



Lost Teachings of the Cathars: Their Beliefs and Practices

Andrew Phillip Smith

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Centuries after the brutal slaughter of the Cathars by papally endorsed Northern French forces, and their suppression by the Inquisition the medieval Cathars continue to exert a powerful influence on both popular culture and spiritual seekers. Yet few people know anything of the beliefs of the Cathars beyond vague notions that they believed in reincarnation, were vegetarians, were somehow Gnostic, and had some relation to Mary Magdalene. The *Lost Teachings of the Cathars* explores the history of this Christian dualist movement between the 12th and 14th centuries, offering a sympathetic yet critical examination of its beliefs and practices.

As well as investigating the origin of the Cathars, their relationship to the ancient Gnostics of the early centuries AD and the possibility that they survived the Inquisition in some way, the author also addresses recent renewed interest in Catharism.

Eccentric esotericists initiated a neo-Cathar revival in the Languedoc which inspired the philosopher Simone Weil. The German Otto Rahn, who has been called the real-life Indiana Jones, believed that the Cathars were protectors of the Holy Grail and received support from Heinrich Himmler. Arthur Guirdham, a psychiatrist from the West of England, became convinced that he and a circle of patients had all been Cathars in previous lives.

Tourists flock to the Languedoc to visit Cathar country. Bestsellers such as Kate Mosse's timeslip novel *Labyrinth* continue to fascinate readers. But what did the Cathars really believe and practice?

Lost Teachings of the Cathars: Their Beliefs and Practices Details

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M. says

Very interesting part of history that I didn't know about. I won it in a contest and it was a good read.

Wayne says

this was a goodreads.com free.. now that that's out of the way. This book is very good research material for authors .. shows religious strife , Centuries after the brutal slaughter of the Cathars by papally endorsed Northern French forces, and their suppression by the Inquisition. The German Otto Rahn, who has been called the real-life Indiana Jones, believed that the Cathars were protectors of the Holy Grai

John Szalasny says

The history of the Cathars in popular culture begins and ends with the 4th Crusade - the only one fought in the heartlands of Europe. The extermination of the believers of a sect who believed in Jesus and his message in the New Testament (primarily the book of John) serves as the template for the religious cleansing of the Nazis as well as the ethnic cleansing of the Serbians in the 20th century. This book dig deeper into the beliefs of the Good Men and Women, those we know today as the Cathars and it is a good starter history on the subject.

The author starts at the end, with the massacres in the Languedoc region of France through to the beginnings of the Inquisition and its round up of Perfects and other believers. The author then goes back to explain the beliefs and the origins of the sect. Done without records of the believers, information on this sect is gathered through the "confessions" recorded by the Inquisition. Even discounting the fact that this history is written through the eyes of the victors, it gives insights to a belief system much different than Roman Catholicism. Bodies are not resurrected. Lives are reincarnated. The creator and god of the earth is Satan (the evil god - the good god is in heaven).

My only quibble about the book is the addition of the last three chapters on the modern revival of Catharism. Most of the figures of this revival have no historical basis for their version of what is and how to be a believer, and the efforts of these people are either based on romantic or nationalistic notions. This would be fine as an afterward, but as written, gives the modern revival the same legitimacy as the historical Cathars and brings down my rating to 3.5 stars.

Lindsey says

DNF. Before picking up this book, I knew that the Cathars were a religious sect who were persecuted and wiped out during the Inquisition. After reading (about a third) of this book, I know that the Cathars were a religious sect who were persecuted and wiped out during the Inquisition. To be fair to the author, it's likely

this book is meant for persons who are already familiar with the history of the Cathars, and not people like me who think they may have heard the word used one time in that terrible Antonio Banderas movie set during the Inquisition. If you already have an interest in history, and you already have some familiarity with the history expanded on here, this book is for you. If you know nothing, this is not a dummy's guide.

I received an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.
