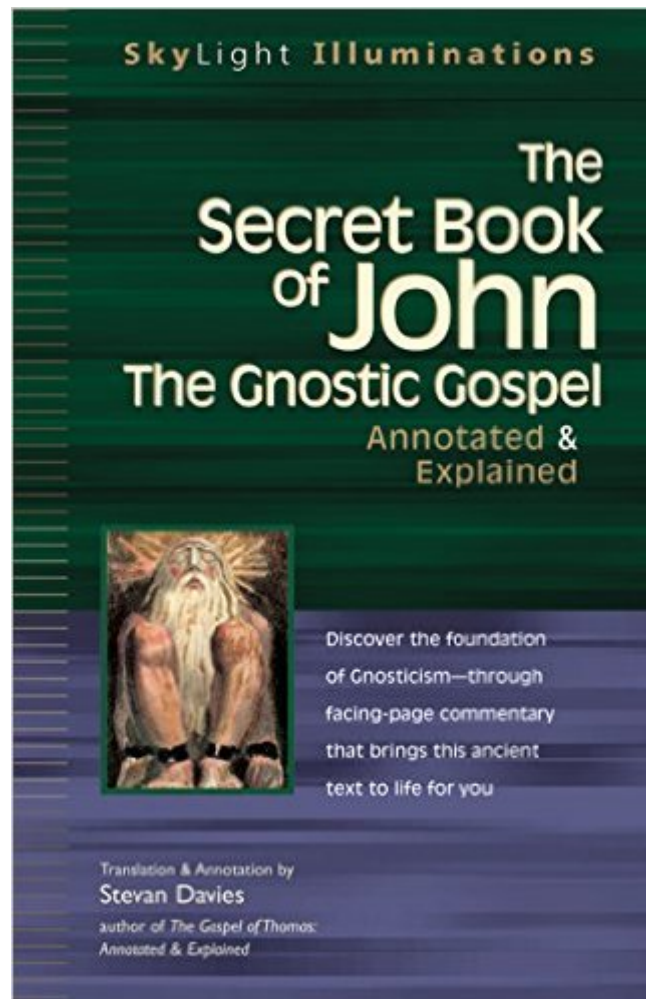


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The Secret Book Of John: The Gnostic Gospels_Annotated & Explained (SkyLight Illuminations)



Synopsis

This ancient Gnostic text can be a companion for your own spiritual quest. The Secret Book of John is the most significant and influential text of the ancient Gnostic religion. Part of the library of books found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945, this central myth of Gnosticism tells the story of how God fell from perfect Oneness to imprisonment in the material world, and how by knowing our divine nature and our divine origins—that we are one with God—we reverse God's descent and find our salvation. The Secret Book of John: The Gnostic Gospel—Annotated & Explained decodes the principal themes, historical foundation, and spiritual contexts of this challenging yet fundamental Gnostic teaching. Drawing connections to Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, kabbalistic Judaism, and Sufism, Davies focuses on the mythology and psychology of the Gnostic religious quest. He illuminates the Gnostics' ardent call for self-awareness and introspection, and the empowering message that divine wholeness will be restored not by worshiping false gods in an illusory material world but by our recognition of the inherent divinity within ourselves. Now you can experience and understand this foundational teaching even if you have no previous knowledge of Gnosticism. This SkyLight Illuminations edition presents the most important and valued book in Gnostic religion with insightful yet unobtrusive commentary. It provides deeper insight into the understanding that in Gnosticism the distinction between savior and saved ceases to exist—you must save yourself and in doing so save God.

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Customer Reviews

The Secret Book, or Apocryphon, of John is perhaps the most important text of classic Gnosticism. It is also one of the most complex, difficult to follow in the standard translations, its meaning more or less impenetrable without a commentary. In *The Secret Book of John: Annotated and Explained*, Gospel of Thomas expert Stevan Davies provides a clear and accessible introduction to this important text. Step by step Davies steers the reader through the different layers of the text, outlining the structure of its thought and even providing diagrams. The translation is straightforward and formatted in such a way that the reader cannot get lost in the maze of terminology and ideas. What is more, the introduction is the best short explanation of Gnosticism that I have ever read. Davies sketches out the fundamentals of Gnosticism clearly, appealing to contemporary spirituality without compromising historical accuracy. Anyone genuinely interested in understanding ancient Gnosticism should start here.

The Secret Book of John was a difficult read, at first. More so, possibly because I had originally read it in James M. Robinson's Nag Hammadi Library collection. I appreciate the classic value of the Robinson edition, but since then other interpreters have better clarified the secret texts, in comprehensible and succinct language. Davies' book is one such basic read, although I still call Marvin Meyer's "The Gnostic Teachings of Jesus" my favorite. However, Davies' "Annotated & Explained" goes further than Myers, so now I have two on my shelves. The more interpretation samples we read, the better our understanding of such esoteric material. "John" is not at all like the Secret Gospel of Thomas, or the Gospel of Mary, which were short, and "sayings". This book is more like a "cosmology according to the Christ". What throws so many people off from The Secret Book/Teaching/Apocryphon of John is that the story doesn't resemble anything else Jesus said in the New Testament. People also tend to condemn it because it stands rather disconnected from other gospel, apocrypha and epistles, and has a sense of fantasy about it. Jesus explains Sophia, the feminine wisdom who gave virgin birth to Yaldabaoth, the demiurge. It discusses the role of archons, even naming the Archons of Yaldabaoth. It is highly revelatory, but so are the writings of Swedenborg, J. Smith and John Ballou Newbrough, to name just a few latter day prophets. The Secret Book of John is a syncretism of Greek ideas and Judaic Genesis mythology. If you give it a chance, you can come away with meaningful and life changing knowledge. One thing it did for me was answer the eternal question of "why bad things happen to good people". That question has never been answered satisfactorily by more traditional (note, I avoid the term "Orthodox", my bias--sorry) priests and pastors, because they don't teach that it was an imperfect demiurge that

made an imperfect world. Once you accept that premise, everything else falls into place. For any reader serious about Gnosticism or Gnostic-curious, this is the book to start with.

I read this book years ago and didn't get nearly as much out of it as today. I doubt that first time readers are going to penetrate any book by John easily. The cosmology expressed needs commentary for modern man, or traditional Christians, who have been trained a different way. What I like about this book is the way it explains the Godhead as male and female, the various layers of the universe, the various co-creators with God that hurt his creation, and the clear references to karma (called fate), and reincarnation, that were probably a part of the original teachings of Jesus. I also see possible references to Aliens and UFO's in this book, which were also a part of Gnostic teaching. Some people might think that Jesus doesn't sound like "Jesus" in this book due to his longer discourses. If so, try reading "Love without End", "The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ", or other books in the Gnostic collection. I think that you will see that Jesus spoke at length about the subjects he loved, with higher initiates, every chance he got. He's just that kind of a person.

Its amazing how much information of God there is out side of the bible. So much of Man's insights, culture, traditions and changing the original words and meaning there is in the bible. Can make a person experience a lack of trust, or provoke them in searching diligently for more knowledge and truth of who our wondrous creator is and our true identity.

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