buildings, quarries, and stone-cut cisterns from the Neolithic, as well as some traces of activity from later periods.

Gobekli Tepe

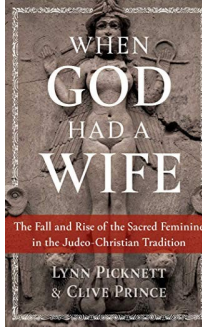


- The site was first used at the dawn of the Neolithic period, which in Southwest Asia marks the appearance of the oldest permanent human settlements anywhere in the world.
- Prehistorians link this Neolithic Revolution to the advent of agriculture, but disagree on whether farming caused people to settle down or vice-versa. Göbekli Tepe, a monumental complex built on the tip of a rocky mountaintop, far from known sources of water and to date has produced no clear evidence of agricultural cultivation, has played a prominent role in this debate.
- The site's original excavator, German archaeologist Klaus Schmidt, described it as the "world's first temple": a sanctuary used by groups of nomadic hunter-gatherers from a wide area, with few or no permanent inhabitants. Other archaeologists challenged this interpretation, arguing that the evidence for a lack of agriculture and a resident population was far from conclusive. Recent research has also led the current excavators of Göbekli Tepe to revise or abandon many of the conclusions underpinning Schmidt's interpretation.

When God Had a Wife



- **The Age of Taurus** (4570BC-2310BC): the Sun is in the sign of Taurus at the Spring Equinox, the Feminine is dominant; the Hebrews are enslaved in Egypt and worship multiple Gods and Goddesses (Lilith, Asherah, Anath, Astarte, Ashima, the cherubim in Solomon's Temple, the Kabbalistic Shekhina is the personified "Shabbat Bride"). Druids in Ireland and Stonehenge in England, the Age of Pyramid building, all in sync with Taurus being the sign of the Master Builder.
- **The Age of Aries** (2310BC-150BC), the Masculine is dominant, Moses leads the Hebrews out of Egypt, the Hebrews worship one God, and are the Chosen People through the First Covenant.
- **The Age of Pisces** (150BC-2010CE), the Feminine is dominant, the new Messiah Jesus of Nazareth (acting as the de facto Avatar of the Age of Pisces) ends the first Covenant and declares a Second Covenant – this one for all people.
- **The Age of Aquarius** (2010CE-4270CE), the Masculine is dominant again but this time with an emphasis on compassion, equality, liberty, individuality, democracy and Brotherly Love; precursors are the American and French Revolutions.



When God Had a Wife

- **The Age of Taurus** (4570BC-2310BC): the Sun is in the zodiac sign Taurus at the Spring Equinox, the Feminine is dominant
- This age is notable for the Pyramids during the Old and Middle Kingdoms of Egypt; the emergence of urban life in Mesopotamia peaking with the city of Uruk becoming the most urbanized city in the world, surpassing for the first time 50,000 inhabitants; and the walled cities of the Indus Valley, planned by the highly skilled Harappan architects.
- This period is also known for its great myths such as the Creation Myth and the Myth of Osiris in the Egyptian Pyramid Texts and the Epic of Gilgamesh of Sumer, to mention very few. Technologically, the Age of Taurus saw the beginning of the Bronze Age at about 3300 BC and the first manufacturing of papyrus. Writing emerged in many different cultures during this age. Examples are the cuneiform writing of the Sumerians, the Egyptian hieroglyphs, and the Cretan/Minoan hieroglyphs.

Manichaeism



- Manichaeism (/ˌmæniˈkiːzəm/; in New Persian آیین مانی Āyīn-e Mānī; Chinese: 摩尼教; pinyin: Móníjiào) was a major religion founded in the 3rd century AD by the Parthian prophet Mani (c. 216–274 AD), in the Sasanian Empire.
- Manichaeism taught an elaborate dualistic cosmology describing the struggle between a good, spiritual world of light, and an evil, material world of darkness, male and female. Through an ongoing process that takes place in human history, light is gradually removed from the world of matter and returned to the world of light, whence it came. Its beliefs were based on local Mesopotamian religious movements and Gnosticism. It revered Mani as the final prophet after Zoroaster, Gautama Buddha, and Jesus.

Manichaeism



- Manichaeism was quickly successful and spread far through the Aramaic-speaking regions. It thrived between the third and seventh centuries, and at its height was one of the most widespread religions in the world. Manichaean churches and scriptures existed as far east as China and as far west as the Roman Empire.
- It was briefly the main rival to Christianity before the spread of Islam in the competition to replace classical paganism. Beginning with the pagan emperor Diocletian, Manichaeism was persecuted by the Roman state and was eventually stamped out of the Roman Empire.

Mithraism



Mithraism, also known as the Mithraic mysteries, was a Roman mystery religion centered on the god Mithras. Although inspired by Iranian worship of the Zoroastrian divinity (yazata) Mithra, the Roman Mithras is linked to a new and distinctive imagery, with the level of continuity between Persian and Greco-Roman practice debated. The mysteries were popular among the Imperial Roman army from about the 1st to the 4th century ce.

Worshippers of Mithras had a complex system of seven grades of initiation and communal ritual meals. Initiates called themselves syndexioi, those "united by the handshake". They met in underground temples, now called mithraea (singular mithraeum), which survive in large numbers. The cult appears to have had its centre in Rome, and was popular throughout the western half of the empire, as far south as Roman Africa and Numidia, as far north as Roman Britain, and to a lesser extent in Roman Syria in the

Mithraism

- Mithraism is viewed as a rival of early Christianity. In the 4th century, Mithraists faced persecution from Christians and the religion was subsequently suppressed and eliminated in the Roman empire by the end of the century.



The Four Fixed Signs in History

Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius

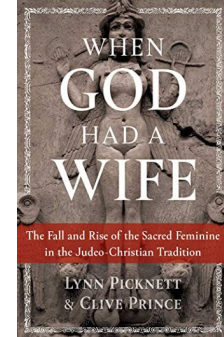
- In Mithraic Symbolology -



- In Celtic Christian Symbolology-

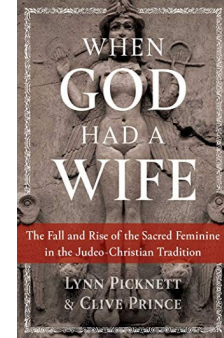


When God Had a Wife

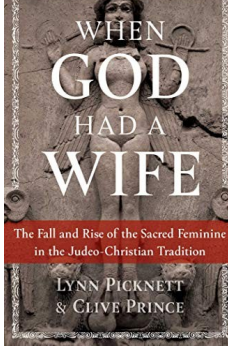


- **The Age of Aries** (2310BC-150BC) poster child civilization is that of the Hebrew people, starting from the prophet Moses, leading the Israelites in the Exodus out of Egypt (representing the old Age of Taurus), through their peak as a single unified kingdom to the destruction of the Temple of Solomon at the beginning of the 6th century BC. In as much as the Hebrew spiritual tradition was influenced by Ancient Egypt, the rigidity of the Egyptian civilization necessitated the breaking away from it.
- The very Aries-like confrontation of Moses with the Pharaoh started this process. It is interesting that in some works of art Moses is depicted as having horns. On their way to the promised land, the Israelites waited for the right moment to return to their worship of the Golden Calf, representing the old familiar influence of Taurus that they knew in Egypt. But Moses, again, in a very Aries-typical reaction, is enraged at seeing that and punishes the people by keeping them in the desert until the entire Golden Calf generation passes away

When God Had a Wife



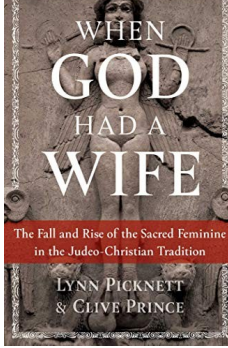
- Provides historical and archaeological evidence for an earlier form of Hebrew worship with both male and female gods, including a 20th century discovery of a Hebrew temple dedicated to both Yahweh and the warrior goddess Anat.
- The Hebrew pantheon of goddesses, including Yahweh's wife, Asherah, goddess of fertility and childbirth, shows how both Jesus and his great rival Simon Magus were attempting to restore the ancient, goddess-worshipping religion of the Israelites.



When God Had a Wife

- Moses and all the other prophets that follow demonstrate the new relationship of religion and spiritual tradition to the ruling aspect of society. The obsession of the Taurian Age with power necessitated the breaking apart of the three great pillars of humanity – civilizational order, religion, and spiritual tradition.
- The connection of the human level to a higher level could not be reconciled with the materialism and corruption associated with positions of power, so they had to be broken away from. From this age on, the prophets, God's messengers on the Earth, and the priests or the religious leaders, are many times in opposition to the ruler: with Moses and Pharaoh; with Akhenaton and the priesthood who opposed his motion to abandon the existing religious order; with Elijah and king Ahab who persecuted him and his companions; and with many others.

When God Had a Wife



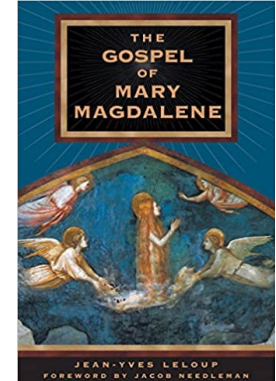
- Despite what Jews and Christians – and indeed most people – believe, the ancient Israelites venerated several deities besides the “Old Testament” god Yahweh, including the goddess Asherah, Yahweh’s wife, who was worshipped openly in the Jerusalem Temple.
- After the reforms of King Josiah and Prophet Jeremiah, the religion recognized Yahweh alone, and history was rewritten to make it appear that it had always been that way. The worship of Asherah and other goddesses was now heresy, and so the status of women was downgraded and they were blamed for God’s wrath.

When God Was a Woman



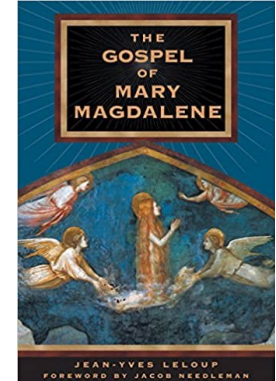
- In the beginning, God was a woman ...
- How did the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy come about? We begin with the story of the Goddess who reigned supreme in the Near and Middle East. Under her rule, societal roles differed markedly from those in patriarchal Judeo-Christian cultures: women bought and sold property, traded in the marketplace, and inherited title and land from their mothers.
- Documenting the wholesale rewriting of myth and religious dogmas, this shift reveals an ancient conspiracy in which the Goddess was portrayed as a wanton, depraved figure, a characterization confirmed and perpetuated by one of modern culture's best-known legends, that of the fall of Adam and Eve.

Gospel of Mary Magdalene



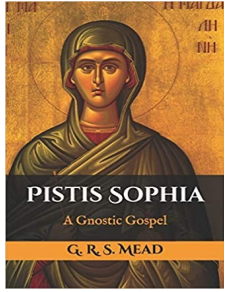
- In parallel, Mary Magdalene has been cast in Catholic canon as a prostitute.
- The Gnostic Gospel of Maria Magdalena (*written in second century CE, discovered in Egypt in 1896, taken to Berlin*) shows that Mary was in fact the close companion of Jesus of Nazareth and was taught inner truths that the Apostles were not capable of handling.
- When Peter asked Mary what Jesus of Nazareth had taught her, and she begins to tell him, Peter says he was not taught this.

Gospel of Mary Magdalene



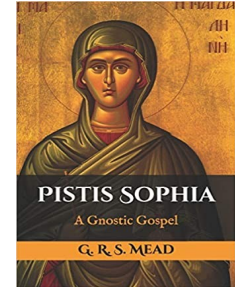
- Mary's gospel reveals a radical love that sits at the heart of the Christian story. Her gospel says that we are not sinful; we are not to feel ashamed or unworthy for being human. In fact, our purpose is to be fully human, to be a "true human being" – that is, a person who has remembered that, yes, we are a messy, limited ego, and we are also a limitless soul.
- And all we need to do is to turn inward (again and again); to meditate, like Mary Magdalene, in the way her gospel directs us, so that we can see past the ego of our own little lives to what's more real, and lasting, and infinite, and already here, within.

Pistis Sophia



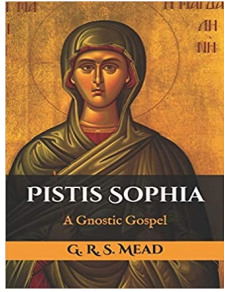
- Pistis Sophia (Koinē Greek: Πίστις Σοφία) is a Gnostic text discovered in 1773, possibly written between the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. The existing manuscript, which some scholars place in the late 4th century, relates one Gnostic group's teachings of the transfigured Jesus to the assembled disciples, including his mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Martha. (In this context, "transfigured" refers to Jesus after his death and resurrection, not the event during his life where he spoke to appearances of Moses and Elijah on a mountain.)
- In this text, the risen Jesus had spent eleven years speaking with his disciples, teaching them only the lower mysteries. After eleven years, he receives his true garment and is able to reveal the higher mysteries revered by this group. The prized mysteries relate to complex cosmologies and knowledge necessary for the soul to reach the highest divine realms.

Pistis Sophia



- Much of the first two books of the manuscript are dedicated to outlining the myth of the fall and restoration of the figure known as Pistis Sophia, in particular giving detailed parallels between her prayers of repentance and particular Psalms and Odes of Solomon.
- Although in many Gnostic texts and systems Sophia is a major female divinity, in Pistis Sophia she originates and dwells outside of the divine realm. Her fall and redemption parallel that found in versions of the Sophia myth such as that in the Apocryphon of John, but the actions all take place in the material aeons, and she can only be restored to her place in the thirteenth aeon, outside the Kingdom of Light.

Pistis Sophia



- Pistis Sophia is a retelling of a fall and a redemption, yet another fall and yet another redemption, all as foretold in the so-called Old Testament.
- The light that illuminates Pistis Sophia is incredible in its sacred aura and raises her above her tormentors.
- The fact that this takes place over a period of eleven years with Jesus of Nazareth and the Apostles suggests this may have taken place after the Crucifixion.

Hildegard von Bingen



- Hildegard of Bingen (German: Hildegard von Bingen; Latin: Hildegardis Bingensis; c. 1098 – 17 September 1179), also known as Saint Hildegard (canonized 2012) and the Sibyl of the Rhine, was a German Benedictine abbess and polymath active as a writer, composer, philosopher, mystic, visionary, and as a medical writer and practitioner during the Middle Ages.
- She is one of the best-known composers of sacred monophony, as well as the most recorded in modern history.
- She has been considered by many in Europe to be the founder of scientific natural history in Germany.

Hildegard von Bingen



- Hildegard's convent elected her as magistra (mother superior) in 1136. She founded the monasteries of Rupertsberg in 1150 and Eibingen in 1165.
- Hildegard wrote theological, botanical, and medicinal works, as well as letters, hymns and antiphons for the liturgy.
- Furthermore, she wrote poems, while supervising miniature illuminations in the Rupertsberg manuscript of her first work, *Scivias*.

Hildegard von Bingen



- There are more surviving chants by Hildegard than by any other composer from the entire Middle Ages, and she is one of the few known composers to have written both the music and the words.
- One of her works, the *Ordo Virtutum*, is an early example of liturgical drama and arguably the oldest surviving morality play.
- She is also noted for the invention of a constructed language known as *Lingua Ignota*.

Hildegard von Bingen



- Hildegard said that she first saw *The Shade of the Living Light* at the age of three, and by the age of five, she began to understand that she was experiencing visions. She used the term 'visio' (the Latin for "vision") to describe this feature of her experience and she recognized that it was a gift that she could not explain to others. Hildegard explained that she saw all things in the light of God through the five senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. Hildegard was hesitant to share her visions, confiding only to Jutta (her nanny), who in turn told Volmar, Hildegard's tutor and, later, secretary.
- Throughout her life, she continued to have many visions, and in 1141, at the age of 42, Hildegard received a vision she believed to be an instruction from God, to "write down that which you see and hear." Still hesitant to record her visions, Hildegard became physically ill. The illustrations recorded in the book of *Scivias* were visions that Hildegard experienced, causing her great suffering and tribulations.

Hildegard von Bingen



In her first theological text, *Scivias* (*Know the Ways*), Hildegard describes her struggle within:

But I, though I saw and heard these things, refused to write for a long time through doubt and bad opinion and the diversity of human words, not with stubbornness but in the exercise of humility, until, laid low by the scourge of God, I fell upon a bed of sickness; then, compelled at last by many illnesses, and by the witness of a certain noble maiden of good conduct [the nun Richardis von Stade] and of that man whom I had secretly sought and found, as mentioned above, I set my hand to the writing. While I was doing it, I sensed, as I mentioned before, the deep profundity of scriptural exposition; and, raising myself from illness by the strength I received, I brought this work to a close – though just barely – in ten years.... And I spoke and wrote these things not by the invention of my heart or that of any other person, but as by the secret mysteries of God I heard and received them in the heavenly places. And again I heard a voice from Heaven saying to me, 'Cry out, therefore, and write thus!'

Hildegard von Bingen



Hildegard's spiritual awareness was grounded in what she called the ***umbra viventis lucis***, the reflection of the living Light. Her letter to Guibert of Gembloux, which she wrote at the age of seventy-seven, describes her experience of this light with admirable precision:

From my early childhood, before my bones, nerves, and veins were fully strengthened, I have always seen this vision in my soul, even to the present time when I am more than seventy years old. In this vision my soul, as God would have it, rises up high into the vault of heaven and into the changing sky and spreads itself out among different peoples, although they are far away from me in distant lands and places. And because I see them this way in my soul, I observe them in accord with the shifting of clouds and other created things. I do not hear them with my outward ears, nor do I perceive them by the thoughts of my own heart or by any combination of my five senses, but in my soul alone, while my outward eyes are open. So I have never fallen prey to ecstasy in the visions, but I see them wide awake, day and night. And I am constantly fettered by sickness, and often in the grip of pain so intense that it threatens to kill me, but God has sustained me until now. The light which I see thus is not spatial, but it is far, far brighter than a cloud which carries the sun. I can measure neither height, nor length, nor breadth in it; and I call it "the reflection of the living Light." And as the sun, the moon, and the stars appear in water, so writings, sermons, virtues, and certain human actions take form for me and gleam.

Scivias by Hildegard von Bingen



- *Scivias* is structured into three parts of unequal length.
 - The first part (six visions) chronicles the order of God's creation: the Creation and Fall of Adam and Eve, the structure of the universe (famously described as the shape of an "egg"), the relationship between body and soul, God's relationship to his people through the Synagogue, and the choirs of angels.
 - The second part (seven visions) describes the order of redemption: the coming of Christ the Redeemer, the Trinity, the church as the Bride of Christ and the Mother of the Faithful in baptism and confirmation, the orders of the church, Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the Eucharist, and the fight against the devil.
 - Finally, the third part (thirteen visions) recapitulates the history of salvation told in the first two parts, symbolized as a building adorned with various allegorical figures and virtues. It concludes with the ***Symphony of Heaven***, an early version of Hildegard's musical compositions.

***Viriditas* and Hildegard von Bingen**



- *Viriditas* (Latin, literally "greenness," formerly translated as "viridity") is a word meaning vitality, fecundity, lushness, verdure, or growth.
- Hildegard von Bingen used it to refer to or symbolize spiritual and physical health, often as a reflection of the Divine Word or as an aspect of the divine nature.
- In a study of Hildegard by historian of medicine Dr. Victoria Sweet, who is also a physician, Dr. Sweet pointed out how Hildegard used the word *viriditas* in the broader sense of the power of plants to put forth leaves and fruit, as well as in the sense of an analogous intrinsic power of human beings to grow and to heal. Inspired by Hildegard, Dr. Sweet began to ask herself as she was treating her own patients whether anything was interfering with the *viriditas* or the intrinsic power to heal--to relate to healing like being a gardener who removes impediments and nourishes, in a sanctuary-like setting.

Viriditas and Hildegard von Bingen



- .In *Scivias*, Hildegard focused on *viriditas* as an attribute of the divine nature. In her works the word *viriditas* has been translated in various ways, such as freshness, vitality, fertility, fecundity, fruitfulness, verdure, or growth. In Hildegard's understanding, *viriditas* is a metaphor for spiritual and physical health, which is visible in the divine word. *Homeostasis* could be considered as a replacement, but without the theological and spiritual connotations that *viriditas* has.
- It is also the name of the San Francisco-based labyrinth organization.

St. Catherine of Siena



- The second-youngest of 25 children, Catherine of Siena is one of only two patron saints of Italy. Catherine believed herself to be spiritually wed to Jesus and committed herself to a monastic life as a teenager.
- She was a peacemaker during the 1368 revolution in Siena and convinced Pope Gregory XI to return the papacy to Rome during a tumultuous time for the Catholic Church.
- One story from her life tells of Jesus appearing to her with a heart in his hands and saying, “Dearest daughter, as I took your heart away from you the other day, now, you see, I am giving you mine, so that you can go on living with it for ever.” She was canonized in 1461.

Joan of Arc



- Joan of Arc grew up a peasant in medieval France and reportedly started hearing the voices of saints from a young age. At the age of 18, Joan believed that God had chosen her to lead France to victory in its ongoing war with England.
- The precocious Joan convinced crowned prince Charles of Valois to allow her to lead the country's army to Orléans, where it defeated the English and their French allies, the Burgundians.
- She was subsequently captured by Anglo-Burgundian forces, tried for heresy and burned at the stake in 1431. She was just 19 years old when she died. The Catholic Church canonized her in 1920.

St. Teresa of Avila



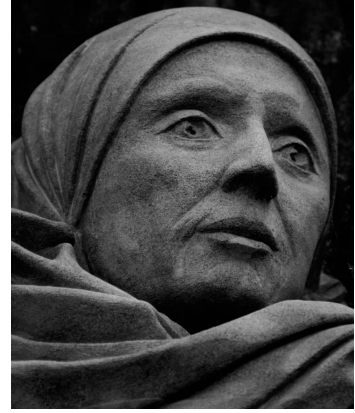
- Teresa of Avila was born in Spain during the 16th century to a well-to-do family. Teresa was fascinated by stories of the Christian saints and martyrs from a young age and explored these interests through mystical games she played with her brother, Roderigo. Her early efforts to join a convent were interrupted by the disapproval of her father, as well as several bouts of malaria.
- She turned instead to quiet prayer and contemplation and attained what she described in her autobiography as the *prayer of union*, in which she felt her soul absorbed into God's power.
- She went on to join a convent and was said to have at one point restored her young nephew to health after he was crushed by a fallen wall. The episode was presented at the process for Teresa's canonization, which took place in 1662.

St. Clare of Assisi

- Clare of Assisi shunned a life of luxury in her wealthy Italian family to devote herself to the burgeoning order of Francis of Assisi. When her parents promised her hand in marriage to a wealthy man in 1211, Clare fled for the Porziuncola Chapel and was taken in by Francis.
- She took vows dedicating her life to God, and Francis placed Clare provisionally with the Benedictine nuns of San Paolo. Her family, furious at Clare's secret flight, went there to try to drag her home by force, but Clare was resolute.
- Clare's piety was so profound that her sister, mother and several other female relatives eventually came to live with her and be her disciples in her convent outside Assisi. The group came to be known as the "Poor Clares" and walked barefoot, slept on the ground, abstained from meat, and spoke only when necessary. Clare died in 1253 and was canonized two years later by Pope Alexander IV.



Julian of Norwich



- Little is known about Julian of Norwich, an English mystic who lived from 1342 until roughly 1430. Information about her comes primarily from her Revelations of Divine Love in Sixteen Showings, the book in which Julian recorded her divine visions.
- In 1373, she became ill and nearly died within a matter of days. A priest came to her bedside and show her an image of Christ, after which Julian recovered and received the 16 revelations that she recorded in her book.
- God later revealed to her the meaning of these visions, which she recorded as: “Would you learn to see clearly your Lord’s meaning in this thing? Learn it well: Love was his meaning. Who showed it to you? Love.... Why did he show it to you? For Love’.... Thus I was taught that Love was our Lord’s meaning.” She chose to live a contemplative and reclusive life until her death.

St. Angela of Foligno



- Angela of Foligno was a Franciscan mystic who was born into a prestigious family and married at the age of 20. A series of events, which included a violent earthquake in 1279 and an ongoing war against Perugia lead her to call upon St Francis, who appeared to her in a vision and instructed her to go to confession.
- Three years later, her mother, husband and all of her children died in the span of a few months. Angela then sold her possessions and in 1291 enrolled in the Third Order of St Francis. At 43, Angela had a vision of God's love while she was making a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Francis of Assisi.
- She dictated her experiences in The Book of the Experience of the Truly Faithful. Pope Francis canonized Angela of Foligno in 2013.

Mechthild of Magdeburg



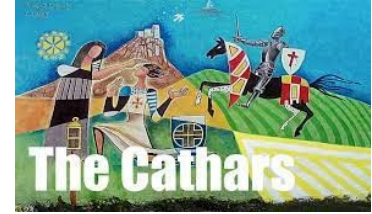
- Like Hadewijch, Mechthild of Magdeburg was part of the Beguine community. The German mystic decided at age 22 to devote her life to God and authored a text entitled *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*.
- She entered the convent of Helfta in 1270 and used poetry to express her divine revelations. On the first page of *The Flowing Light*, Mechthild wrote: “I have been put on my guard about this book, and certain people have warned me that, unless I have it buried, it will be burnt. Yet, I in my weakness have written it, because I dared not hide the gift that is in it.”

Hadewijch

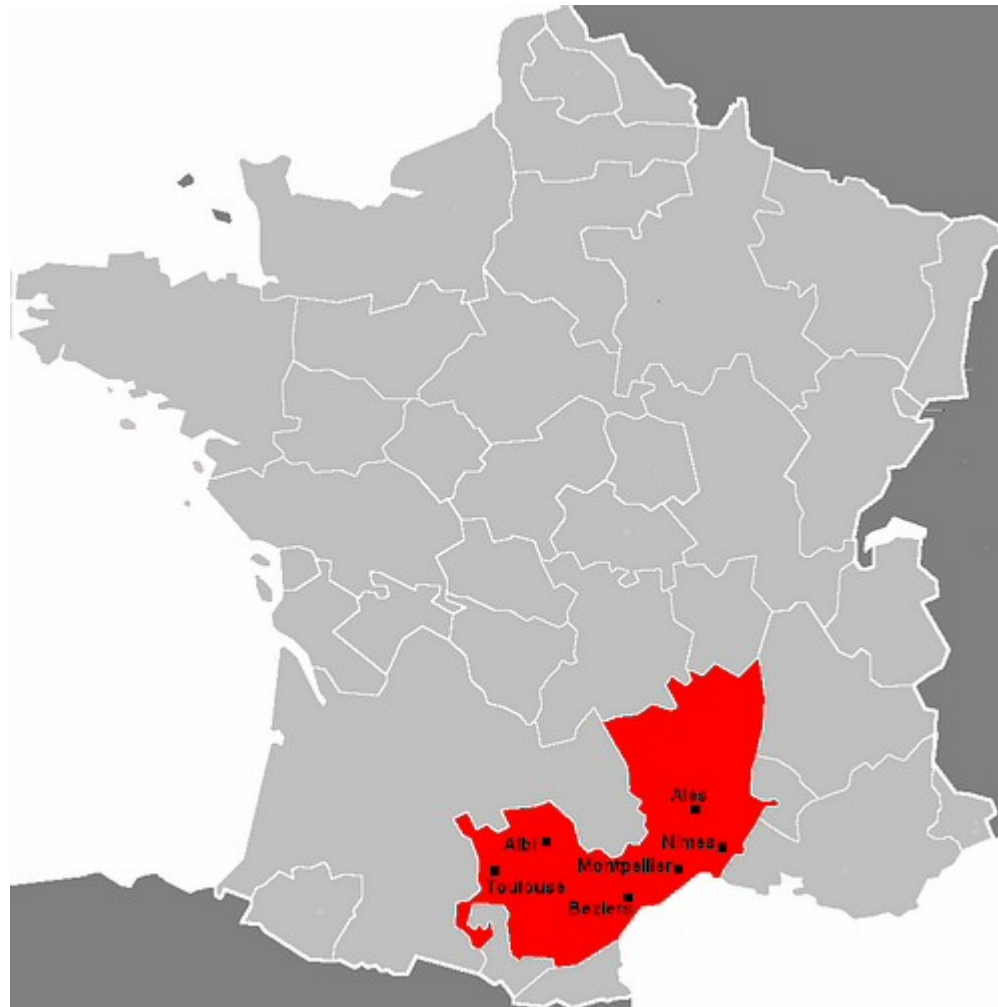


- Hadewijch was a Flemish mystic who was part of the Beguine movement, a network of ascetic and philanthropic communities of women that arose primarily in the Netherlands in the 13th century. Little is known about her life outside of her writings, which include a collection of letters on the spiritual life of the Beguines, as well as a book of visions.
- According to Dr. Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, a comparative literature professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Hadewijch “believed that the soul, created by God in his own image, longs to be one with divine love again, ‘to become God with God.’”

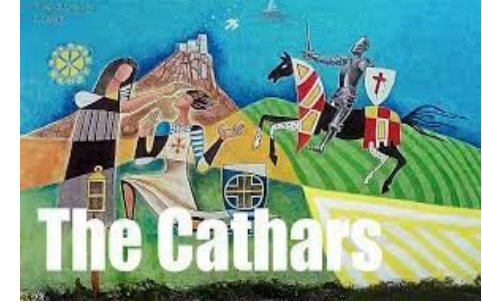
Cathars in Languedoc



- Languedoc Region of France

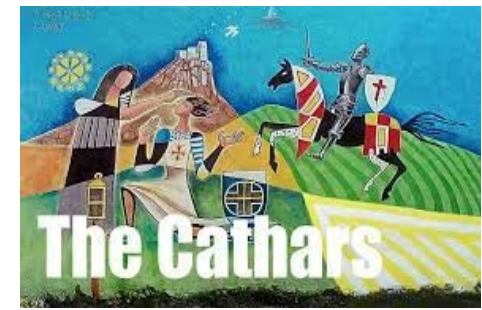


Cathars



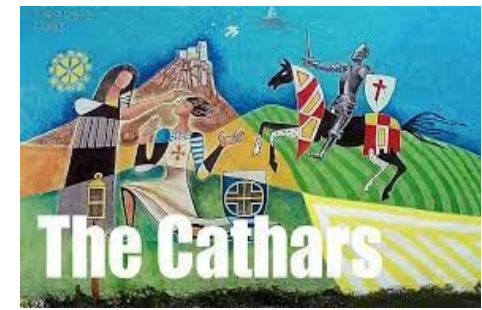
- The Cathars (also known as Cathari from the Greek Katharoi for “pure ones”) were a dualist medieval religious sect of Southern France which flourished in the 12th century CE and challenged the authority of the Catholic Church. They were also known as Albigensians for the town of Albi, which was a strong Cathar center of belief.
- Cathar priests lived simply, had no possessions, imposed no taxes or penalties, and ***regarded men and women as equals***; aspects of the faith which appealed to many at the time disillusioned with the Church. Cathar beliefs ultimately derived from the Persian religion of *Manichaeism* but directly from another earlier religious sect from Bulgaria known as the Bogomils who blended *Manichaeism* with Christianity.

Cathars



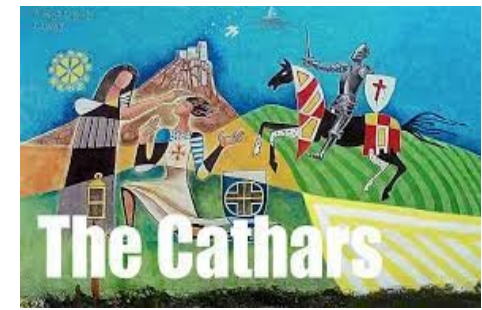
- Cathars believed that Satan had tricked a number of angels into falling from heaven and then encased them in bodies. The purpose of life was to renounce the pleasures and enticements of the world and, through repeated incarnations, make one's way back to heaven. To this end, the Cathars observed a strict hierarchy:
 - Perfecti – those who had renounced the world, the priests and bishops
 - Credentes – believers who still interacted with the world but worked toward renunciation
 - Sympathizers – non-believers who aided and supported Cathar communities
- Cathars rejected the teachings of the Catholic Church as immoral and most of the books of the Bible as inspired by Satan. They criticized the Church heavily for the hypocrisy, greed, and lechery of its clergy, and the Church's acquisition of land and wealth. Not surprisingly, the Cathars were condemned as heretical by the Catholic Church and massacred in the Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229 CE) which also devastated the towns, cities, and culture of southern France.

Cathars



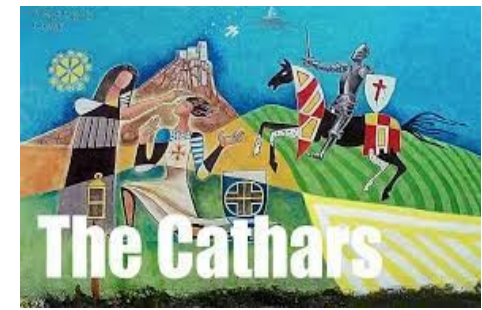
- The King of France and the Pope both desired the wealth of the Cathars, so they schemed together to create the First Crusade against the Cathars and to create the Inquisition to determine who were true believers in Christ and who were not.
- Almost everything known about the Cathars comes from confessions of “heretics” taken by Catholic clergy during the inquisition which followed the Albigensian Crusade.
- The belief structure can easily be traced back to Manichaeism which traveled via the Silk Road from the Byzantine Empire and the Middle East to Europe where it became entwined, under certain circumstances, with Christian belief and symbolism.

Cathars



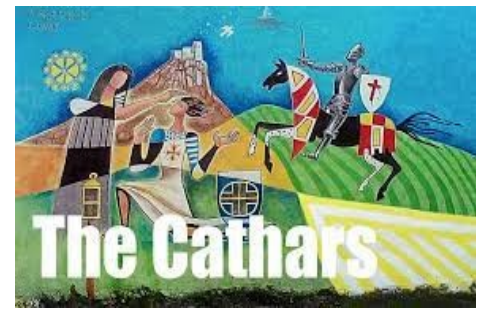
- The orthodox view of the Catholic Church was that there was one God with three aspects-Father, Son and Holy Ghost-but this orthodoxy was not part of the vision of early Christianity and was not generally accepted until accepted after the Council of Nicaea in 325CE (convened by Constantine, the first Christian Emperor of Rome) ruled in favor of it.
- Even then, the Nicaean interpretation of Christianity vied with others such as Manichaeism for centuries. The so-called heretical movements of the Middle Ages such as the Bogomils, the Cathars, and the Waldensians, were simply the latest challenges to the Church, but the Cathars were significant as the first to set themselves up as a legitimate alternative to Catholicism in any form.

Cathar Beliefs



- Recognition of the feminine principle in the divine – God was both male and female. The female aspect of God was Sophia, “wisdom”). This belief encouraged equality of the sexes in Cathar communities.
- Metempsychosis (Reincarnation) – a soul would be continually reborn until it renounced the world completely and escaped incarnation.
- Cosmic Duality – the existence of two powerful deities in the universe, one good and one evil, who were in a constant state of war. The purpose of life was to serve the good by serving others and escape from the cycle of rebirth and death to return home to God.

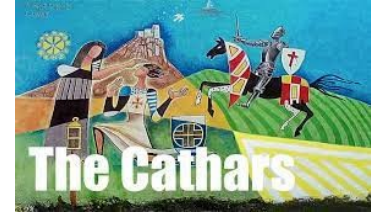
Cathar Beliefs



- Vegetarianism-though eating fish was allowed to credentes and sympathizers.
- Celibacy for perfecti-celibacy was also encouraged generally since it was thought that every person born was just another poor soul trapped by the devil in a body. Marriage overall was discouraged.
- The dignity of manual labor-the Cathars all worked, priests as well as laypeople, many as weavers.
- Suicide (known as the ritual of endura) as a rational and dignified response under certain conditions.

Cathar

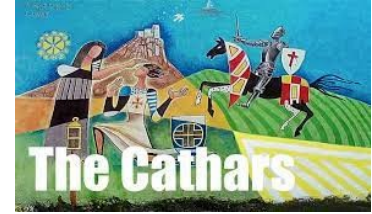
Book of Two Principles



- The only books of the New Testament they accepted were the gospels, completely rejecting the epistles of Paul and the others, with a special emphasis on the Gospel According to John.
- Their central religious text was The Book of Two Principles, passages of which would be read by one of the perfecti to a congregation and interpreted for them by another member of the group.
- The Book of Two Principles related, among other aspects of the faith, the dualist nature of life and how humans, once divine spirits of light, came to be bound in corruptible mortal flesh.

Cathar

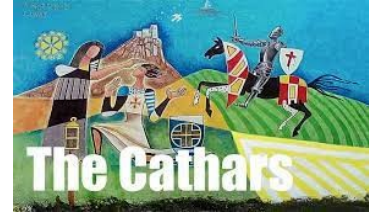
Book of Two Principles



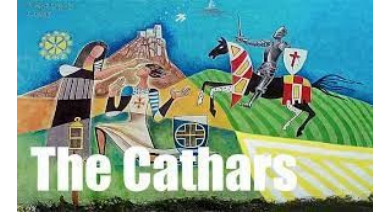
The story goes that the devil came to the gates of heaven and requested entry but was denied. He waited outside the gate for a thousand years, watching for a chance to slip in, and one day he saw his opportunity and took it. Once inside, he gathered an audience of divine spirits around him and told them they were losing out by continuing to love and serve God who never gave them anything. They were little more than slaves, he said, since God owned everything they thought they had. If they would follow him, however, and leave heaven, he could provide them with all kinds of pleasure such as lovely vineyards and rich fields, beautiful women and handsome men, wonderful riches, and the best wine.

Cathar

Book of Two Principles



- Many souls were seduced and for nine days and nine nights they fell through the hole in heaven the devil had created. God allowed this for those who wished to leave but other souls were falling through the hole and so God sealed it.
- After the souls had fallen, they found themselves in the devil's realm without any of the good things he had promised and, remembering the joys of heaven, they repented and asked the devil if they could return. The devil replied that they could not because he had fashioned for them bodies which would bind them to earth and cause them to forget all about heaven.



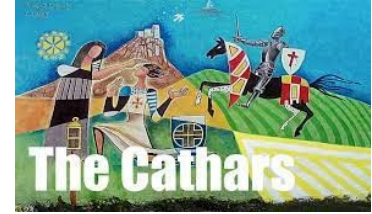
Cathar

Book of Two Principles

- The devil made the bodies easily enough but could not manage to attach the souls to them so they would think, feel, and move; vexed by this, he asked God for help. God understood that the souls who had fallen would have to work their way back to his grace and that they could do so through struggling with these bodies so he made a deal with the devil: the devil could do as he liked with the bodies, but the souls which animated them belonged to God. The devil consented, and humans were created.

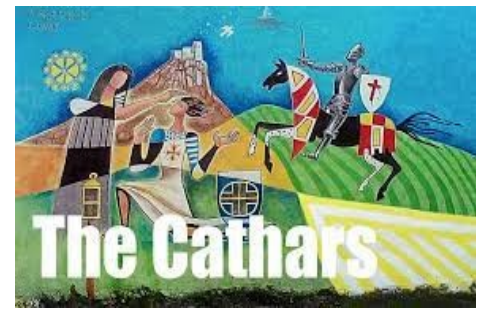
Cathar

Book of Two Principles



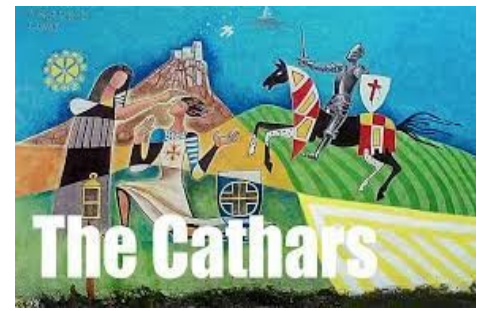
- Trapped in these bodies, the soul would live, die, and be reborn in another as long as that soul remained attached to the body and the pleasures which the devil had promised it back in heaven.
- Once the soul renounced the body and all its temptations, it would be freed to return to God and resume its former state. The whole purpose of human existence was this struggle against the devil (known as Rex Mundi, “the king of this world”) and the prison of the flesh.

Cathar Conflict with Catholic Dogma



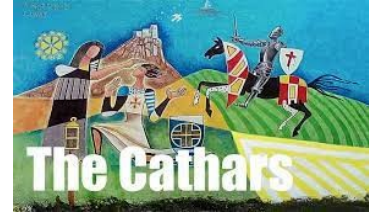
- This view contrasted sharply with the Church's vision of a Garden of Eden in which woman, in the form of Eve, had caused humanity's fall by seducing Adam into eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and of humanity's later redemption from sin through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the son of a single, all-powerful, male god.
- Suicide was (and is still) considered a serious sin by the Church, marriage is encouraged, reincarnation rejected, as is the concept of duality. In Catharism, God and the devil are two eternal, uncreated, forces of equal power; in Christianity, the devil is a fallen angel created by God and ultimately subordinate to him.

Cathar Conflict with Catholic Dogma



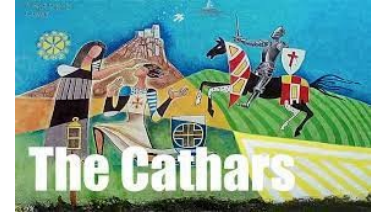
- In addition to these differences, there was the Cathar insistence that Jesus had never been born of a woman and been made flesh, never suffered, died, and was therefore never resurrected.
- All these events, as told in the gospel narratives, happened ideally as a sort of allegory for the state of the soul which is born into the world trapped in a body, must suffer and die, and will finally be free only after it has mastered the body and renounced the things of this world.

Cathars and Catholicism



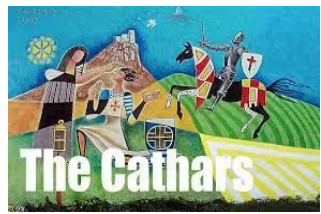
- The Cathars, therefore, repudiated the symbol of the cross and a literal reading of any of the biblical books. They considered the cross a symbol of Rex Mundi and believed it should be destroyed when encountered as it was a representation of evil.
- The cross, they claimed, was nothing more than a symbol of worldly power, and all the sacraments of the church, including infant baptism and communion, were likewise rejected.

Cathars and Catholicism



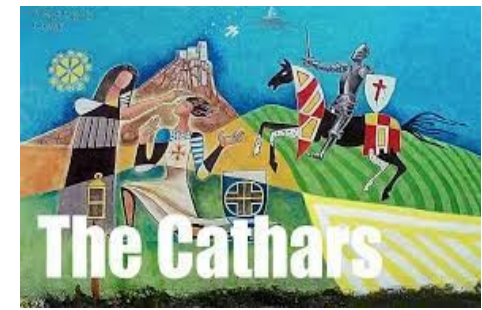
- Cathars who were not celibate practiced birth control and abortion, believing that sex was a natural aspect of the human condition and could be engaged in for pleasure, not only for procreation; in fact, procreation was discouraged.
- Women were valued as men's equals and female figures from the Bible were highlighted, especially Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary.
- Some scholars have suggested, in fact, that the growth of the Cult of the Virgin Mary in medieval Europe – which became an increasingly popular and influential movement – was encouraged by the Cathars' elevation of womanhood.

Cathar Life



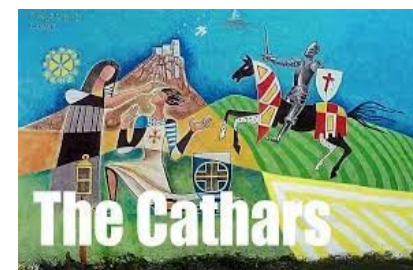
- The Cathars lived in communities which varied in size from 60 to 600 individuals. They shared their possessions and took care of each other as a family. The faith gained a strong foothold in Italy and Southern France through its appeal to the peasantry.
- Scholar Martin Erbstosser notes how “it was the life of the perfecti rather than the teachings of the heretics which played the key part here”. The perfecti lived such blameless lives and were so eager to be of assistance to others, they inspired devoted followers.
- The faith did not remain restricted to the peasantry for long but spread up the medieval hierarchy to artisans like weavers and potters, writers and poets, merchants and business owners, members of the Catholic clergy, and finally nobility. Eleanor of Aquitaine (l. c. 1122-1204 CE) and her daughter Marie de Champagne (l. 1145-1198 CE) were both associated with the Cathars as sympathizers.

Cathar Organization



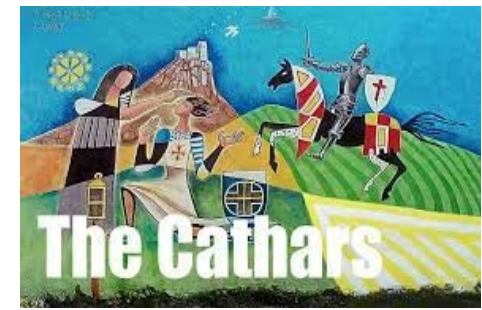
- The Cathars dressed simply in dark robes with hoods or hats, went about barefoot, and the men were unshaven with long beards. They appear in small numbers in records from the 1140's CE in France, but by 1167 CE, there were enough communities in the region to require an assembly to set rules and boundaries.
- The Council of Saint-Felix of 1167 CE organized the Cathar communities into bishoprics, each with a presiding bishop who was responsible only to his own flock. There was no central authority like the Pope of Rome. The council was presided over by a Bogomil cleric named Nicetas (1160's CE) which firmly establishes Bogomilism as the direct source of Catharism.

Cathar Life



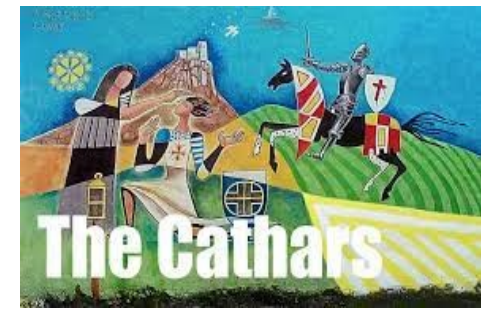
- To become a Cathar, one simply professed one's belief and received the consolamentum, a blessing and welcoming to the faith through the laying on of hands.
- To become one of the perfecti, one completely renounced the world and went through a period of withdrawal and purification before taking office. Men and women were perfecti. There were no official services or masses as with the Church but rather informal gatherings which seem to have been in adherent's homes.
- In Southern France, where the church had never had a very strong hold, Cathars lived and worked among the wider community and convened their gatherings without concern. Elsewhere, they had to be more careful and hide their faith. This practice, according to some scholars, gave birth to the most popular literary genre of the Middle Ages: the poetry of courtly love.

Cathars and Courtly Love



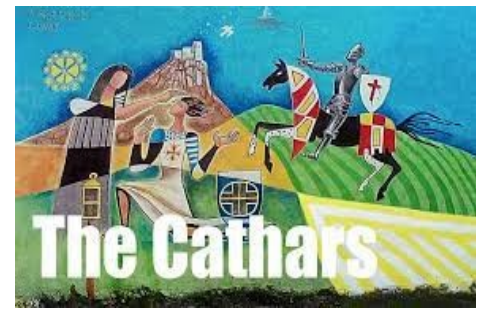
- Courtly love poetry developed in Southern France at the same time as the Cathar heresy. The common theme of this body of medieval literature is the beautiful woman who commands worship and service by a courteous, brave, and noble knight.
- The famous literary motif of the damsel-in-distress who must be rescued comes from this genre, and its most famous author was the French poet Chretien de Troyes (c. 1130 – c. 1190 CE) whose patroness was Marie de Champagne.
- Chretien is best known for creating some of the most famous elements of the Arthurian Legend such as Lancelot's affair with Arthur's queen Guinevere, the quest for the Grail, and is the first to call Arthur's court Camelot.

Cathars and Courtly Love Poetry



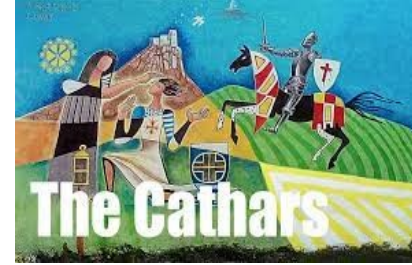
- The poems often involve a quest or some struggle to find or rescue a lady who has been abducted or imprisoned. Women frequently play important roles in these stories and, in a reversal of earlier medieval literary motifs, are central characters who are served by men rather than minor figures and men's property.
- Most importantly, the poems celebrated romantic love, which was considered quite different from, and far superior to, marriage because in marriage the couple had no choice (the match was arranged by the parents) while one chose to engage in extra-marital or premarital love affairs.

Cathars and Courtly Love



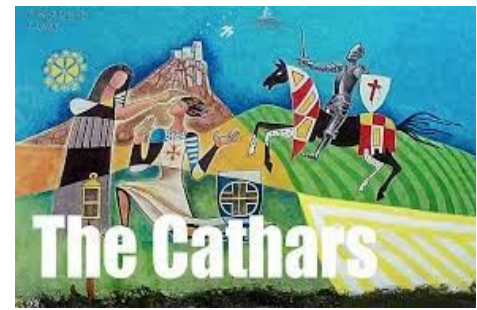
- The scholar C.S.Lewis points out how, in the modern day, these themes seem commonplace and far from surprising but if one compares the poetry of 12th-century CE Provence with works like Bede's history or Beowulf, one realizes what a startling departure this was.
- Lewis and others cite Catharism as a probable inspiration for these works and claims they were allegories of the Cathar vision. The damsel-in-distress was the feminine principle of God, Sophia, who had been abducted by the Catholic Church, and the brave knight was the Cathar adherent who loved, served, and was sworn to rescue her.
- According to this theory, Catharism spread as widely and quickly as it did through the troubadours who traveled through France performing these works.

Albigensian Crusade



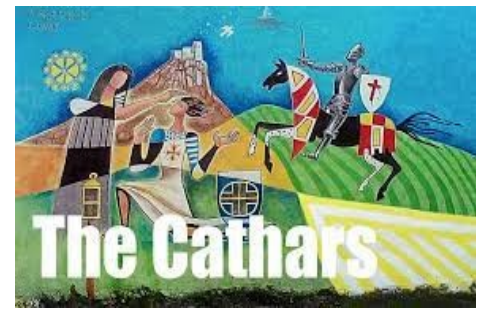
- Whether the poetry was religious allegory helping spread the faith or whether the Cathars simply provided a better alternative to the corrupt and power-hungry medieval church, by the late 12th century CE, Catharism was winning more adherents than ever. Papal legates had been sent to Southern France to try to win the heretics back to orthodoxy, and councils had been called to discuss the problem; none of these efforts had made any headway.
- In 1208 CE, Pope Innocent III (served 1198-1216 CE) sent the lawyer-monk Pierre de Castelnau to Southern France to enlist the aid of Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse (r. 1194-1222 CE) in suppressing the heresy. Raymond was not only an ardent protector and supporter of the Cathars but also the bishop of the order in Toulouse. He refused to cooperate with the Pope's legate and sent him away; Castelnau was later found murdered.

Albigensian Crusade



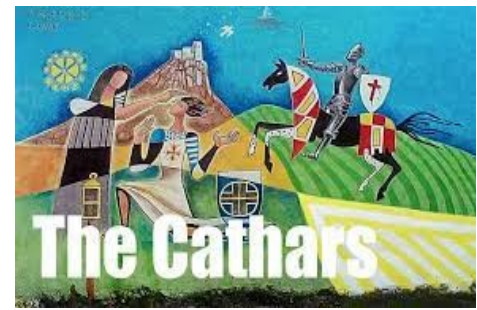
- Pope Innocent then called for a crusade against Southern France, promising the nobles of the north that they could keep all the rich lands and booty of their southern neighbors after the Cathars had been killed and their supporters crushed.
- The northern nobles were only too happy to comply with the pope's holy wishes and the Albigensian Crusade was launched in 1209 CE.

Albigensian Crusade



- Since the majority of Cathars were women, it was mainly women and children who were massacred in the crusade, but often whole towns went up in flames and all the citizenry killed.
- At the siege-turned-massacre of the town of Beziers, when Arnaud-Amaury (the Cistercian monk commanding the Church's forces) was asked how to tell the difference between a heretic and a believer, he said, “Kill them all, the Lord knows who are His” (Bryson & Movsesian, 12).
- According to Church documents, 20,000 heretics were slaughtered in and around Beziers and the town burned to the ground.

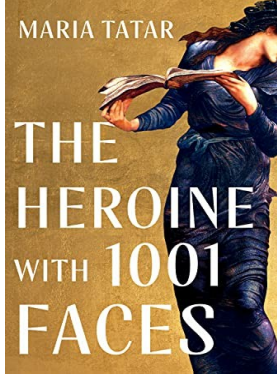
Albigensian Crusade



- .After 1209 CE and the sack of Carcassonne, the earl Simon de Montfort (l. c. 1175-1218 CE) led the crusade which continued the destruction of the region while enriching the northern barons who participated. By 1229 CE, the “official” crusade was over but the Cathars were still persecuted and northern armies continued to sack villages and murder innocent people.
- Between May of 1243 and March of 1244 CE, the Cathar stronghold of Montsegur held against siege but was finally taken and the last Cathar defense fell. In the massacre which followed, 200 perfecti were burned alive on a large pyre.

The Hero with a Thousand Faces

- Joseph Campbell wrote *Hero with a Thousand Faces* concerning common themes in myths, with the hero always being male.
- Campbell views the monomyth as the product of the human psyche, which is encoded with Oedipal impulses and infant fears that are the subject of contemporary psychoanalytic study.
- Campbell draws connections between modern dreams and ancient myths, which share a common symbology and represent the insistent meaning-making of the human mind. The Prologue also begins exploring the spectrum of tragedy and comedy in myth, the role of heroes and gods, and the ultimate source of power in the universe as represented in myth, which Campbell calls The World Navel.



The Heroine of 1001 Faces

- From Penelope and Pandora to Katniss Everdeen and Lisbeth Salander, the 'hero's journey' gets a much-needed makeover
- Starting with Greek mythology and Scheherezade and moving through the centuries all the way to the Game of Thrones series and The Queen's Gambit, women's reinvention of heroism goes to embrace empathy, compassion, and care, often to pursue social justice
- In contemporary culture a female version of the 'trickster' archetype in Everdeen and Salander. Is identified
- Of this lineage, among the shared interesting traits not traditionally associated with women characters is a prodigious appetite