FOREWORD

Religious dualism, founded on belief in two cosmic principles, has a more venerable, varied and influential history than adherents of the major world religions have usually acknowledged. In recent decades, dualist belief and organization in the Byzantine world has attracted growing interest from historians and theologians alike. Documented by rich but difficult and diverse materials, it has generally been studied piecemeal; and very little has been available in English. Janet and Bernard Hamilton in this path-breaking work present a goodly selection of this evidence, some of it never previously published. The introduction supplies the historical context, and a comprehensive commentary is supplied for each text. In line with the goals of the Manchester Medieval Sources series, the Hamiltons thus make important material accessible to a wider audience than ever before. They allow English-speaking students to grasp for the first time the scale and significance of dualism in the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans: for some eight hundred years, varieties of dualist religion existed and flourished, some not too far from orthodoxy, others quite distant, mostly within the lands ruled from Constantinople but sometimes beyond Byzantine frontiers. Eastern dualism thus amply deserves study in itself. Equally, it deserves attention from all those interested in western medieval heresy; for the Hamiltons also show that contacts between eastern and western dualists were close, and that western Catharism was strongly influenced from the Balkans. This book transforms our understanding of religious traditions throughout the medieval Christian world, showing their interconnectedness as well as their differences.

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