



The Other Bible

Anonymous , Willis Barnstone (Editor)

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A new edition of our classic, The Other Bible, including a new index, new cover, and a new introduction from the author to bring The Other Bible up to date.

The Other Bible gathers in one comprehensive volume ancient, esoteric holy texts from Judeo-Christian tradition that were excluded from the official canon of the Old and New Testaments, including the Gnostic Gospels, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Kabbalah, and several more. The Other Bible provides a rare opportunity to discover the poetic and narrative riches of this long-suppressed literature and experience firsthand its visionary discourses on the nature of God, humanity, the spiritual life, the world around us, and infinite worlds beyond this one.

This new edition will include a full index and a new introduction from editor Willis Barnstone.

The interest in Gnostic texts begun with The Da Vinci Code has spread to include many of the other "suppressed" early texts of Judaism and Christianity, and this book contains many of them in one volume.

The Other Bible Details

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TediyraBH says

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Eric says

Western religion from a respectful and alert perspective. Here is the developing biblical tradition in all its diversity: Gnostic, Samaritan, Blakean...

The translations are crisp and accessible, the introduction and notes informative in the extreme.

This book contains much of what has been missing in the average person's religious education. And it will broaden the reader's perspective even as it conveys the intensity of the search for God.

Sherri Moorer says

This was interesting. It gave me a broader perspective on The Bible and the context of the history of our faith. The gnostic gospels can make your head spin and, of course, all of this is open to interpretation. I feel that it's beneficial for Christians to read because we can learn a lot from the text here that wasn't accepted into cannon, although I do recommend reading with great discretion and discernment.

Christie Bogle says

Ok, so I bought this book back in 1990. (maybe a previous version) but I find it interesting that they describe the book as having followed a trend that began with a book that is only, what, five years old? Well, call me a trendsetter! I read the apocryphal texts and the gnostics texts as a CHILD for FUN. Woo hoo! Pays to go to catholic schools,eh?

Suzanne Singman says

Thank goodness I finished this book. It was very long and dry. I am interested in religion and in its various forms. This book includes many pieces of biblical literature that have been found that are not included in the "good book" (for any number of reasons). There is a lot of what they call inter-testamental writings, to explain the difference between the god of the old testament and the new testament. But overall it was just hard to read. I am not a scholar, so it was harder for me to hold on to the multiple ideas thrown about. and i got so tired of the ridiculous creation stories and the number of heavens and angels and depths of hell. I had the same trouble when I read my first Kabbalah book by Gershom Sholam (I think that's his name). I just didn't have enough context.

So i don't recommend this for casual reading.

Denise says

Bought this pre-Google, pre-Wikipedia... pre-internet. It has served me well as a quick reference book, alas it takes up precious space on my book case and most of the information can now be found with a few key strokes. Goodbye book, if the library can't use you, may you be recycled into a new and loved form.

Joanna says

I started reading this a year or so ago, but it ended up back on the bookshelf before I finished it (it is 732 pages). It contains the text of the *Gnostic Gospels*, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, *Visionary Wisdom Texts*, *Christian Apocrypha*, *Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, and *Kabbalah*. Instead of all of the books being sandwiched into one, the book is edited so that it begins with Creation Myths taken from each of these sources, with subsequent sections organized in the same manner. I'm reading it again because the Apocrypha is required reading for a literature class I'll be taking soon.

Corey says

so far this book is quite interesting. Looking at some of the early scriptures that were suppress by mainstream Christianity and other forces of the early day. This book includes th Gnostic scriptures, Dead sea Scrolls, Visionary wisdom texts, Christian Apocrypha, Jewish Pseudepigrapha, and the kabbalah. There is a descrian of what each of these are and translations.

Thise that are interested in relious history and alternative spirituality, this text is for you. It will not only challenge and allow you to see religion and spirituality from a very different point of View.

Kyle Muntz says

An immense, incredibly rich collection of noncanonical Jewish and Christian writings, with special focus on the Gnostics and their notion of an evil creator God, "an abortion of darkness".

This book had me thinking a lot about the idea of divinity (the "god feeling") as a poetics/cosmology of the sublime; of fantasy as a means for humans to grapple with an incomprehensible universe, and the power that has within the context of fiction.

I just wrote a much longer review, but I think I'm going to be expanding it into a post for Entropy, so keep your eyes open!

(Also, it's difficult to read this without thinking of the incredibly powerful role fanfiction has had on the development of culture, which isn't what I'm going to write about but a super rich look into the history of writing and how ideas are formed.)

Melissa says

So far, this book is pretty interesting. Many religious works omitted from the Bible, all together in one place. Currently, I am reading the Kaballah. It is so interesting to compare the differences in religion and points of view, though the stories are pretty much the same. It is facinating to learn how the Hebrew "alpha-bet" is used to "create" the universe by God. Very interesting. Though I am a bit lost in some spots, not being familiar with the religion, I still can't help but be drawn to read more. If anyone has any insight they would like to share on the Alphabet, feel free. :) I need all the help I can get.

Very cool. Facinating to see the differences in relgions, though there seem to be more similarities than contrasts. I especially liked the Kaballah and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Ian says

Good collection of Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi texts; Dr. Barnstone vitiates what could have been a superior collection with the assertion that these apocryphal writings somehow 'disprove' the biblical Canon, ignoring the fact that they were written in the infancy of Christianity when belief was still a work in progress (much like using the Magna Carta or the Plymouth Charter in disproving the U.S. Constitution...)

Kate says

I had two big problems with this collection:

1. the way it was organized by genre (infancy gospels all together, creation stories together, etc), even to the point of cutting out parts of the story that don't fit the genre. This took the books out of the context of their religious movement and time period, and at the same time didn't allow them to stand on their own by forcing them into artificial categories.
 2. The fact that most of the stories here are not included in full but are only excerpts. The gaps are cleverly disguised by removing the original chapter/verse divisions. You have to read the footnotes to figure out where the gaps are. After comparing the original to the excerpt it was not clear to me why they chose to cut out what they did. Was it not interesting enough for their tastes? Or did removing the passages make the story conform better to the editors' notions of the genre they decided to assign to it? They never explain themselves.
-

adam prometheus says

The best collection I've seen of material that was deleted from the official "Bible" by the Church (Emperor Constantine, etc.)- including gnostic and qabbalistic texts, and basically anything that contained any real empowering spiritual wisdom or revealing mythological connections, was labelled as "pagan" and removed from the canon... but they are every bit as legitimate (or more so), source-wise, as the books that they approved! Reading them you can clearly see how vital elements were left out to enable easier psychological control of the masses- it sheds a lot of light on what Christ was actually trying to tell people, and it makes a whole lot more sense.

And the creation fables are especially interesting- my favorite is the part where it's explained that the

Creator-god is actually a malevolent demiurge who sinned against the true God by stealing divine Light and trapping it in matter. The serpent then represents not Satan but the earliest incarnation of Christ, and he came to help mankind to free themselves from the matter-trap by explaining to them that the demiurge doesn't want them to eat the fruit because then they would work their way through the Knowledge (Gnosis) of the Tree until finally they would obtain the Tree of Life, at which point they would have the same powers as the demiurge and have the ability to create their own worlds!
And that's just the beginning!

Mary Overton says

07/14/2009: read 'THE GOSPEL OF NICODEMUS,' a text once considered part of the canon and wildly popular during Medieval times. '...a passion gospel purporting to be an official report of the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus.... one of the most dramatic and moving documents of early Christianity. Argumentative rather than spiritual, it reads like an exciting eyewitness report of murder, miracle, and resurrection.... a fabricated record of the third or fourth century written specifically as a pious counterblast to Pagan statements concerning Jesus.... Faith or disbelief makes one person's miracles another's sorcery.... In keeping with other works of the period, the Gospel is virulently anti-Jewish. It attempts editorially to dissociate Jesus as well as early biblical figures from Jewish identity.... the term 'Jews' becomes a stereotyping device to condemn a rival alien people.' (359-360)

From the first part, 'Acts of Pilate': Medieval romance writers invented the Holy Grail from legends about Joseph of Arimathaea, who claimed the body of Jesus and placed it in the tomb. Before that happened, though, Jewish leaders advocating for Jesus' death imprisoned Joseph. He is rescued by divine intervention. Joseph describes how, 'at midnight as I stood and prayed, the house where you shut me in was raised up the four corners, and I saw as it were a lightning flash in my eyes. Full of fear, I fell to the ground. And someone took me by the hand and raised me up from the place where I had fallen, and something moist like water flowed from my head to my feet, and the smell of fragrant oil reached my nostrils.' (372)

From the second part, 'Christ's Descent into Hell': Hades is the personification of death, a being who devours the dead and holds them in his gut. He and Satan are fearful that Jesus will steal all the dead from them and bring the dead up to heaven.

"Then Hades said to his demons: 'Make fast well and strongly the gates of brass and the bars of iron, and hold my locks, and stand upright and watch every point. For if he [the crucified Jesus:] comes in, woe will seize us.'" (376)

Of course, Jesus breaks through all the brass and iron and redeems those lost souls who died before His coming. Then Hades and Satan squabble about who is to blame.

'And Hades took Satan and said to him: 'O Beelzebub, heir of fire and torment, enemy of the saints, through what necessity did you contrive that the King of glory should be crucified, so that he should come here and strip us naked? Turn and see that not one dead man is left in me, but that all which you gained through the Tree of Knowledge you have lost through the tree of the cross.' (377)

10/14/2008: read the 'Infancy Gospels' -- of James, Matthew, Thomas, as well as the Latin & Arabic ones -- researching Mariology; also dipped into the 'Apocalypses.'

Daniel says

Really interesting reading of additional scripture texts that have been found - especially the books of Enoch

and of Adam. These texts were accepted as legitimate texts back in Jesus' time and shortly there after, but were later culled from the holy books and destroyed where possible.

This mostly isn't page-turner reading, though it is in places. Even so, it's a great resource and worth checking out.
