The Gospel of the Secret Supper, or John’s Interrogation, is not an original Cathar text. It exists as a gift from the Bogomils, in Latin translation from a text in old Bulgarian from the twelfth century or earlier, that in the thirteenth century was obtained and taken to Italy by the Patarene emissaries of Bosnia to the bishop of Concorezzo and thereafter dispersed through Italy and Provence. There may have been a Paulician scripture behind it, in Greek rather than Armenian, some centuries before, now lost, on which the Secret Supper was based and shaped to accommodate Bogomil doctrine. It exists in two slightly different versions, one preserved in the archives of the Office of the Inquisition at Carcassonne and the second in the National Library of Vienna. Both come from one source, but the Vienna version appears to be altered to make it clearer in sense and interpretation. It is not complete, breaking off forty-three lines from the end (in René Nelli’s French translation). The Vienna has definite virtues. It clarifies passages and adds colorful language. However, it reads almost as a gloss of the Carcassone and lacks its majesty. Where the Vienna version seems to solve a problem of meaning, this is recorded in the notes.

The Secret Supper is a gospel of the invisible father, his son the angel Christ, and John of the canonical gospels, who questions the lord (Jesus Christ) and the invisible father at a Last Supper (Passover meal). Structurally,
it is dialectic, at times like a platonic dialogue, but without debate; at other moments it is a genesis narration. It begins with a creation of the world. The imagery is as striking as that of Genesis or Revelation. The main character is Satan, shining white before his fall and burning red thereafter. Then Adam and Eve are created. After Satan and his reptile provoke the first couple's sin, the world, which is a mistake, is reigned over by Satan and his own angels. Jesus Christ descends. There is baptism by water and spirit, the eucharist, last judgment, and punishment of Satan. In the last part the invisible father speaks and controls the scene.

The work begins as a strongly dualist text, immediately introducing two conflicting deities. The invisible father is not to be confused with the demiurge creator in Genesis. There is the creator of good, who is the true lord, and the creator of evil, who is Satan and his contaminated creations. Humans have a spirit or soul, however, which permits them to return from the evil of the prison of earthly matter. This gospel or treatise is thus a mitigated dualist document, in that god is not entirely separated from the possibility of creating figures who might do evil. There is an element of free will, which permits Adam and Eve to make their fatal choice. In a text like the Book of the Two Principles, which is considered an absolute dualist document, however, free will does not exist. Otherwise god would have been guilty of creating angels and ultimately humans capable of choosing evil, which he cannot do or even wish to do. God is limited to doing good, and therefore there is a second presence who can and desires to do evil—the second absolute deity, the principle of evil. In absolute dualism there is an absolute distinction between good and evil and their mutual divine authors.

After earlier gnostic conversation and narration, the scripture continues, moving toward a more conventionally Christian gospel, albeit with a reference to the crucifixion in which Christ is an angel, an illusion, a phantasm rather than the suffering Jesus. The last judgment, while it is linguistically fresh and the details of Satan's punishment are rich in apocalyptic images from late apocrypha, varies little, or not at all, from what it means and how it sounds in the New Testament. The way there is different, the deity above is other, but the conclusion is recognizably alike, with the invisible father substituting for the Christian god. In the early part the references are to Genesis and Isaiah, in the later part to the gospel of John, the preferred gospel in gnostic treatises. The Secret Supper and the Book of the Two Principles, which escaped the fire of wars and Inquisition, constitute the two main extant Cathar scriptures.
WHO BROUGHT YOU HERE?

I, John, who am your brother and share with you the tribulation of having shared the kingdom of the skies, since I was lying on the chest of our lord Jesus Christ, asked him, "Lord, who brought you here?"

And he answered me, "He who put his hand in the plate with me. So Satan entered in him, and he, Judas, had already betrayed me."

BEFORE SATAN FELL

And I said, "Lord, before Satan fell, what was his glory beside your father's?"

And he told me, "Such was his glory that he governed the virtues of heaven. As for me, I sat next to my father. Satan was the master of all those who imitated the father, and his power descended from the sky to the inferno and rose again from the inferno to the throne of the invisible father. And he observed the glory of him who transformed the skies. And he dreamed of placing his seat on the clouds of heaven, because he wanted to be like the very high."

Then, having descended into the air, he said to the angel of the air, "Open the gates of the air for me."

And the angel opened the gates of the air.

And he went on his way to the bottom. There he found the angel who guarded the waters, and he said to him, "Open the gates of the waters for me."

And the angel opened the gates of the waters.

Going ahead, he found the whole face of the earth and saw two fish who were stretched over the waters. They were like two oxen joined together for plowing and, at the invisible father's order, they held up the earth, from sunset to sunrise.
When he descended farther down, he found himself in the presence of clouds weighing on the tidal waves of the sea. He went on until he got to his ossop, which is the principle of fire. After that he could not descend farther because of the intense flame of the fire. Then Satan came in from behind and filled his own heart with malice, and reaching the angel of the air and the one who was above the waters, he said to them, "Everything belongs to me. If you listen to me, I will place my seat on the clouds and I shall be similar to the very high. I will withdraw the waters of the upper firmament and assemble all the areas occupied by the sea into one entity of vast seas. That done, there will be no water on the face of the entire earth, and I shall reign with you through the centuries of the centuries."

After he said this, the angel Satan rose toward the other angels to the fifth heaven, and to each of them he said, "How much do you owe your masters?"

"One hundred measures of wheat," one of them answered.
"Take pen and ink," he said to him, "and write forty."
He told the others, "And you, how much do you owe the lord?"
"One hundred jars of oil," he answered him.
"Sit down," Satan said to him, "and write fifty." He climbed into the skies, and with such words seduced the angels of the invisible father up to the fifth heaven.

THE FATHER PITIES SATAN

But a voice came out of the throne of the father, saying, "What are you doing, denier of the father, you who are seducing the angels? Creator of sin, hurry with what you hope to do!" Then the father ordered his angels, "Rip off their robes!"
The angels stripped all those angels who had listened to Satan of their robes, their thrones, and their crowns. And I questioned the lord further.

"When Satan plummeted, where did he make his living place?"
And he responded to me, "My father transformed him because of his pride, and he withdrew the light from him." His face became like red fire and

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6. In the Vienna version a marginal note says that ossop is the same as the Valley of Josaphat, although the text reads "principle of fire."
9. Satan was also the angel Lucifer, carrier of the light.
was fully like that of a man. He dragged with his tail the third part of the an-
gels of god, and he was hurled from his seat and from his domain in the skies. Descending to the firmament of the fallen angels, he found no place to rest for himself or for those who were with him.

And he begged the father, saying, “Be patient with me and I will return everything to you!”

The father pitied him and gave him and those with him rest and permission to do what he wished to do on the seventh day.

SATAN REVEALS DRY LAND AND
CREATES MAN AND WOMAN

So he installed himself in his heaven and commanded his angels who were above the air and above the waters. He lifted two parts of the water, from bottom to top, into the air, and from the third part he made the sea, which became the mistress of the waters, but, according to the father's commandment, he also prescribed that the angel who was above the waters hold up the two fish. And he lifted the earth from bottom to top and dry land appeared. He took the crown of the angel who commanded the waters and from one half made the light of the moon, from the other the light of the stars. With precious stones he made the army of stars. Then he chose the angels for his ministers according to the celestial hierarchies established by the very high. And by command of the invisible father, he made thunder, the rains, the frosts, and the snows. He placed his angels as ministers over them to govern them. And he commanded the earth to produce every kind of great beast, all reptiles, and trees and grasses. And he commanded the sea to produce fish and the sky birds.

After that he reflected, and he made a man so that he might have a slave. He ordered the angel of the third sky to enter this body of mud, from which he then took out a part for making another body in the form of a woman. And he commanded the angel of the second sky to enter the body of the woman. But these angels wept when they saw that they had there an external mortal form and that they were dissimilar in that external form. Satan joined them in this act of turning their bodies of mud into flesh. The angels did not perceive that in this way he also committed a sin.

The announcer of coming evils meditated in his spirit on a way he would
fashion paradise. Then he ordered the people to enter it and his angels to lead them to it. The devil planted a reed in the middle of paradise. And in one spit he made the serpent, whom he commanded to live in the reed. In such way the devil concealed his evil design so they might not know his trickery.

And he entered paradise and spoke with them.

He said to them, “Eat from all the fruit that is found in paradise, but beware of eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.”

However, the devil slipped into the body of the evil serpent and seduced the angel who was in the form of woman and he spread over her head the powerful desire of sin, and he satiated Eve with his bodily desire while he attended to the serpent’s tail. That is why humans are called the children of the devil and children of the serpent, because they serve the desire of the devil, who is their father, and will serve it until the consummation of this century.

**ADAM AND EVE CHOOSE SIN AND BECOME MORTAL**

Then, I, John, questioned the lord, “How can one say that Adam and Eve were created by god and placed in paradise to obey the father’s orders, but they were then delivered to death?”

The lord answered me, “Listen, John, beloved of my father, it is the ignorant who say, in their error, that my father made these bodies of mud. In reality he created all the virtues of heaven through the holy spirit. But it is through their sin that they found themselves with mortal bodies of mud and were consequently turned over to death.”

And again I, John, questioned the lord, “How can a man become born in spirit in a body of flesh?”

And the lord answered, “Descended from angels fallen from the sky, men enter the body of a woman and receive the desire of the flesh. Spirit is born then from the spirit and flesh from the flesh. So Satan accomplishes his reign in this world and in all nations.”

He told me further, “My father permitted him to rule seven days, which are seven centuries.”

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12. The serpent’s tail here suggests the penis.

13. Nelli comments on this passage that the spirit that man receives from on high is sperm (seed) of an angelic nature. The mitigated dualists teach that a person’s soul derives from a fallen angel, the body from bodies created by Satan that serve as a prison to house the spirit (Ecritures cathares, 52).
SATAN'S ANGEL Chooses Three Trees for the Crucifixion

And again I asked the lord. I said to him, "What did he do during all that time?"

And he told me, "From the instant the devil was expelled from the glory of the father and was forbidden to take part in affairs of heaven, he sat on the clouds and sent his ministers, angels burning with fire, down below to the people. He did so from the time of Adam to Enoch. And he raised his minister Enoch above the firmament and revealed his divinity to him. He had pen and ink brought to him. And once seated, Enoch wrote sixty-seven books under the devil's dictation, and the devil ordered him to carry them back to earth.

Enoch kept them safely on the earth and then transmitted them to his children, and he began to teach them the way to celebrate sacrifices and iniquitous mysteries. So he concealed from people the kingdom of the skies.

And Satan said to them, "See that I am your god and that there is no other god but me." That is why my father sent me into the world, that I make known and teach people to perceive the wicked spirit of the devil. But then Satan, having learned that I had descended from the sky to this world, sent his angel, and he took the wood of three trees and gave it to Moses so that I might be crucified on a cross made from the wood, which is at this time waiting for me. And he made his divinity known to his people, and ordered the law to be given to the children of Israel, and that he cross dry through the middle of the Red Sea.

THE LORD INSEMINATES THE ANGEL MARY

When my father thought of sending me to the earth, he sent before me his angel named Mary to receive me. Then I came down, entered her by the ear, and came out of her ear.

14. In the Vienna version, the devil ravishes Enoch with ecstasy as he sends him on high.
15. Isaiah 45:5-6, 21:46:9. This arrogant claim is commonly made by the creator of the world (for example, Yaldabaoth) in gnostic texts.
16. The Vienna version adds, "she became my mother."
17. The notion that Mary was inseminated through the ear is based on noncanonical apocrypha and is found in medieval painting. Here Jesus as an angel inseminates his mother the angel Mary with his sperm through her ear. This notion of purity is doubly reinforced, since Mary will not have been inseminated normally, and the child will issue from her pure ear rather than from her loins.
And Satan, prince of this world, knew that I had come down to seek and save the beings who had perished, and he sent his angel the prophet Elijah down to earth to baptize in water. He is called John the baptizer. Then Elijah asked the prince of this world, “How can I recognize the Christ?”

And the lord himself answered, saying, “He on whom you will see the holy spirit descend like a dove and remain there, he is immersed in the holy spirit for the remission of his sins. He alone has the power to lead astray and to save.”

**IS IT A SIN TO MARRY?**

Again I, John, ask the lord, “Can one be saved by John’s immersion without your immersion?”

And the lord answered me, “If I have not immersed one through the spirit for the remission of sins, no one by only immersion in water can see the kingdom in the skies, because I am the bread of life descendant from the seventh heaven. Only those who eat my flesh and drink my blood are called the children of god.”

And I asked the lord, “What must one understand by your words, eating my flesh and drinking my blood?”

The lord told me, “Before the devil was driven out with all his troops from the glory of the father, his angels prayed and glorified the father, saying in their prayers, ‘Our father who is in the skies,’ and so all their canticles rose before the throne of god. But since their fall, they cannot glorify god, at least not in their prayer.”

And I asked the lord, “How is it that all receive John’s immersion and not yours?”

The lord made this response to me: “Because their works are bad and they do not reach the light. John’s students take husbands and wives, but my students do not marry and are like god’s angels in the sky.”

I said then, “If it is a sin to know a woman, is it wrong to marry?”

The lord replied to me, “Not everyone understands the sense of this word unless he has been given grace to understand. There are eunuchs who have come out of their mother’s stomach, there are men who have become eunuchs,

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19. This question is not answered in either version. It is answered in the New Testament passages on the eucharist.
20. From the Vienna version.
and there are those men who have become eunuchs by renouncing marriage in exchange for the kingdom in the skies. Whoever can understand this should understand."

HEAVEN OR THE LAKE OF FIRE

And then I asked the lord about the day of judgment, "What will be the sign of your coming?"

He answered me, "It will be when the name of the just will be consummated according to the name of the just ones who have been crowned and fallen from the sky. Then Satan will be freed and will leave his prison, a prey to great anger, and he will make war on the just and they will cry to the lord god in a great voice. And the lord will immediately command his angel to sound the trumpet. The voice of the archangel, in the trumpet, will be heard from heaven to the inferno. And then the sun will darken and the moon give no more light. The stars will fall and the four winds will be torn from the foundations, and they will make the earth tremble, and also the mountains and hills. Immediately the sky will tremble and the sun darken until the fourth hour. Then will appear the earthly son, and with him all the saintly angels. And then the son rises, and he will place his seat on the clouds and will sit on the throne of his majesty, with twelve messengers seated on twelve chairs of glory.

The books will be opened and he will judge the universe according to the faith they revealed. And then the earthly son will send his angels to gather the elect—from the four winds and the summits of the skies and to the corners of the world—and bring them before him. The earthly son will send for the bad demons to bring all the bad nations with him, and he will say to them, "Come here, you who say, 'We have eaten well and drunk and enjoyed the goods of this world.'"

Then he will direct them all before the tribunal, and they will be shaking with terror. And the books of life will be opened, and there will be known the thoughts of all the nations and of their impieties. And the lord will glorify the just in their patience and good deeds. Those who have followed the angelic

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22. The Vienna version reads "accomplished."
27. Apostles.
prescriptions will gain glory, honor, and imperishability. Those who have obeyed the iniquity of the devil will share in anger, indignation, and the torments of anguish. The earthly son will take the elect from the midst of the sinners and say to them, “Come, you who are blessed by my father. Receive the kingdom that has been prepared for you since the organization of the world.”

He will say to the sinners, “Go far from me, cursed ones, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and for his angels.”

Then all the others, seeing that the time has come for the ultimate separation, will pity the sinners in their inferno, who will be there by order of the invisible father.

The souls will leave the prison of the unbelievers and also my voice will be heard, and there will be no more than one sheepfold and one pastor. And there will issue from the depths of the earth a dark gloom, which is the dark gloom of the Gehenna of fire, and fire will consume the universe from the abysses of the earth to the air of the firmament. And the lord will reign from the firmament to the infernos of the earth. The lake of fire where the sinners will live is so deep that a stone that a thirty-year-old man lifts and drops to the bottom will barely reach the floor of the lake after three years.

SATAN IN FIRE AND THE ELECT IN HEAVEN

Then Satan will be bound with all his troops and placed in the lake of fire. But the son of god and his elect will stroll on the firmament, and he will lock the devil, lying there, in strong, indestructible chains. The sinners weeping and lamenting will say, “Earth, take us back and hide us in you.”

The just will glow like a sun in the kingdom of the invisible father. And the son of god will take them before the throne of the invisible father and say to them, “Here I am with my children whom you have given me. Just father, the world has not known you, but I have truly known you, because it is you who sent me on my mission.”

28. Matthew 25:34.
30. At this point the Vienna version breaks off. The conclusion is lost.
31. This passage has been identified in a Bogomil Bulgarian version and also in an early apocryphal apocalypse. The man of thirty years may be Jesus.
32. The suggestion is that they wish to return to their painless death in the annihilating earth.
33. John 17:25.
Then the father will answer his son with these words, "My beloved son, sit down to my right until I place at your legs, as a stool, your enemies who have denied me and have said, 'We are gods and besides us there are no other gods.' They have killed the prophets and persecuted the just. It is you now who will pursue them into the remote gloom, where there will be tears and the grinding of teeth."

Then the son of god will sit at the right of the father, and the father will govern his angels and govern the elect. He will place them in choirs of angels, dress them in imperishable garments, and give them unfading crowns and immutable seats. And god will be seated in the middle of them. They will not know hunger or thirst. The sun will not strike them, nor any burning heat. And god will banish all tears from their eyes. The son will reign with his saintly father, and his reign will have no end from centuries to centuries.

36. Since this manuscript was found in the Office of the Inquisition in Carcassone, two concluding lines, rejecting the truthfulness of the treatise, were added by the Carcassone inquisitors concerning the Gospel of the Secret Supper. They are omitted here.