

# Gnostic-Christian initiation with the Cathars

Rachel Ritman



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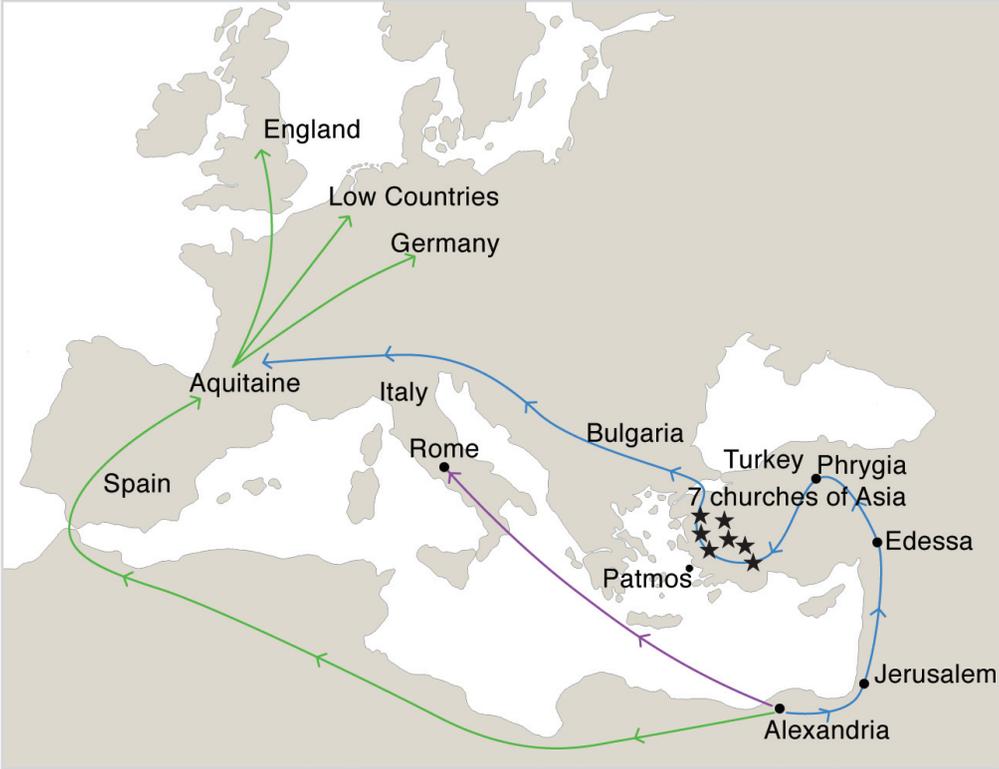
The cave of Bethlehem  
Puivert

## *Inside cover*

Explanation of the numbers in the drawings

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## Gnostic-Christian initiation with the Cathars

In the Spiritual School of the Golden Rosycross, we often speak about the Chain of the Universal Brotherhood. This name implies that there has been a divine intervention for humanity, always and everywhere, to acquaint it with the origin and the destiny of all life. In all times and everywhere, there has been a reaction to this intervention, and people have appeared who devoted their lives to finding and obeying this destiny. In this way, countless people have shaped an immortal figure with a consciousness that surpassed any duality and limitation. Together, they form an uninterrupted chain, of which the Spiritual School is the last branch. We call the Cathars 'the preceding brotherhood', because they possessed a centre of initiation, where a process of initiation was experienced, aiming at the rebirth of the original Soul, the Light Soul. In a historic perspective, such a Christian School of Initiation is unique, because, although our Spiritual School has its roots in the impulse of the Rosycross at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it did not expand to a true Body of Initiation until our time.

Although the Cathars were considered heretics by the dominant church, their origin can be directly traced back to an early impulse of purely gnostic Christianity. As early as the second century, a certain Montanus of Phrygia founded a church that was based on the *Apocalypse*, the *Book of Revelation*, ascribed to John of Patmos.

This book contains the letters to the seven churches in Asia. This Johannine movement called itself the church of Mani and Gnosis, of Spirit and Knowledge. Maneism, not to be confused with Manichaeism, is therefore the church of the Spirit, the church of Love, the church of the Paraclete.

In the fourth century, the Alexandrian, Marcus of Memphis, founded a school of wisdom that linked the Hermetic tradition with this Christian movement and that spread its teachings to Spain. His pupil, Priscillian of Avila, spread them further to Aquitania. He preached throughout former Gaul, the Low Countries and Germany (where he was beheaded in Trier). Religious communities were formed, called Priscillians, which held out for ages despite persecution and suppression. Many withdrew to the Pyrenees, where they formed the breeding ground for early Pyrenean Catharism that had a lively interaction with other communities from Turkey to Spain. When the Cathars were increasingly confronted with persecution, too, they sought the help of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The latter sent, in 1167, his confidant, Nicetas, as bearer of the Seal of the seven Churches of Asia. During a visit lasting a whole year, Nicetas guided Catharism to a wholly new development and expansion, as an independent shoot of the Johannine Church of the Orient. In his person, the direct impulse from Alexandria merged, via the Iberian Peninsula and the Pyrenees, with the impulse via the Middle East; we will come back to this later. This was the start of the pinnacle of Catharism, with a tremendous effect on the whole of Aquitania in all sections of society.

The centre of initiation of the Cathars were the caves of what is nowadays called the Holy Mountain. This complex, which consisted of 52 caves, accommodated the three different stages of initiation, as described in the book *On the Way to the Holy Grail* by Mr. A. Gadal. Before going into the different spaces and aspects of this complex, we would first like to examine the sources, from which the Cathars drew, on the basis of a few original writings, which they had at their disposal.

From recent research, we know that the Cathars were familiar with the *Apokryphon* or *The Secret Book of John*, a gnostic text; with *Aesclepius*, a Hermetic text, and also with *The Book of the twenty-four Philosophers*, in which twenty-four definitions of God have been recorded, amongst which the definition, ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus: 'God is an infinite sphere, the centre of which is everywhere and the circumference is limited nowhere.' In addition, they knew *The Gospel of Thomas* with statements by Jesus, and obviously the *Bible*, in the context of which they primarily based themselves on the *Gospel of John*. Also, the *Revelation of John* played an important role.

What do we mean by gnostic-Christian? Let us begin with the concept 'Christ'. The Judean Christians of Jerusalem, the first Christians, had the idea that the person Jesus was clothed with the Christ at the baptism in the Jordan when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, that is, what is mortal is clothed with what is immortal. As the apostle Paul says, we should die in Christ in order subsequently to be able to arise in Christ. This dying is not meant as dying in the ordinary sense, but as discarding the earthly, mortal nature and simultaneously building a new, eternal body. The Cathars called this discarding the old human being the 'endura'. In 1 Corinthians 15, the verses 44,46,47,49, Paul expresses this as follows:

It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

The concept of 'image' refers to the book *Genesis*, in which the story of creation is told. On the sixth and last day of creation, God says: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' Here, man refers to matter-born man. He is only a likeness after the image of the eternal God. On the other hand, John and Paul speak about the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. Here, the word glory has a special meaning with them. The eternal God is often referred to as the Lord. He is the Primordial Source, the Nucleus Being in all things. He is the centre that is everywhere, but it is unknowable to the ordinary, matter-born mind. The 'glory' is like the light, the love and the ensoulment, emanating from Him. It is a brilliant, radiant field of manifestation, in which the essence of God can manifest itself.

Within this field of manifestation, an activity is generated, a systematic structure that shapes the idea of God in creation. The infinite circumference, of which Hermes spoke, is in this way filled with the divine Idea as a plan of fulfilment.

This plan is unchanging, eternal and perfect, but it emanates a dynamic power, called the creative Word, or the Logos. Christ is seen as an aspect of the Logos, and sometimes also as the Logos itself. This is why Paul says:

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth.

According to some Gnostics, this firstborn one came into being on the first day of creation, when God said: 'Let there be Light.' First of all, this concerns the cosmic field of manifestation, but the same Plan underlies the microcosmic field, as a promise of true human genesis. On the level of the microcosm, this light being may be called the first Man, or the Light human being, or the Adam from Paradise, or the inner Christ, but to every human being, it is an image of perfection, which we may satisfy. According to Paul, the human being, in whom what is material is replaced by what is spiritual, is renewed to full knowledge after the image of his Creator, but this renewal is only possible through the bath of the rebirth from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Language says that only by receiving the Spirit, can God be truly known, because the Spirit sees all things. If during the baptism in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit descends upon the human being, Jesus, he is linked with this Christ manifestation and becomes Jesus the Christ. John, too, speaks of the need for rebirth during the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus, in which Jesus says: 'Unless one is reborn of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'

The essence of Christ is a cosmic reality, unlimited and universal. Every human being who prepares himself in the right way is able to link himself with it and be taken up into it. This is why this thought not only lives in original Christianity, but also in other religious communities and philosophical systems. This is the reason why we sometimes speak of a Christ impulse, which, as far as the western world is concerned, affects Christianity, but which is also found with the Hermeticists, Gnostics and so many other movements.

Being renewed to full knowledge begins in the heart, and is, therefore, also referred to as the knowledge of the heart, or gnosis. The concept of gnosis refers us, first of all, to Alexandria. At the time of the Greek occupation, it was the capital of Egypt. Before the beginning of our era, the lodge of the hermetic Gnosis had already originated there, which Greeks, Jews and Egyptians could join. At the time, about two million Jews lived in Egypt, of which approximately fifty thousand were in Alexandria alone (in Judea, there were only about five hundred thousand Jews). They were familiar with Ezekiel's vision (5th century BC), in which he beheld the glory of God in the figure of a Man. The pre-Christians called this figure *ph s*, meaning 'light' as well as 'man'.

Therefore, they also spoke of the Light Man, as a divine prototype, as original man, according to which the heavenly Adam was formed. The Cathars were familiar with this representation. There are three small caves one perched above another on the Holy Mountain, the top one of which is called Ka, which in Egypt referred to the light soul. During the first centuries AD, the Alexandrian Hermeticists also had an image of primordial Man as divine prototype. The book *Pymander* (1st century AD) relates that God is light and life. In Greek, these words are masculine and feminine respectively. Thus, God generated the heavenly 'anthropos' as the primordial image of the heavenly Man. At a certain moment, the anthropos became conscious of his reflection in the waters of lower nature, fell in love with it and bent toward it. In lower nature, desire was also kindled and thus they united. This is why the human being as we know him bears both the image of eternal reality as well as that of mortal reality.

The Jewish-esoteric sect of the Gnostikoi already existed before Christ. With the emergence of Christianity, their world of thought was mixed with Christian ideas. One of the main writings from this circle is the *Apokryphon of John*, a manuscript from the second century that influenced the thinking of the Manichaeans, the Bogomils and the Cathars.

They introduced the idea that our imperfect world, and the equally imperfect human being, had not been created by the unknown God, but by another, malevolent Demiurge or Creative God called Jaldabaoth, another name of Jehovah. His view is limited to his own range of action and powers, and he is unaware of the Unknown God as the first cause. In his folly, he proclaimed himself the only God. Then a ray of light radiated over the primordial waters that manifested the Glory of God in the figure of Man. After this figure, which is called Adamas, Jaldabaoth moulded the body of earthly man. Although he was a 'living' creature, he was unable to walk upright and writhed through the dust. By guile, the Breath of the Mother was blown into him, and in this way, man raised himself up and became an ensouled being. The Mother is the female aspect of the Deity, here called Barbelo, or the Sophia, the divine Wisdom. The Breath of the Mother is expressed in a human being as a particle of light, referred to as 'epinoia', which means enlightening Insight, that is, Gnosis. She is the one who illuminates his thinking and teaches him the path of arising, when he is caught in the lowest realms of matter by the earthly powers. We refer to this particle of light as the spirit spark.

The Gnostikoi not only lived in Egypt, but also in Syria and Asia, now called Turkey. During the Middle Ages, they ended up in Bulgaria, where they transmitted their ideas to the Bogomils, who had emerged there around the year 1000. With them, also a copy of the *Apokryphon* turned up that found its way to the Cathars of Italy and the South of France. Thus a direct link can be established between the Cathars and the teachings of the Gnostikoi. Valentinus, the great Gnostic from Alexandria, already knew the *Apokryphon* and adopted the idea of the Gnostikoi that the Creative God was not the same as the unknown God, who surpasses everything else. However, to

him, Jehovah is not the malevolent Demiurge, but he called him 'oblivion', because he is, after all, not conscious.

Moreover, he stated that the Demiurge is an image of the living countenance of the Christ, in other words, a reflection, a likeness. This shows that Valentinus was also strongly influenced by the Gospel of John, which was already known in Alexandria at an early stage. He identified the concept of Adamas, the prototype of the divine Man of the Gnosticoi, with the Christ of the Gospel of John. Both the early Christians as well as the Cathars were aware that the divine Image should be seen both universally as well as individually. They briefly described it as the Spirit,

which was purportedly to be found above the human head, although usually without being linked with it. The human being, after a long preparation reborn as to the soul, was linked with this Spirit, the inner Christ, by the consolamentum (the sealing). This encounter and unification with the Spirit generates the power of inner perception, the full knowledge of which Paul spoke. John described it as the Spirit of Truth as well as the Comforter, the Paraclete. According to John, Jesus promised that he would, after his death, send the Comforter, which his disciples would know, because He would be with them and in them.

Another important theme in the Gospel of John is Love. This was the driving force behind the central message of the Cathars: God is Love. According to chapter 13, verses 34 and 35, Jesus says:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another;  
even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.  
By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love  
for one another.

Thus, the *Gospel of John* was the basic writing for the Cathars. It probably originated in or around Edessa, the centre of Syrian-Aramaic Christianity that has continued to exist for ages alongside Latin and Greek Christianity. It had its own holy, liturgical language, the East-Aramaic, and its own ideas (the Holy Spirit as the Mother). It is assumed that this Aramaic Christianity had been supplanted from Jerusalem, and therefore had preserved traits of original Christianity. Characteristic of this was the strictly ascetic, encratic attitude. From this movement, a certain Marcion stepped to the fore, a Paulician Gnostic. He was a sympathiser of Valentinus, but instead of the latter's more hermetic inclination, he represented the early Christian, the Jewish-Christian line. In the year 144, when he was, together with Valentinus, banned from the Roman church, he established a counterchurch that spread over the entire world known at the time, particularly in southeastern Europe, which existed for ages. This movement strongly influenced the Bogomils. Around 225, the famous *Hymn of the Pearl* was written in Edessa. In it, the Spirit is called the Image of the soul that stays behind in heaven, when the soul descends to the earth; it is the Self that meets it, when it

ascends again. We also recognise this idea in the strictly ascetic writing *The Gospel of Thomas*, also written in Edessa and very soon known in Alexandria. The Cathars knew the Gospel of Thomas, and it has undoubtedly influenced their perception directly or indirectly. The Cathars, who had chosen for the strict path of initiation, rejected marriage and abstained from eating meat and drinking wine. According to the Cathars, the Spirit remained behind in heaven when the soul fell. The laying on of hands, when bestowing the Consolamentum, restores the lost link.

The representation of the individual spirit as the angel, the Self or the image, to Aramaic Christianity, one of the most important elements of their religion, was therefore very familiar to them. In the Gospel of Thomas, this is beautifully expressed in Logion 84:

Jesus says: When you see your likeness (in a mirror), you rejoice. But when you see your *images* that came into being before you, which neither die nor are manifested, how much you will have to bear!

With the Cathars, seeing this heavenly Other One face-to-face was the ultimate aim of initiation and was linked with the cave of Bethlehem.

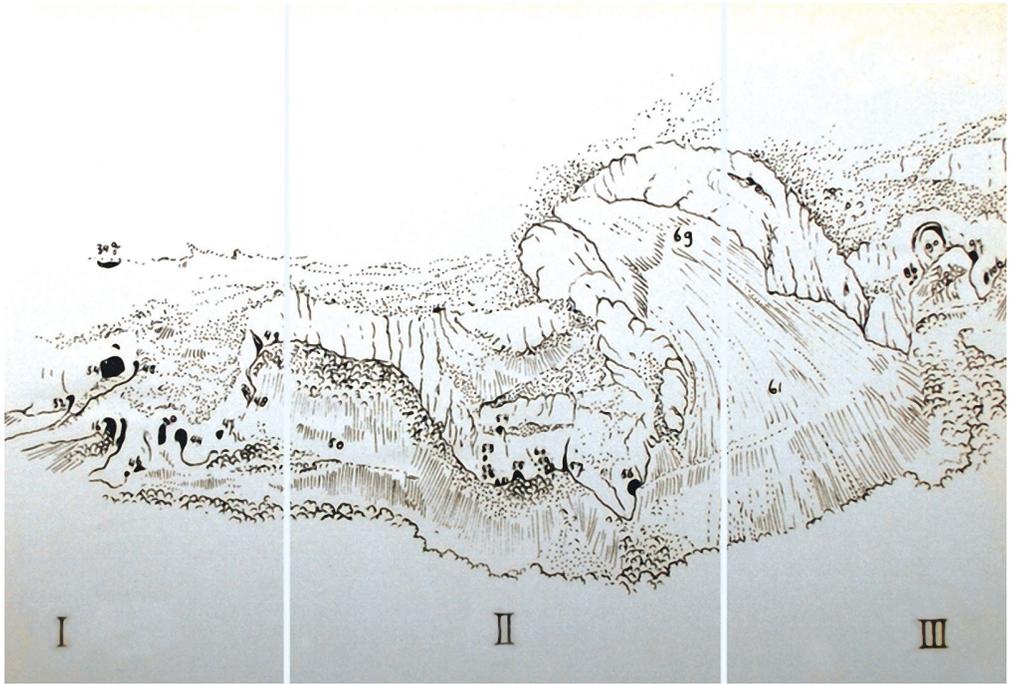
In this way we have, on the basis of a few original texts, explained some fundamental concepts. We distinguish the existence of a higher and a lower nature, the first one of which originates from the creative Divine Word, the Logos, and the second one which is the result of an impulse from the Demiurge. The human being is also twofold, potentially immortal, but existentially mortal. The eternal light spark, stemming from the kingdom of the light, contains the possibility of rebirth and of a return to the heavenly origin. To this end, the old man should merge into the new man through the Endura. The pinnacle of the process of initiation is contained in the encounter and union with the individual Spirit, and therefore in merging into the essence of God. The human being who has liberated himself in this way puts his life at the service of the Christ and of his neighbours in self-sacrificing love.





## 1 View from the cave of Bethlehem

The initiation centre of the Cathars was housed in what is nowadays called the *Montagne Sacrée* (the Holy Mountain) in Ussat-les-Bains, South of France. This first illustration shows the magnificent view of the valley of the Ariège from the *cave of Bethlehem*. The next illustrations give an impression of the complex of caves, within which the three different stages of initiation were accomplished, described in the books *On the Way to the Holy Grail* and *Le Triomphe de la Gnose Universelle* (The Triumph of the Universal Gnosis), both written by Mr Antonin Gadal.



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## 2 The Holy Mountain

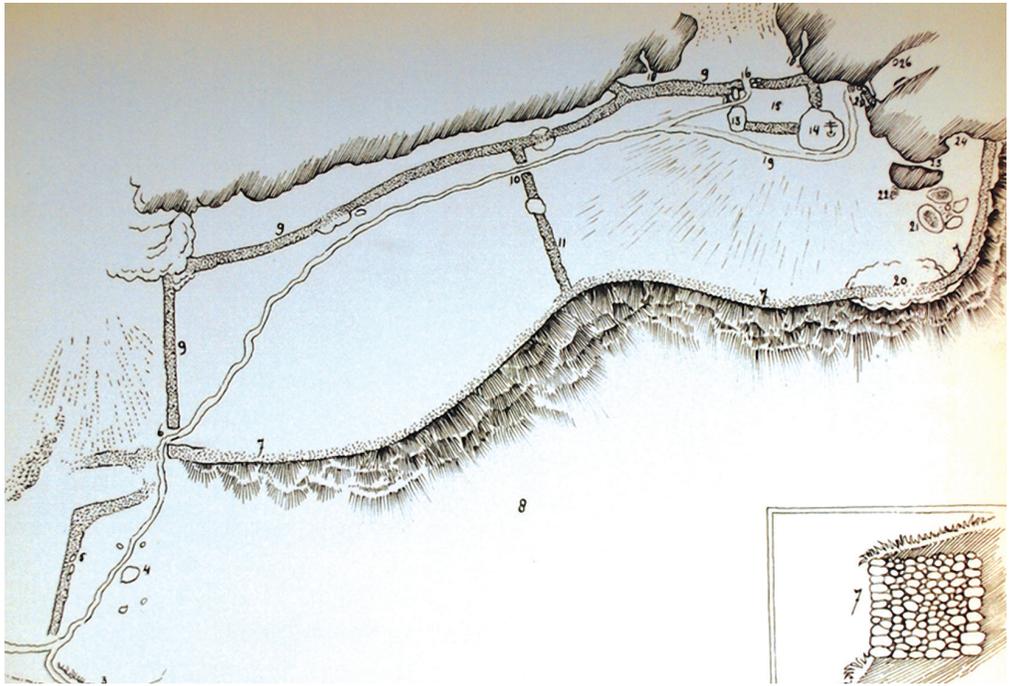
The Cathars referred to the three stages of initiation in terms of a metamorphosis: The caterpillar – the pupa – the perfect insect. Or as: Formation – Reformation – Transformation.

The physical human being must disappear, the Omega, the end. The Spirit-Human Being will replace him, the Alpha, the new beginning. In this way, the purified soul, liberated from the imperfections of matter, will become the Light Soul. [...] This is what was called 'Sahu', the glorious body, the soul that has received the seal of the consecration and the illumination.

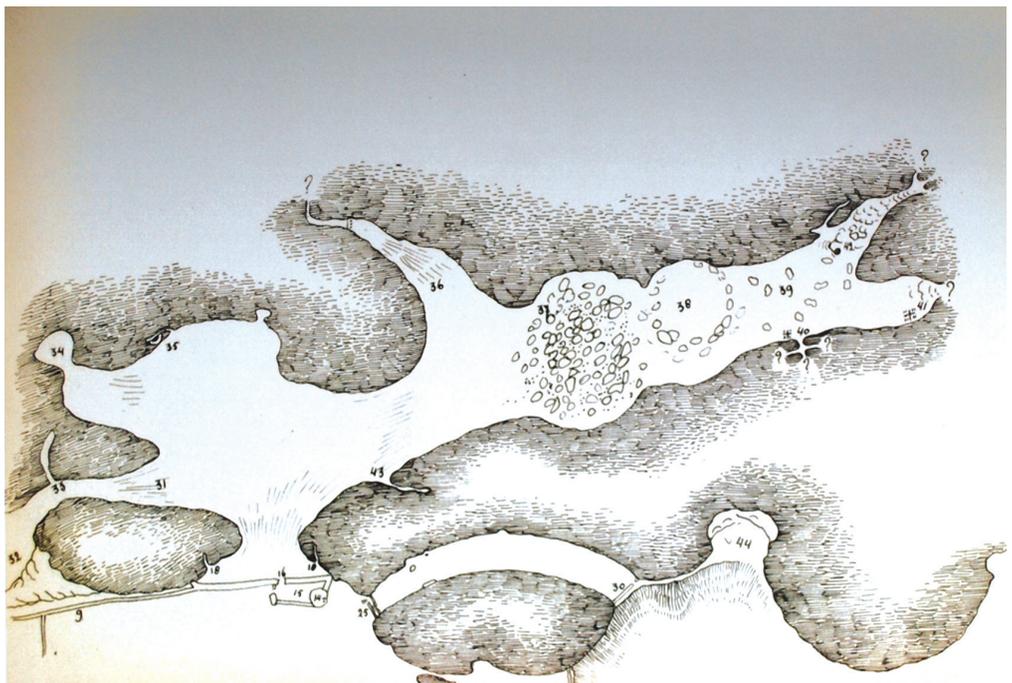
*(The Triumph of the Universal Gnosis)*

## 3 Complex of the Églises (1st stage)

The first stage of the initiation took place in the complex of caves of the *Églises*.



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#### 4 Symbolic Wall and forecourt of the Églises

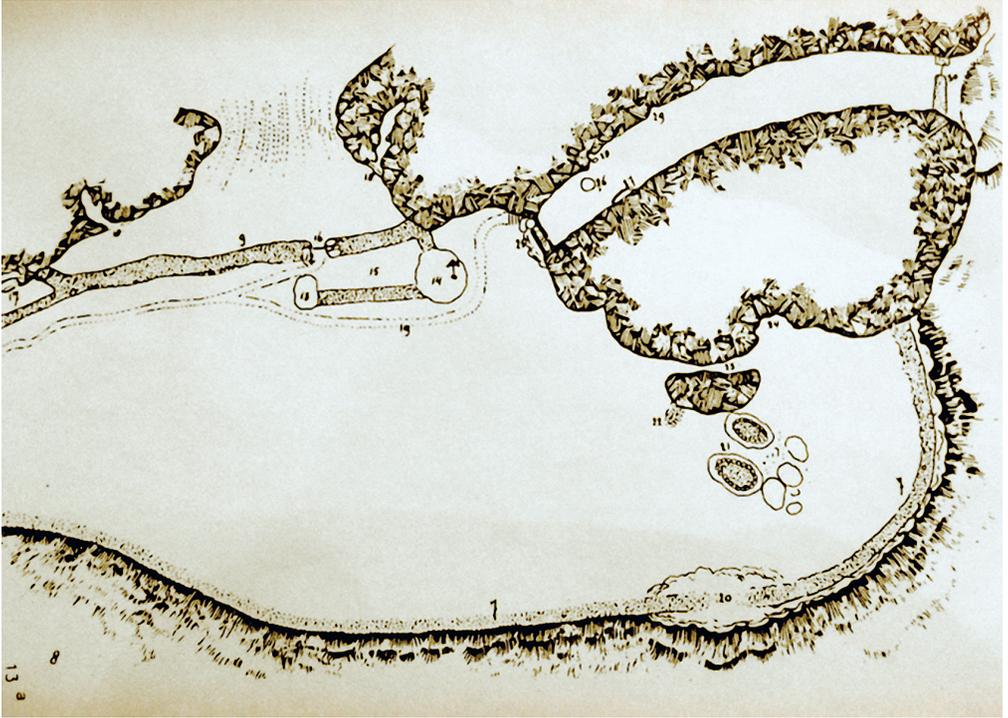
Outside this deep cave was a forecourt with two parts. Visitors were allowed to enter the outermost part. The second part was reserved for the inhabitants. When the candidate for initiation was welcomed here as a *novice*, he broke off contact with his family, his background and with everything belonging to his personal sphere of life, for the duration of his initiation. He passed through the so-called *Symbolic Wall* and only left the Sacred Mountain as a completely new man through the *Mystical Gate* after a period of approximately three to four years. These two points mark the 'Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega' of his path of initiation.

We may see the first period of approximately two years as a preparatory stage, during which the mental and physical suitability for the real path of initiation should be shown. In the Spiritual School, we speak of the Forecourt, in which a person can develop into a true pioneer in the process of rebirth, a Johannine human being.

#### 5 Ground plan of the Églises

The central space of the cave gives the impression of being immensely large. The furthest corners are lost in darkness. Down below, there is a fairly flat section with large boulders that served as seats during the common meals. To the left, above the large slope of chippings, which was smaller seven hundred years ago, there was light from a higher cave, called the *Église supérieure*. From there, the Lord's Prayer was recited at the appointed times. During those moments, everyone interrupted his work for a moment of contemplation and prayer. The text of the Lord's Prayer deviated in one respect from what is usual: the Cathars did not pray for their 'daily' bread, but for the 'heavenly' bread. The nature-born human being builds a consciousness by interaction with his sphere of life, the outside world. Even karmic influences from his auric being reach him *from the outside*. Therefore, the directedness of the human being is by nature egocentric and geocentric. This makes him fundamentally dependent on these influences, so that his perception is always in part, very conditioned and personally coloured. Because the eternal nucleus in the heart is a source of ensoulment as well as an *inner* cognitive faculty, a human being is not automatically able to judge the suggestions, emanating from it, properly and to distinguish them from other influences. The preparatory stage therefore intends to make a person aware of the extent to which he is determined by karmic ties and blood ties, upbringing, environment and habits. With the Cathars, this did not happen as it does in our time, namely on the basis of mental reasoning. The stay in the complex of caves of the Églises placed the candidate in a true School of Silence. The days were spent by quietly doing work, during which only what was necessary was spoken, with silent meals, and with the silent praying of the Lord's Prayer. Through this continuous directedness, any inner turmoil was exposed and could be neutralised in a natural way.

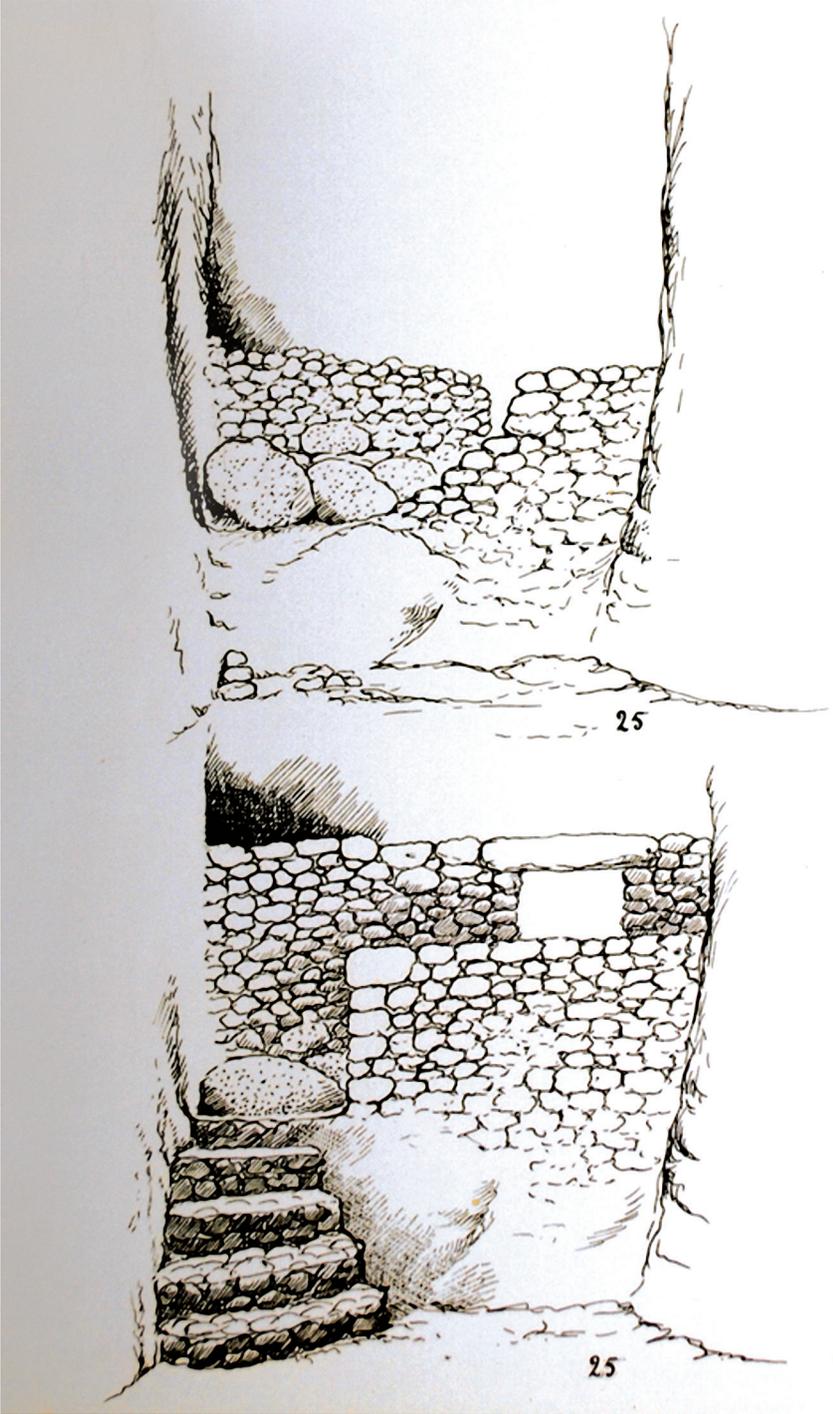
The need for daily providing a group of people with everything necessary, like food, clothing and care, had the additional result that everyone learned practical skills.



This was important, because every Cathar, man or woman, was supposed to support him or herself. In this way, the novices prepared for an independent life and developed community spirit. Incidentally, the same approach was followed in the women's convents that were, due to family ties, not restricted, but were open to everyone. These 'houses' were made available by well-off, usually noble families.

## 6 The Chapel

To the extent that the inner disposition calmed down, the candidate's attention and directedness was able to shift to the impulses, rising up from the eternal nucleus. This was, amongst other things, promoted by the gatherings that took place in the *Chapel* every Sunday. This was a splendid, natural, crescent space with a high, vaulted ceiling, only partly closed by walls on either side for sufficient light. The Chapel could be reached from the outside via the forecourt. To the right of the entrance, to be reached through a narrow passage between mountain and aiguille, was a fireplace. Past the second exit, also accessible around the back, the workshops were to be found.



## 7 Entrance of the Chapel

Bible readings, mainly from the Gospel of John, accompanied by a simple meditation, silence and prayer constituted the breeding ground for the development of a wholly new susceptibility. The simplicity of the event, the serene atmosphere and the spoken words were initially experienced as something that was passed on from the outside, but they were not attuned to the needs of the personality; rather they were meant as nourishment for the soul principle.

This whole preparatory stage may be referred to as the *caterpillar stage*, or as the process of *formation* in the sense of setting the record straight or coming to terms with oneself as a personality. Simultaneously, a clear notion developed that they bore inwardly an unchanging principle. By becoming increasingly aware of this inner Other One, the candidate developed almost inadvertently into a Johannine human being as a preparation for the Jesus birth. In *The Triumph of the Universal Gnosis* Mr A. Gadala says about the state of mind of the candidate:

The Cathar simply knew: 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.' This is why the way to the Holy Grail was to him quite ordinary and simple. This way would make him master over himself, an obedient disciple, exalted without showing it to the world. It placed him modestly above any sect, any religion, and any politics. It was a soul state in Christ, and this says it all! [...] Between the Alpha and the Omega, also other letters must be learned: we cannot speak of perfection right from the beginning. Similarly, the quest for the Holy Grail is a way, a long, arduous way filled with obstacles. What would, otherwise, be its merit? What would constitute the moral value of someone, with his moodiness, his passing fits of anger... which he admits... although he does not exert himself to remedy these flaws that actually do not really amount to much? And how many minor deficiencies should not be overcome before achieving a certain wisdom? The process develops gradually, while the Spirit watches in its Pentacle!



8



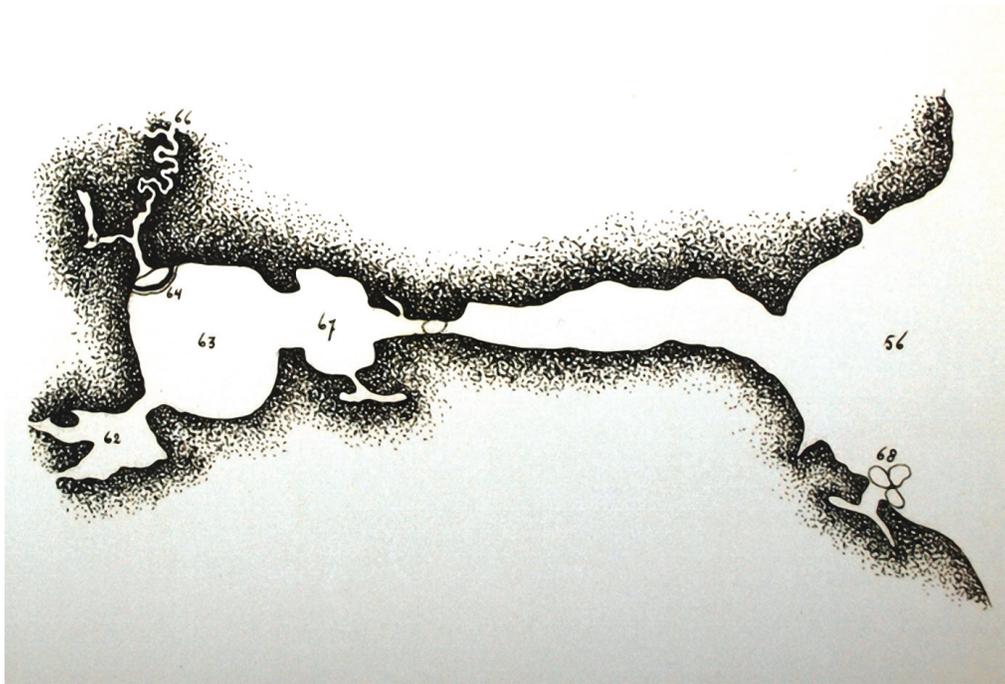
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## 8 Complex of the Hermit (2nd stage)

Inner recognition and acknowledgement of the inner Other One forms the necessary basis for entering the next stage. In the Spiritual School, this begins with the participation in the Inner School; with the Cathars, this stage began in the second complex of caves of the Holy Mountain that we know as the first and the second *Hermit*. In this illustration, we see wholly left, still belonging to the group of the Églises, the *Cave of the Grandmaster* or of *the Grandmaster of the Temple*, to which we will come back later. After crossing a slope of boulders in the direction of the first Hermit, we find the beautiful, spherical cave of the *Grand-père*, the ‘grandfather’, which is from top to bottom covered with rock drawings that were used for instruction. A little further, we find three very small, superimposed caves with a specific significance for the initiation, *Kepler* or *Kheper*, *Mès-Naut* and *Ka*. ‘Ka’, for instance, refers to the concept of ‘light soul’. The form and location of the whole complex of the Hermit shows a wonderful analogy to the process of the rebirth of the original soul. To the extent that the new soul principle increasingly begins to speak to the consciousness, the candidate becomes more aware of the limitations of the personality. It is a continuous confrontation between two kinds of ensoulment. This is why the Johannine human being says in complete self-surrender: ‘He, the Other One, must increase and I must decrease.’ This process of decreasing, in devotion and perseverance, was called the *endura* by the Cathars.

## 9 The first Hermit

If we clearly experience the mortal and the immortal aspect within our own being, this is reflected in the two sanctuaries of this complex of caves. The first Hermit housed the more practical aspect of the stay, during which particular attention was paid to instruction. The candidate-initiates not only received spiritual training, but they were, for instance, also familiarised with medicinal herbs and their application. The same was true for the female Cathars, who not only opened their Homes to training, instruction and study, but also to the care for the sick. The classical Rosicrucians, too, knew this twofold activity, as witnessed by their device: ‘Preach the Gospel and heal the sick.’ The second Hermit was first of all a spiritual sanctuary, a place of internalisation. This crevice-like space of considerable height may be reached around the back as well as via a hard-to-access, internal passage. Quite symbolically, a fairly direct route may be chosen, via this passage, but also a detour that is called the *Labyrinth*. Every candidate on the inner Path must, in the practice of life, cross his inner labyrinth in order to find his own *Hall of miracles* at a certain moment, a small, splendid cave with a crystal clear, reflecting water surface in the soundless, silent, innermost part of the Holy Mountain, accessible from the Hermit.



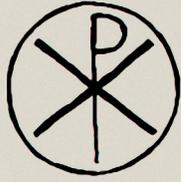
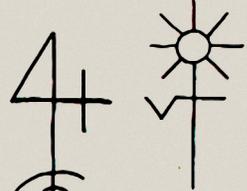
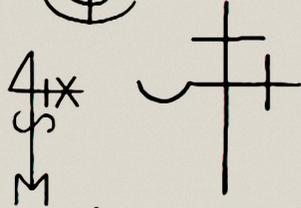
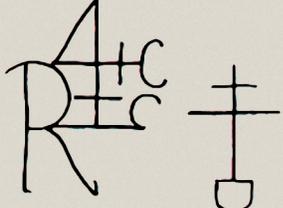
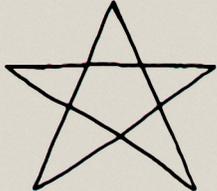
## 10 Ground plan of the second Hermit

The stay in the complex of the Hermit may be described as the stage of *the pupa* or the process of *reformation*. The stage of pupation symbolises the deep repentance and the self-surrender to the new soul principle, the endura. In addition, the Cathars were familiar with the phenomenon of the silkworm, and saw the formation of the cocoon as referring to weaving the new soul vesture, the immortal soul vehicle. With regard to the method of instruction, we can find an enlightening text in *The Triumph of the Universal Gnosis*.

The initiates themselves did not have any illusion about the extent of their knowledge. Guided by insight, they above all discovered that they did not know anything. This is why *the true sage professes that he knows nothing*. On the basis of a certain fullness of experience, they therefore succeeded, without much exact knowledge, in at least sensing, surmising and intuiting precious truths. In this way, a Tradition developed that was not well-defined, but with which every seeker is linked who truly strives for hidden knowledge. This True Tradition is never laid down in teachings, recorded in any book and is not passed on orally. [...]

Spiritual insight is not transferable like the flame of a torch. Our spirit is not a lamp that can be switched on artificially; it is a focal point that must overcome the darkness by itself, so that it, no longer smouldering under the ashes, will flare up and radiate freely. Learning to win the Light is the actual aim of initiation.

The process of internalisation and deepening was supported by periods of fasting. To the extent that a candidate increasingly dissociated from outside influences, which are so self-evident for the matter-born personality, the need also developed to actually live from the inner source. This is as it were being submersed in another reality that wells up from the heart, as a stream from within to without and, therefore, a gradual polarity reversal in the candidate's being. In the biblical story, this is symbolised by the Baptism in the river Jordan. It is said that John baptised Jesus. Accordingly, we see in the second Hermit the *Fount Santa* where, through a symbolic act, this Baptism by water was administered. For the candidate, this submersion as to matter meant an intense purification, a possibility for growth for the inner Other One, as a preparation for the baptism by Fire that was to take place in the cave of *Bethlehem*.

Resch	God (Hoofd)	9999 God de Vader	PPPP God de Zoon
Cirkel. Ain	○	Eeuwigheid	
Chrismon	XC	Christus	
Jesmon	I —	Jezus	
Caput Vaas. Vat	UV n^	Leven Begin Dood Einde	
Alpha	αAA	Begin	
Omega	ωΩ	Einde	
Soter	S S	Verlosser	

## 11 Symbolic language

The instruction that the candidate received was not focused on mental knowledge, but was intended for linking the spiritual lines of force, unfolding on the basis of the awakening soul principle, *with* and testing it *against* the imperishable, universal laws that the Creator has set down in His creation and the creature. These laws underlie the whole of nature and therefore also affect the destiny and the experience of life of every human being. In this way, gradually insight was able to develop into the underlying cohesion of all phenomena that can be traced back to the one source, from which everything existing originates. This one source is God, and the law that links everything and emanates from him is the divine love.

The mediaeval human being possessed a great susceptibility of the heart that was strongly linked with intuitive, visual thought. In order to become familiar with more abstract concepts, the ancient symbolic language was used in conversations with the candidate, as it was already transmitted since pre-Christian and early Christian times. It might rather be described as ‘characters’, comparable to Chinese written language. As an example, we may mention the vertical line, the *Resch*, referring to the divine, descending impulse. Resch means God or ‘head’, in the sense of divine Consciousness. If the Resch was drawn as a capital P, it meant: God the Son; if it was written as its mirror image, it meant: God the Father. We see the Hebrew sign *Ain*, sometimes also referred to as *Ain Soph*, the circle of Eternity. Moreover, we find the signs X and C, both referring to the Christ, and the M, referring to the *Mater*, the *Materia*, the Mother. The S or *Soter* means ‘Saviour’ or Liberator. And there are the A or *Alpha* and the  $\Omega$  or *Omega* and, of course, the Pentagram, the five-pointed Star that refers to the reborn soul figure.

By always forming different combinations, time and again another aspect could be explained. We will now show this on the basis of what we call the ‘seals of the Grandmasters’, and of a few rock drawings that are still more or less visible in and near some caves.



## 12 Seal A. Gadal

This first seal is called the Christ monogram, which was already known by the early Christians, as is true for this whole language of symbols. In the book *The Heritage of the Cathars*, Mr A. Gadal also relates this symbol to the knights of the Temple, referring to the Grail tradition, elements of which can be found with, amongst others, Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram von Eschenbach and Robert de Boron. The latter takes as his point of departure the Gospel of Nicodemus and builds his story around Joseph of Arimathea and his son Joseph.

The *Resch P* refers to God the Son who, with regard to the development of humanity, is expressed in the activity of the Christ. This is indicated by the *Chrismon* that looks like the letter X. This activity of the Christ flows out into the universal field of manifestation that is represented by the circle. Not only is the Plan of perfection contained in this field, but also the power to achieve the fulfilment of this Plan. It is what was, what is and what is to come. This is why Jesus the Christ says of himself: 'I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*...' These two signs can be found on the upper arms of the *Chrismon*.

The microcosm is the bearer of the same Plan of perfection. If a human being is able to open himself to the universal Christ power on the basis of the spirit-spark, he is linked with both the origin as well as the destiny of everything that exists. In him or her, the original Spirit-Soul human being will be able to develop. Paul speaks of the death of the old man in Christ, so that the new man can be resurrected in Christ. The Cathars spoke of the *endura* and the *transformation*. It is the 'good end' that enables the new birth in the universal field of the Christ manifestation. This is why Christ continues: 'I am the beginning and the end.' This is represented by the two bowl-shaped signs on the lower arms of the *Chrismon*, in which the reversed vase or *caput* represents the end; and the upright *caput* symbolises the beginning.

This seal of Christian initiation, which is in line with the classical path of initiation of all times, was borne by Mr A. Gadal. With regard to the Spiritual School, he represented the link with the preceding Brotherhood of the Cathars, but within the Triple Alliance of the Light of Grail, Cathar and Cross-with-Roses, as the post-Christian link to the Chain of the Universal Brotherhood, he represented the aspect of the Grail. A special coincidence is that the name A. Gadal is an anagram of Galaad, the noble knight and keeper of the Grail.

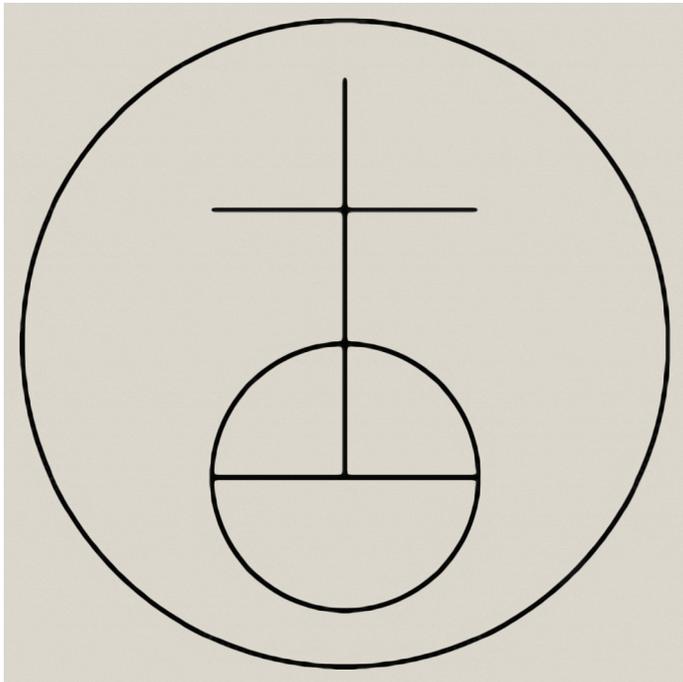


### 13 Seal J. van Rijckenborgh

The second seal symbolises ‘the Seven Churches of Asia’. Amongst other things, it refers to the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia, the texts of which can be found in the *Revelation of John*. During his visit to Occitania, Nicetas transferred this seal to the leadership of the Cathar community at that time. It refers to the vision at the beginning of the *Apocalypse*. There, John beholds a luminous figure who walks between the seven lampstands and keeps seven stars in his right hand. The text explains: ‘The seven lampstands are the seven churches, and the stars are the angels of the seven churches.’ These seven ‘angels’ refer to the active forces, emanating from the Seven-Spirit. This is also expressed as ‘the seven Spirits before the Throne’.

The transfer of the Cathar heritage took place during a service in the Renova Temple, on 22 November 1955. It culminated in the confirmation of the Grandmastership of Mr J. van Rijckenborgh and Mrs Catharose de Petri by Mr A. Gadal. On this occasion, he, amongst other things, transferred this seal to Mr J. van Rijckenborgh. This seal implies the task to make the Holy Seven-Spirit ignite the Spiritual School that is potentially manifested sevenfold in matter – that is, the seven candelabra that are erected from below upwards. In the Spiritual School, the interaction between this descending and ascending sevenfoldness is represented by the ascending and descending pyramid. The descending pyramid represents the Brotherhood of the Order of the Rosycross that surpasses matter.

Mr J. van Rijckenborgh has energetically taken the task implied in this seal in hand, as explained in the book *The Gnosis in Present-day Manifestation*. We know that in his footsteps, the development of the Spiritual School is unceasingly pursued, in absolute directedness *towards* and continuously attuned *to* the field of the Brotherhood.

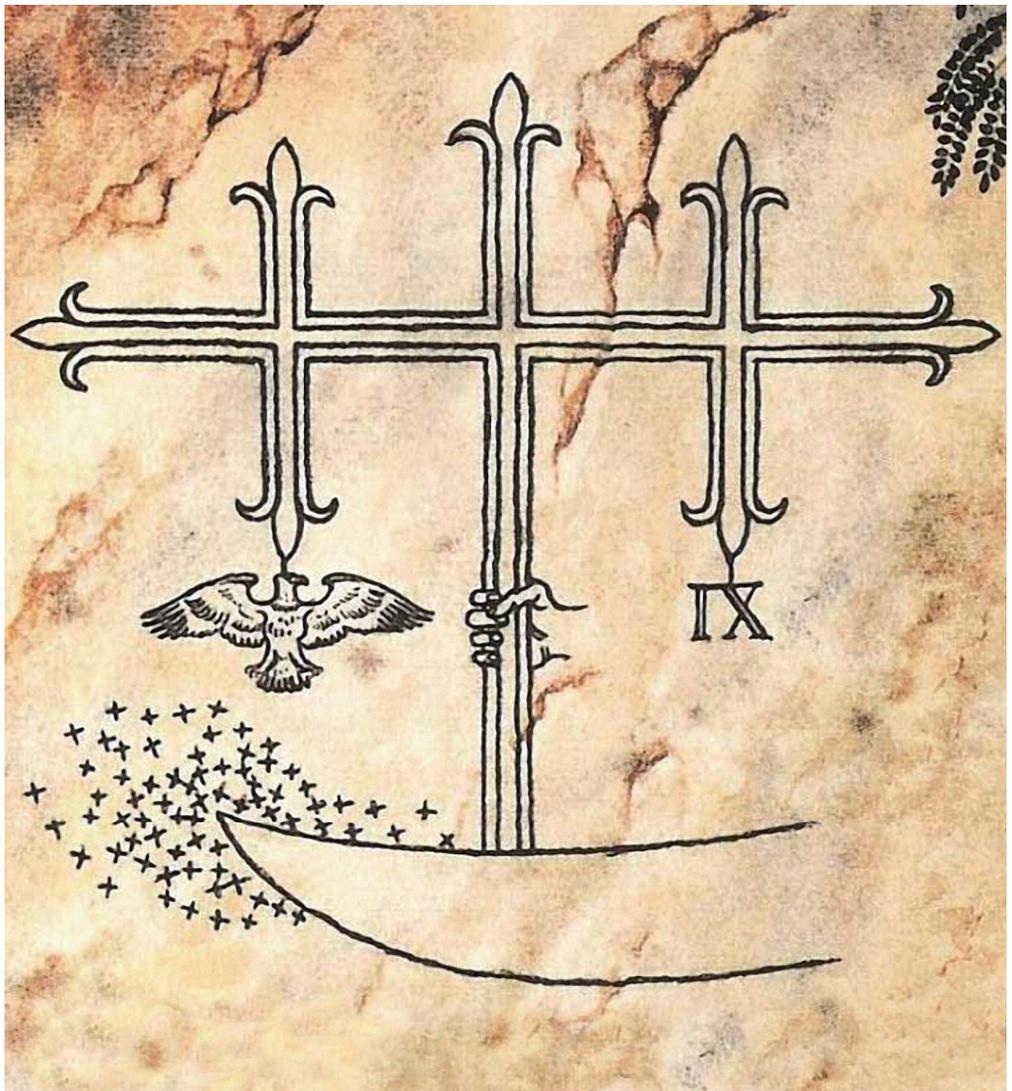


#### 14 Seal Catharose de Petri

The third seal also falls back on early Christianity. It is used by the Church, too, but it was certainly not always understood as to its true meaning. This sign is a representation of the word of Jesus, the Christ: I am the Light of the World. Just as the microcosm is illuminated from within by the spirit nucleus, the Earth is illuminated from within by the Christ spirit, also referred to as the planetary Logos. Mr A. Gadal speaks of the Cross of Eden, the four paradisiacal streams that irradiate and illuminate the world at the level of the soul. In the Spiritual School, we speak of the four pure, original ethers. Therefore, a cross of Light has been planted in the heart of the world with a range of action that, as the field of manifestation of the universal Christ power, encompasses and pervades our whole earth with all its creatures.

Via the microcosmic spirit nucleus, every human child has contact with this Light of the World. However, in order to be able and allowed to represent this Light, this Light should be granted access on the basis of pure susceptibility. A vase, a *caput*, a Grail cup should be built from below upward, into which ultimately, through the link with the Spirit, the living Blood of the universal Christ power can be received. Individually, this occurs through the path of self-initiation. In addition, it is the long-term task of the whole of humanity, and the short-term pioneering task of any spiritual school. The Bible says about the blood that flowed from the side of the crucified Christ after the spear thrust [1 John 5:7]: ‘There are three witnesses in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and there are three witnesses on earth, the Spirit, the water and the blood.’ The link of this ‘as above, so below’ is called the incarnation of Christ.

The seal that was entrusted to Mrs. Catharose de Petri, implied the task of building a receptive field, founded in a group of people in which this threefold power of manifestation can be received. Mr Gadal saw this task as related to that of the great Esclarmonde of Foix, the Cathar princess who, as Arch-deaconess, had a prominent influence during the bloom of Catharism. The name Esclarmonde literally means ‘light of the world’. Catharose de Petri has indeed been a tireless builder on the structure of lines of force of the Inner School. After Mr J. van Rijckenborgh’s demise, she has crowned this work by the formation and guidance of the Grail Community, as the realisation within the Living Body of the Spiritual School, as the realisation of the task implied in this seal.

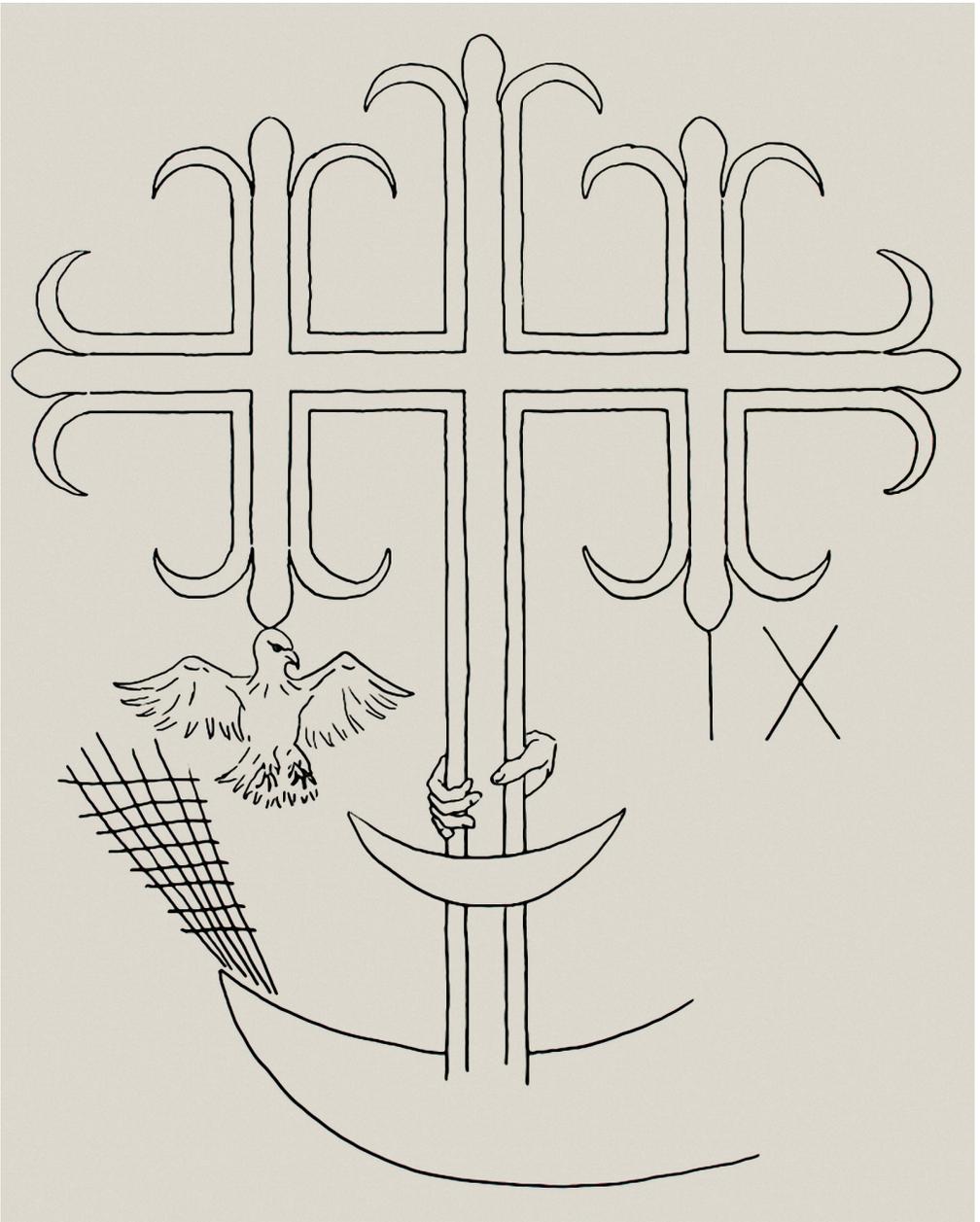


## 15 Cross of the Grandmaster of the Temple

During the transfer of the Cathar heritage by Mr A. Gadal, also this picture of the Cross of the Grandmaster of the Temple, to be found in the *cave of the Grandmaster of the Temple*, was transferred. In what way and in which spirit this transfer took place has been described in the book *The Triumph of the Universal Gnosis*. The mentioned picture can be seen on the cover of this book. In the chapter 'The Cross of the Grandmaster', we also find an explanation, both by Mr A. Gadal as well as by Mr J. van Rijckenborgh. However, a symbol is never unequivocal and will time and again, in every beholder, at different moments and in different contexts, make different insights surface. This is why we would like to add the following. Mr. A. Gadal links the description 'Temple of the Spirit' with the concept of the 'Triple Alliance of the Light'. After all, the three powers of manifestation, which will be shown to be the three witnesses in heaven and the three witnesses on earth, are released from the one Spirit.

How and where do we find the activity of this Triple Alliance of the Light? Around the beginning of our era, the cosmic Christ impulse occurred and a new development of humanity was initiated. This impulse was transmitted as a touch in the heart of every human being, so that he might become aware of his divine origin. This cosmic impulse also intensified the universal Christ field that could then be approached by the prepared human being. It finally communicated itself as the power of the Holy Spirit, as Pentecostal fire, to the circle of the twelve disciples, who in this way represented a first Grail circle, followed by many others. Illuminated by this Pentecostal fire, they came into firsthand contact with the divine plan and the aspect of the divine Will, the aspect of the Father. This individual touch by the cosmic Christ power was in the human being of the first centuries AD converted into a new form of inner perception that is called gnosis, the knowledge of the heart. This is why many gnostic testimonies originated during this period. The brothers and sisters, elevated in this way, are referred to as the *Brotherhood of the Holy Grail*. During the following period, the formation of a community was prominent. This took place on the basis of the birth of the new soul according to the Christian path of initiation. This aspect stands first of all in the sign of the divine Love, the aspect of the Word or of the Son. The elevated ones of this impulse are called the *Brotherhood of the Pure* or the pure *Cathars*. The subsequent period that continues until our time stands more particularly under the sign of the divine Wisdom and is described as the *Brotherhood of the Rosycross*. However, it will be clear that the three aspects of the Triple Alliance of the Light have made themselves felt in each period. There were always three human types, people who primarily reacted on the basis of the heart, the head or their actions. Only the emphasis shifted.

In the accompanying illustration, we see that the Cross of the Grandmaster rests on the outlines of a ship or a crescent moon. A soul community forms a heavenly vessel that, with common effort, follows its destiny, guided from above by the threefold Logos. The aspect of the Father, of the divine Will, is expressed by the hand that lets the threefold Cross descend into the group from above. The aspect of the Son is represented by the



eagle on the left beam of the cross, as the symbol of the highest elevation. It is the eagle that can look at the divine sun without being blinded by it. The eagle is also identified with John, the most beloved disciple, who fathomed his Master as no one else did. On the right beam, we see the *Ies* and the *Chrismon*, together representing *Jesus, the Christ*. Jesus refers to the immortal soul principle in the heart. It is a principle of genesis. The microcosmic Christ is the eternal structure of lines of force, in which the Plan of Perfection is recorded as a promise of perfection. These two must become one, in a threefold process of rebirth as to spirit, soul and body, a process that is accomplished in the power of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. This is why the I and the X also form the Roman number IX, the symbol of the resurrection of the perfect human being in the microcosm.

If a soul community functions in this way as an instrument of elevation, a magnetic effect will emanate from it, which is represented in this picture by the human souls that are pulled along in the wake of the heavenly vessel.

#### 16 Line drawing of the Cross of the Grandmaster

The cave drawings are sometimes difficult to read. Through erosion on the one hand and by calcification under the influence of humidity on the other, we see the readability deteriorate with each next generation. In addition, by rubbing, moistening it with water or even with saliva, the perceptibility is increasingly affected. Some understanding for this is urgently needed.

The previous image was made by order of Mr. A. Gadal according to what he remembered, at an age when he was no longer able to climb the Holy Mountain himself. Thus it might happen that upon careful inspection, a few observations could be added, as this image shows. The human souls, represented by crosses, could on second thought, also be interpreted as a fishnet that was cast out from the heavenly vessel. However, this does not change the meaning in any way.

Another surprise has also surfaced, namely, under the hand that holds the cross. The heavenly vessel itself has the shape of a crescent like an Egyptian barque, a barque of Isis. The material moon influences fertility, growth and birth. Therefore, it is a symbol of the feminine, manifested, formative powers of the Spirit. The vehicle of the individual soul, or of the collective of the Living Body is, therefore, often represented by the moon. However, the Spirit itself, as the Sophia that grants us the divine Wisdom to fathom the essence of God, is also represented by the moon. The crescent moon under the hand of the divine Father tells us that through this link, the grace granted to us *from above*, the possibility of *ascent* is also opened by receiving the Holy Spirit or the link with the Spirit.

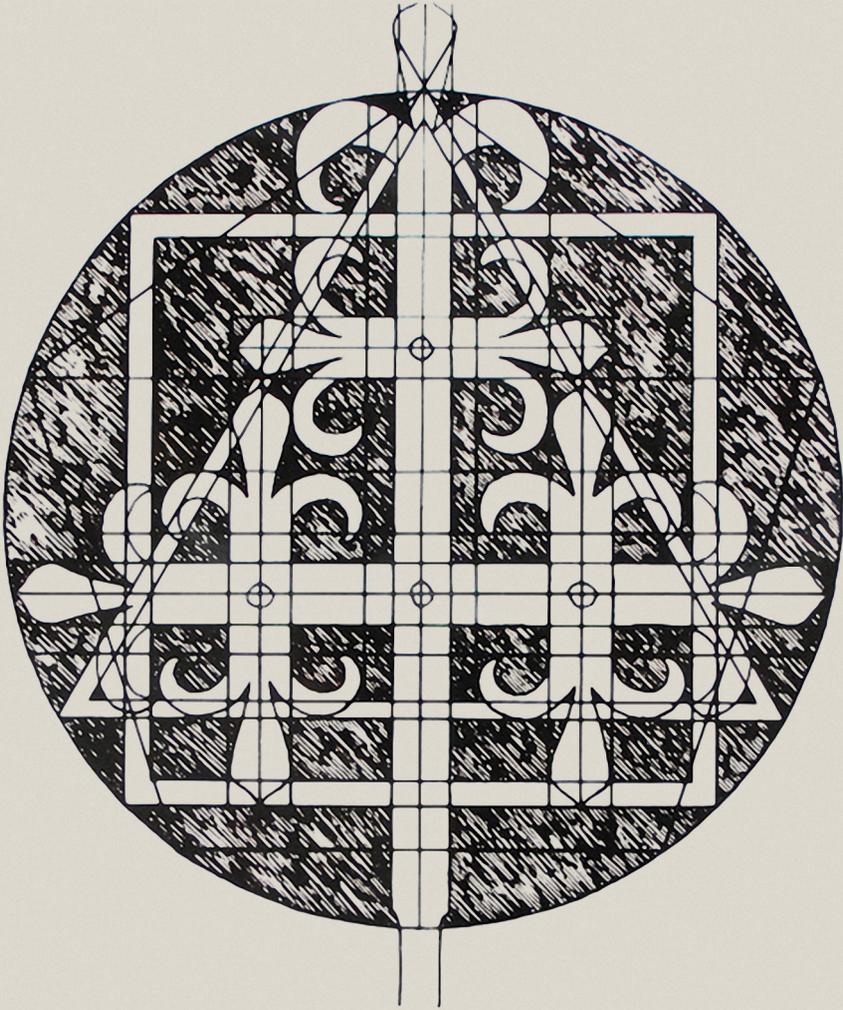


## 17 Cathar cross

According to the hints of Mr A. Gadal, this cross initially stood at the entrance of the *Chapel*. Later, it stood on the low wall of the churchyard of Ussat-en-Haut, but it was probably stolen. We might consider it a rather profane reproduction of the Cross of the Grandmaster. In the beautifully executed threefoldness, springing from the heart of the cross, the additions of the previous illustration are missing that only revealed their secrets to the initiates.

Once again, this cross refers to the Triple Alliance of the Light. However, it would be good to remember that this name did not originate in the Middle Ages, but rather in modern esoteric movements. Therefore, Mr Gadal did not identify the Brotherhood of the Grail with the very catholic Order of the Knights Templar that was deployed by the French king and the Pope against Islam, and later against the dissident Christians, the heretical Christians. With this name, he referred to the knighthood of the Spirit. What we nowadays understand by the Brotherhood of the Rosycross, originated, considered historically, at the beginning of the seventeenth century and did, as such, not yet exist during the Middle Ages either. Nevertheless, the rose was used as a symbol of the divine element within the human being, the soul. Thus the *Roman of the Rose*, in which a young man dreams of an enchanted garden with a budding rose in it with which he falls in love, was published in the thirteenth century. As soon as he wakes up, he begins his quest to find this rose and looks for ways to find the enchanted garden. Thus he sets out on an adventurous and instructive journey, which is fundamentally nothing else than becoming conscious of his innermost depth. This story is a logical continuation of the ideas about courtly love that left their mark on the courtly culture in Occitania in the beginning of the thirteenth century. This concerned the love for an unattainable noble lady, to whom people could dedicate all noble and knightly deeds. It is a fact that the position of women was nowhere held in such high esteem as in the culture of Southern France. Compared to their contemporaries, they enjoyed a certain independence, also financially, because they shared in inheritances. Cathar women cooperated as equals with the men and were, in the same way as in the first Christian communities, used for priestly tasks, although they were not allowed to hold the office of bishop.

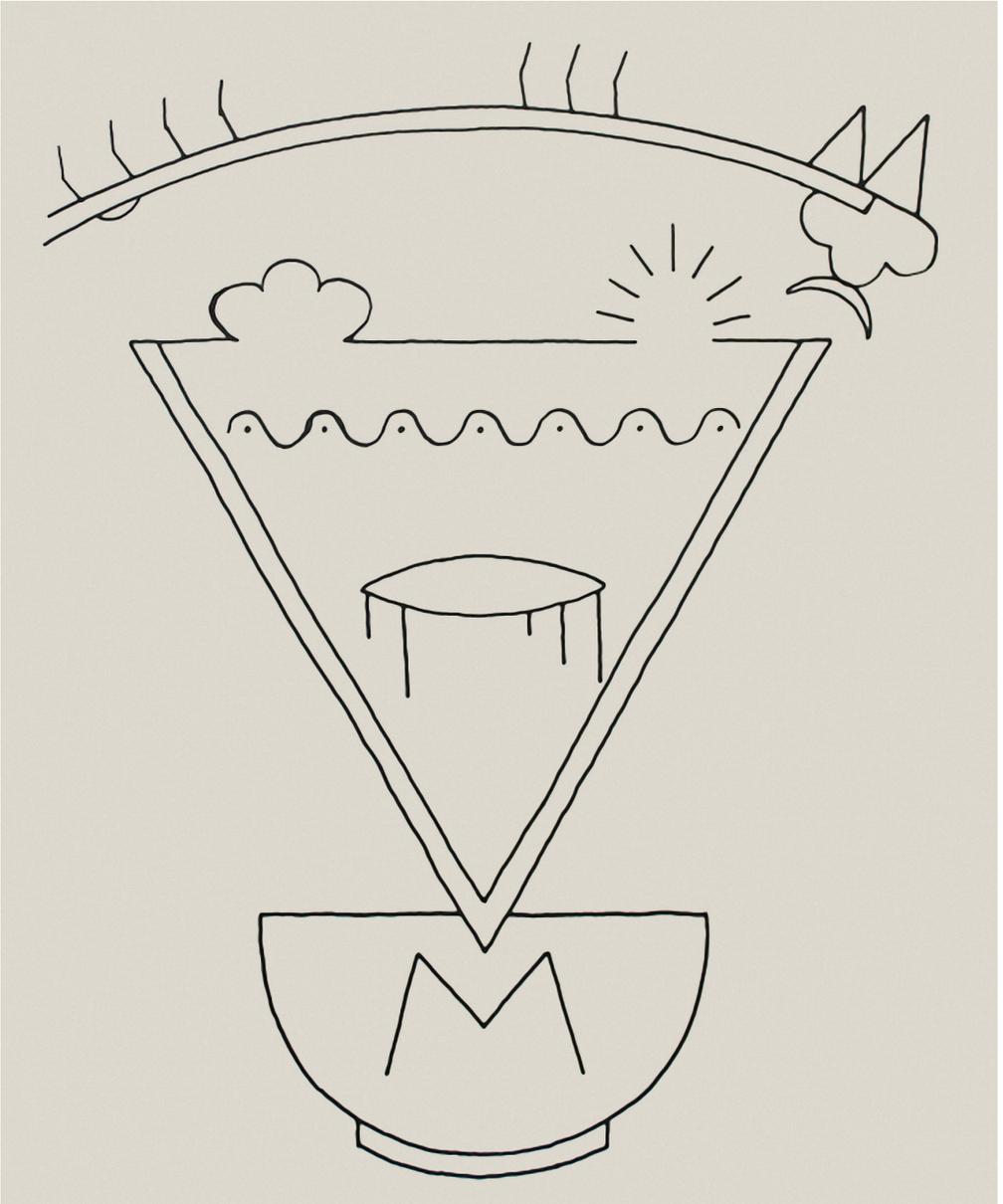
Finally, the label 'Cathars', related to the Greek *katharos*, literally 'Pure Ones', was not used by themselves, but was used for the first time by an abbot from the Rhine region, and was subsequently copied by others. It is therefore a sobriquet that was meant mockingly, but which nevertheless exactly reflected the principles that they represented. They called themselves simply 'Christians' or 'good Christians' or 'apostles of Christ'. Therefore, the name Triple Alliance of the Light does not have any historical basis, but nevertheless expresses within the Spiritual School a threefold, spiritual development that has emerged from the Christ impulse. As long as we hold onto the underlying image of the threefold power of manifestation of the Logos, expressed in the different human types in different stages of the development of the consciousness in Europe,



we will properly understand its unceasing activity. Then we will also understand that the Inner School of the Golden Rosycross is wholly protected by this Triple Alliance of the Light that links us with the gnostic treasure of Light of all times.

### 18 Proportions of the Cross of the Grandmaster

Despite the apparent simplicity of this cross, a French pupil of the Spiritual School discovered that its exact proportions perfectly corresponded to our familiar symbol of the circle, the triangle and the square. The circle of eternity represents the infinite One; the triangle represents the three primary aspects of the divine manifestation, the Father, the Word and the Spirit, and the square represents the cosmic and human manifestation, realised in matter. On closer inspection, it moreover appeared that the pentagon, the pentagram, as the symbol of the potential possibility for the development of the vehicle of the new soul, also corresponds to the structure of lines of force of this cross. In the reduced picture, we see that the proportions continue to correspond, if we divide the divine triangle into nine equivalent triangles. In this way, the Creator expresses himself fully in the ninefold, perfect human being.



## 19 Drawing in the cave of the Acacia

From what was said before and from reading the book *On the Way to the Holy Grail*, we can get a fair idea of the inner change occurring in the candidate during his path of initiation. His insight into the essence of God, into the coherence between the cosmic phenomena, expressed in the nature surrounding him, and his own place in the whole has enormously increased. The whole point of gravity of his directedness has shifted from the old ensoulment to a new ensoulment. He gradually approaches the point that the Spiritual School calls the 'light birth', during which the new consciousness can occupy the central place in the head sanctuary, where previously the personality consciousness had its seat. This birth will be sealed by the ministration of the *consolamentum* in the cave of *Bethlehem*, which is, however, preceded by a period of intense preparation in the cave of the *Acacia*.

This cave is situated not far from the cave of the Grandmaster, around the corner of the exit of the Chapel. Above the entrance, we see this complicated symbol that we know from the cover of the above-mentioned book, in which an explanation by Mr. A. Gadal has also been included. After a further development of the Spiritual School of more than fifty years, we will look at this symbol again and see what it has to tell us.

What immediately strikes us is a descending triangle or a pyramid, the base of which can be found on top. This base is characterised by a triple bulge and seven radiating lines. We may interpret them as the threefold Logos and the seven spirits before the Throne of God. From this base, a prepared working place has been formed, the body of initiation, the Light field of a spiritual school. This field is not formed on the basis of the aspect of the primordial substance that shapes gross-material reality, but it is raised from the aspect that shapes the field of the development of the soul. We sometimes speak of the pure primordial substance or of the gnostic-astral field. This is symbolised here by the vase-shaped *caput* with the letter M of *Mater* or *Materia*.

Within the body of initiation, this fundamental matter is transformed into seven ether states, adapted to the collective state of being of the pupils concerned, here represented as the undulating movement. These ether values correspond to the sevenfold rose of the heart, so that it is enabled to unfold its sepals systematically. Through the baptism by water, the candidate is linked with these new ether values. Then the body of initiation of a spiritual school works as a kind of uterine field, within which the birth of the new soul can be prepared.

In order one day to be able to stand as an independent being in the world with an autonomous link to the world of the soul, a new vehicle should develop. It is the fivefold soul vesture that is crowned by the new thinking faculty of which Hermes speaks. We see this expressed as a kind of house of the new soul, resting upon five fundamental columns. According to early Christianity, like with Origen and others, the reborn human being has five spiritual senses for feeling, beholding, perceiving, tasting and sniffing the smell of holiness inwardly. In *The Gospel of Thomas*, we read in logion 19 the following about this:



Jesus said: Blessed is he who came into being before he came into being.  
[...] For there are five trees for you in Paradise which remain undisturbed  
summer and winter and whose leaves do not fall. Whoever becomes  
acquainted with them will not experience death.

He who possesses such a soul vehicle is able to enter 'the way of the stars' that is represented at the top of the illustration. The pre-Christian initiation describes this way as releasing the forces of the seven planets, expressed in all kinds of human impediments. This is only possible when a human being, under all circumstances and, if necessary, in all great ordeals with which life in matter confronts people, truly lives and acts on the basis of the *divine* seven-power. Origen, therefore, confronts the seven planetary impediments with the seven heavens, the seven radiation values of the Spirit-Soul, into which the human being should raise himself. We also encountered them in the seven stars of the seal of the Grandmaster, Mr. J. van Rijckenborgh.

Therefore, the light birth confronts the initiated human being with an absolutely new beginning, which is represented by the small *caput* to the left. Through the way of the stars, the human being will know himself as to his true Self and learns to use his new faculties in practice. Through self-knowledge, he simultaneously increases in Wisdom, in the true Knowledge of God. This is represented by, respectively, the small and the large triangle to the right. In this way, he achieves a synthesis within himself and reflects the threefold power of Manifestation of the Logos as to spirit, soul and body. The light powers, released by it, will be put at the disposal of the Spiritual School, the world and humanity as the healing and comforting power of the Paraclete. However, in order to be able to continue this way, the old soul vehicle should first be discarded.

## 20 Kepler – Mès-Naut – Ka

The stay in the cave of the Acacia was also a period of fasting, literally as well as to desiring, feeling and thinking. In the Spiritual School, we learn that the fivefold, material aspect of the soul is formed by the blood, the nerve fluid, the hormone fluid, the serpent fire and the consciousness. Together they form the light vesture. We can, therefore, wholly understand that the period in the Acacia was spent in solitude, silence, fasting and deep contemplation. Everything was focused on neutralising any obfuscation still circulating in these soul fluids, as much as possible.

As a last step on the way to the pinnacle of the path of liberation in Bethlehem, this was followed by a period of three days and four nights in the tiny cave of *Kheper*, close to the entrance to the first Hermit. Here, any bonds to matter, that is, the last remnants of geocentric, egocentric bonds, were discarded in what we, in our time, call the burial vault of Christian Rosycross. The entrance to this cave is situated at ground level and can only be entered or left while lying down. The inside is low and round and has approximately the form of a drop of water on a flat surface. You can only lie in it in a somewhat curled position, like a child in the womb, and the space can be closed by a stone.



This reminds us of the tomb that Joseph of Arimathea prepared for the body of Jesus after it had been taken down from the Cross.

When the stone was removed and the candidate was helped out in the dawning light of a new day, he must really have experienced this as a new birth. In the book *On the Way to the Holy Grail*, this stage is beautifully described and in *The Triumph of the Universal Gnosis*, we read:

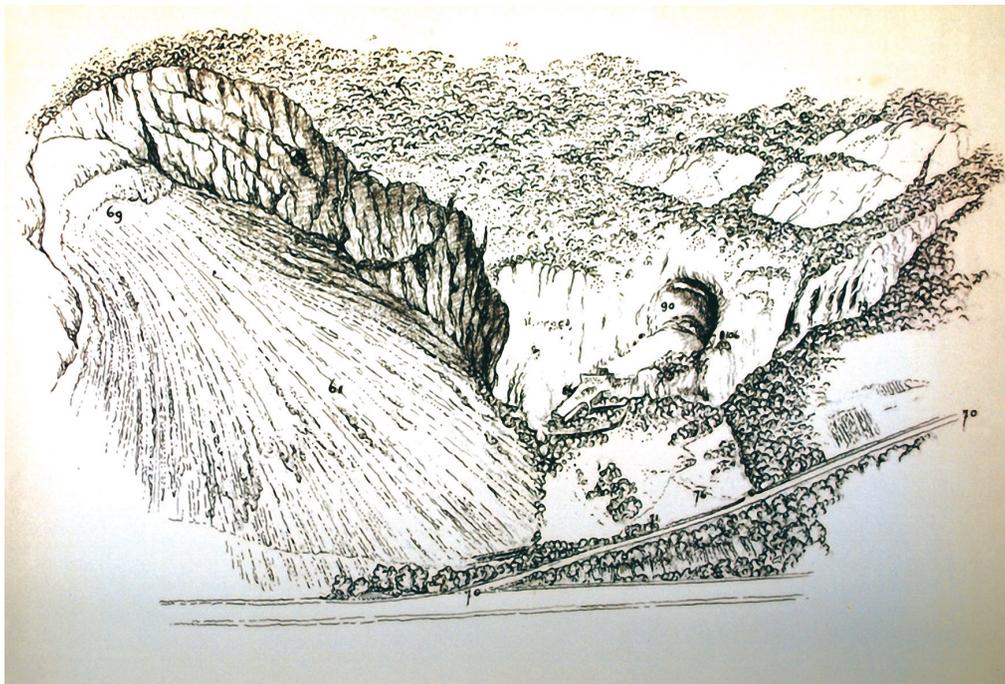
Let us return to the most important event during the Egyptian initiation that later, at the time of Pyrenean Catharism, was to become the initiation of the *purs* or *parfaits*. For three days and three nights, the initiate stayed in a sarcophagus. During this period, he accomplished his journey in the other world, to the extent that his state of progress enabled this. Because he remembered this upon awakening, and he had had a preview of the underworld, he had as it were arisen from death and had been born twice, as this is referred to in the language of the temple. Christ had [...] accomplished his cosmic journey during his entombment, before his spiritual resurrection took place before the eyes of his disciples. Here we see another correspondence between the classical initiation and the new mysteries that were brought to the earth by Christ. This is a correspondence, but also a tremendous expansion! The reason is that the astral journey, 'the journey through the stars' of a God who has experienced earthly death, is of a quite different nature and has a much larger scope than the timid journey of a simple mortal to the realm of the dead in the barque of Isis! (This barque was actually nothing else than the etheric body of the initiate himself that the Master had separated from the physical body and that was taken along by the turbulence of the astral streams...)

We read further:

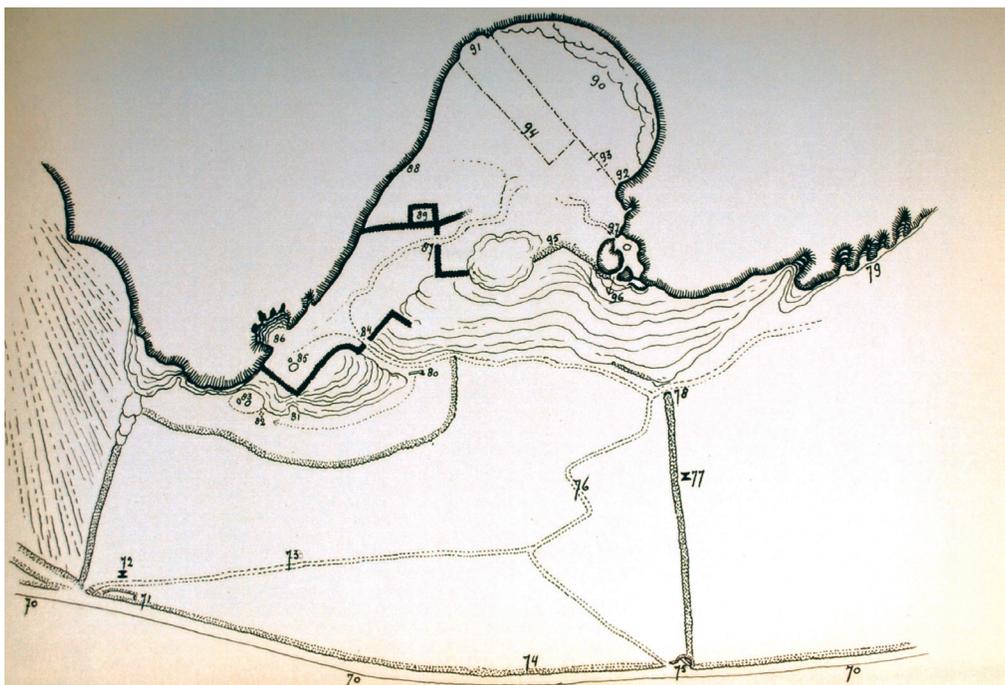
And when the *parfait* had experienced the death of matter in Kepler (or Kheper), the cave of Osiris, the God of death, [...] and was subsequently metamorphosed into a Spirit-Soul Man, through the sacrifice, the great and complete sacrifice of himself, then Bethlehem received him...

#### 21 View on the cave of Bethlehem

In this picture, we see the characteristic lines of the cave complex of Bethlehem, seen approximately from the monument 'Galaad' of the Triple Alliance of the Light, down in the valley.



22



23

## 22 Complex of Bethlehem (3rd stage)

This drawing shows the third part of the Sacred Mountain where, on the one hand, the period of initiation was ended that took place in the seclusion of the initiation centre, but where at the same time the basis was laid for the third stage of initiation that was referred to as the *Transformation*, the stage during which from the pupa, the butterfly, the perfect insect, emerges. This third stage was begun in the seclusion of the Holy Mountain, in Bethlehem, but that would later *in* and *through* the daily practice of life in the service of their fellow human beings be guided to an irreversible reality. Having arrived in Bethlehem, the ‘butterfly’ is, therefore, ready ‘to fly’.

## 23 Forecourt of Bethlehem

Similar to the Églises and the Hermit, this complex was enclosed by a double wall. The outer space was a kind of terrace, the large height difference of which was bridged by stairs at the time. The next passage formed the connection to a forecourt that was partially shaded by the inward-curving rock. On the basis of a careful reconstruction, the conclusion may be drawn that a spacious house was located here with a kitchen with a hearth to the left.



## 24 House of Retreat

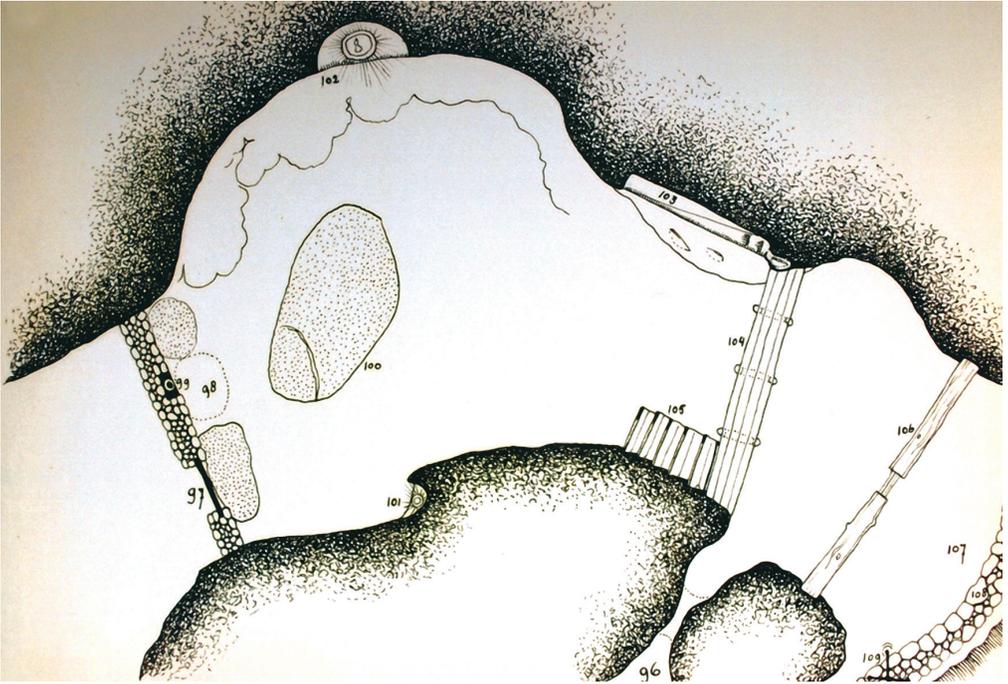
We may assume that this complex did not have caves at its disposal that were suitable as sleeping and living accommodation, although the sanctuary itself, the cave of Bethlehem, must have been used regularly for gatherings, apart from the final stage of the path of initiation in the Sacred Mountain. After all, we should not consider the events in Bethlehem, described in such a special way by Mr. A. Gadal in his book *On the Way to the Holy Grail*, as merely a solemn ritual. No, to the candidate, it meant being bodily taken up into a new reality of life that is symbolised by the *Pentacle*, the pentagonal cavity in the rock. Such a sanctuary should, therefore, possess a serene, lofty atmosphere with a high vibration that can only be maintained and ensured by the priestly work of a few, especially invited brothers. It is obvious that this always concerns older Brothers, purified by a life of service. Mr. Gadal therefore speaks of a house of retreat that was to be found in the high, arched recess in the wall of the forecourt.



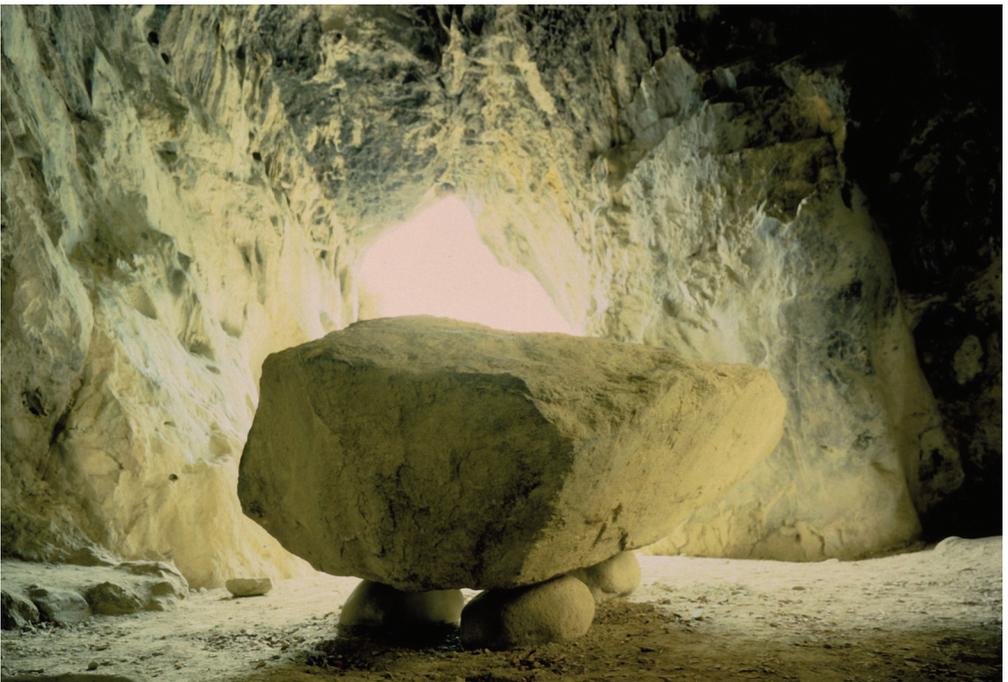
## 25 Entrance of the cave of Bethlehem

The cave of Bethlehem had two entrances, both of which were originally partially closed off by a stone wall, and open at the top for sufficient light. At the side of the forecourt, we find the doorway which, however, only the Head of the Order, or someone else on his instruction, was allowed to open. Slightly more to the right was a low passage in the rock, through which the room might be entered with reverently bowed head. Mr A. Gadai writes about this sanctuary in his book *The Triumph of the Universal Gnosis*:

It is indeed in Bethlehem that the Pentacle liberated the human being from matter – after he had received the Consolamentum – and raised the Spirit-Man above the Man of Matter. In this way, the superman developed through the sanctification in Christ! Daily, the tiresome, obstacle-strewn way should be cleared and followed step-by-step, not as angels, which we cannot be, but as simple mortals – as we try and desire to be – thus returning to matter the supporting spiritual task of serving the Spirit!



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## 26 Ground plan of the cave of Bethlehem

On this map, we can clearly see that wooden stairs were placed opposite the Pentacle, which granted access to a platform that led to the bottom right corner of the Pentacle, so that the latter might be entered easily.

## 27 Altar stone

The interior of the cave has been clearly described in the writings of Mr Gadai. In this picture, we see the impressive, granite altar stone that, covered by white linen, was the place of the Bible.

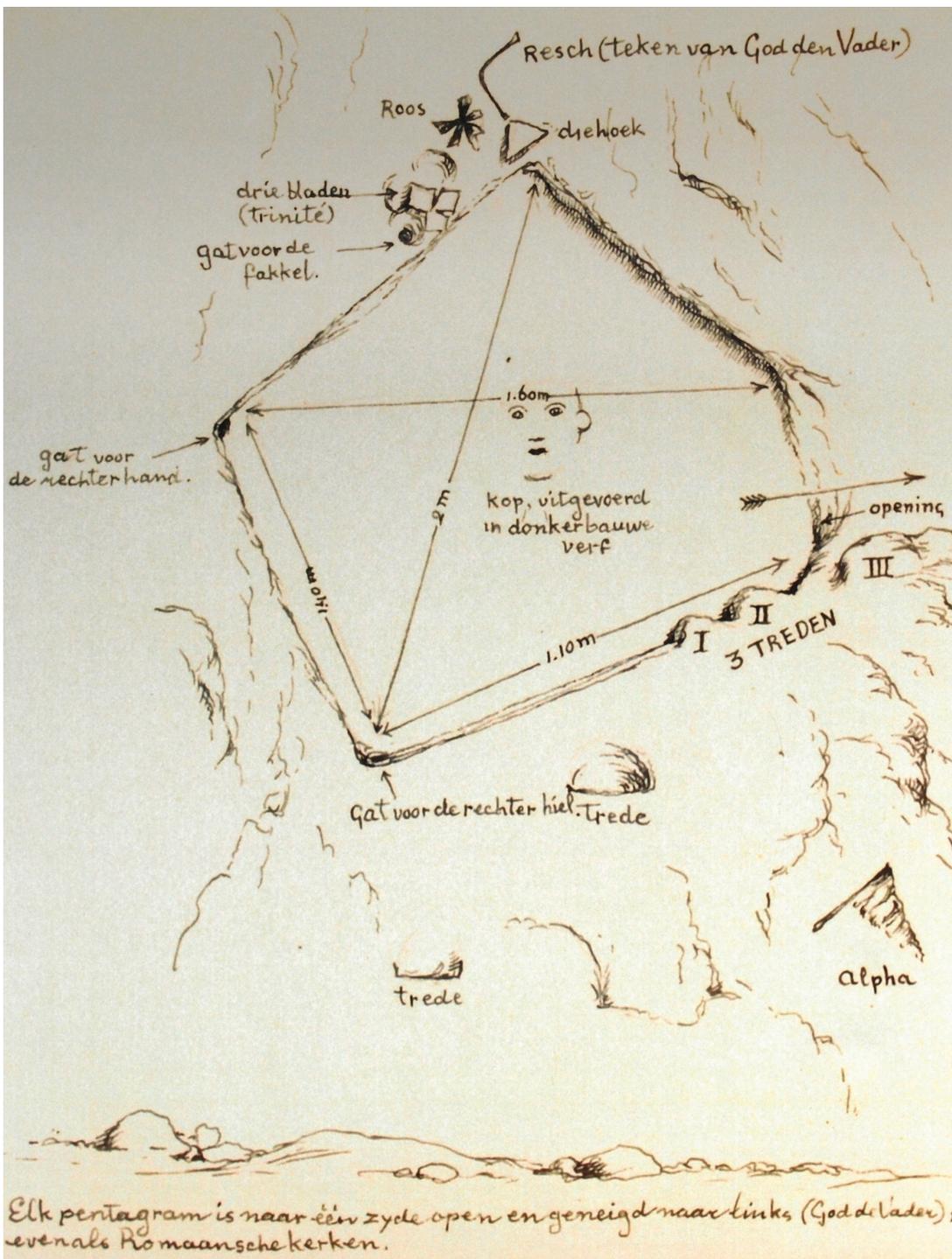


## 28 Pentacle

Equally prominent in this room is the Pentacle itself, which was carved sufficiently deeply to accommodate a human figure. We can find a reference to the meaning of the number five in *The Song of Pronoia* (providence) at the end of *The Apocryphon* or *The Secret Book of John* (from *The Nag Hammadi Library*):

And I raised him up, and sealed him in the light of the water with five seals,  
in order that death might not have power over him from this time on.

At the level of the bottommost point to the right, we can distinguish the holes, into which the supporting beams for the platform could be placed. Inside the Pentacle, we can clearly see the partly crumbled remnants of two steps as silent references to the most hidden aspects of genesis and gaining consciousness that were unveiled to the candidate by the light birth in Bethlehem.



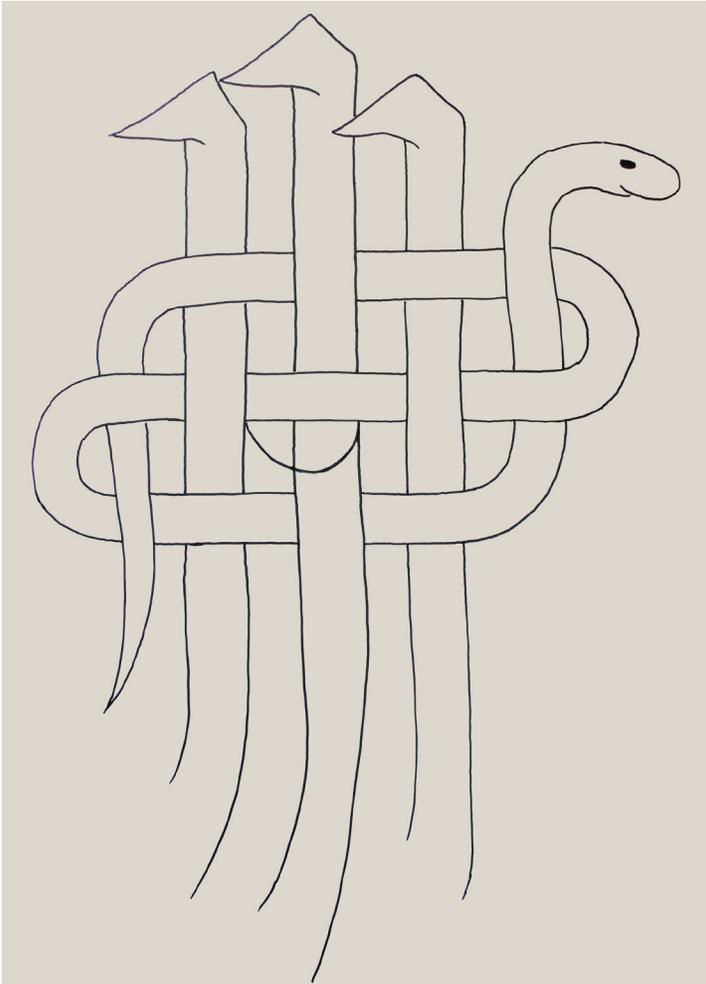
Elk pentagram is naar één zijde open en geneigd naar links (God den Vader), evenals Romaansche kerken.

## 29 Schematic drawing of the Pentacle

With A. Gadal's transfer to the Gnostic Spiritual School of the Golden Rosycross also belonged this drawing of the Pentacle of Bethlehem. Our attention is drawn by two details. Firstly, we see a face depicted in the centre of the Pentacle that virtually can no longer be seen in the cave of Bethlehem. Mr. Gadal told that this rock drawing had completely faded, but that originally a beautiful, serene face had been drawn with a few simple lines. A photo of it is to be found in *Le Musée du Catharisme* by René Nelli (1966). To our question concerning the meaning of this face, he only reacted with a knowledgeable smile that was intended to anchor this question more deeply in our hearts. By investigating the background of Cathar thought, the answer suddenly stood crystal clear before our sight. What else could have been represented here than the encounter with the inner Other One, the image, the inner Christ, the Light of the World, with which the candidate was linked by the Baptism of the Spirit? Indeed, the Spirit watches in the Pentacle!

In the Spiritual School, this link of the ascending soul with the descending Spirit is called 'the Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosycross'. Through this union, a new power of perception is generated. It is the manifestation of the Spirit of Truth that may be experienced by people as the Plan of the Beginning. The realisation of this Plan can only become an insoluble property within our own being through practical application in word and deed. Unveiling this mystery is as a promise buried in every human being and is accepted as a task by the initiated brother or sister. The true new ensoulment is as it were incorporated into the whole feeling, thinking, willing and acting of reborn man, and is, ultimately, confirmed in the new soul consciousness as an immortal faculty. This is why the five lines of the Star of Bethlehem are drawn within the pentacle. On the basis of the endura, the transfiguration, the transformation down to matter, is initiated.

Secondly, this is why we see in the bottom right corner the remnants of two symbolic steps, mentioned before, that refer to 'the way of the stars' that the initiated human being enters by putting his newly gained soul state at the service of his suffering and straying fellow human beings. These steps also represent the sixth and seventh aspect of initiation. They have a relationship with the caves *Mès-Naut*, meaning 'ever higher', and *Ka*, meaning 'the Light Soul'. In this drawing, a third step is shown, representing a natural bulging on the outside of the Pentacle. This is probably a misunderstanding that has originated during the oral transfer.



### 30 Serpent symbol in Bethlehem

Although, as said before, it becomes ever harder to see most rock drawings, we should make an exception for the sign of the serpent to be found opposite the Pentacle on the smooth wall next to the low passage. This sign has always remained unnoticed, even by Mr. Gadal, who had been there countless times and had absorbed everything very attentively. It was noticed for the first time in the year 1969, when Mrs Catharose de Petri made preparations for the work of the Grail. To her, this discovery formed a confirmation of her vision and plans. In recent times, many details in the drawing have been lost due to erosion, caused by too much human interest.

Here we see a graphic view of the whole image. Immediately, our attention is drawn to the symbol of the serpent. This creature has always been considered the symbol of the renewal of the consciousness through knowledge, or in this case, by Wisdom that is born from the Spirit. Isn't it a characteristic of a serpent that it, while growing, more than once sheds its skin that has become too small? This is why this symbol expresses the transformation of the consciousness. The way, gone by the serpent, consists of a number of curves between three vertical pillars. They are the three fundamental pillars that represent the three primary aspects of the essence of God: the Father, the Word and the Spirit. The three horizontal planes may be seen as references to the spiritual, the soul and the material aspect of the human being, which are wholly penetrated by the three vertical lines of the threefold, divine power of manifestation.

A similar symbol can, amongst other things, be found in the vaults of a very old church in The Netherlands, although there the serpent goes upwards in three spirals, thus crossing the pillars nine times. In another variant, discovered on a baptismal font from the Abbaye de l'Ardorel, a replica of which can be seen in the Musée du Catharisme in Mazamet, the letter S, of *Soter*, is woven through the three pillars. However, the variant, found in the cave of Bethlehem, is absolutely unique. There the serpent has first of all made every effort to reach the highest, the *spiritual level*. It experiences being part of the All-encompassing Divine Plan, the divine Will of the Father. The essence of this Plan is communicated to the head sanctuary and from there fulfils the whole soul being.

The heart of the symbol shows the Grail Cup that the candidate has erected within himself. It is filled with the blood of the Christ, the universal love power of the divine Son. This is the *level of the soul*. It turns him into a true disciple of his beloved Master and stimulates him to follow Him in absolute service to his fellow men. He is enabled to do so by the divine Wisdom, the Holy Spirit, which drives him to the right action in any situation of life.

On the cube of the monument in the Rose Garden at Noverosa, this is briefly summarised as Knowledge, Love, Deed. In this way, the candidate is ignited by the divine Will; he dies in the divine Love and is reborn in the divine Wisdom. Then he represents in principle the ninefold, wholly manifested human being. Now he is sent into the world to test his new state of being against the *reality of our field of life*.



He must prove himself by service to his fellow human beings. We may see this as 'descending' into reality, but also as a process of realisation, through which a renewal is accomplished in his new light vesture that is reflected in all four vehicles. Thus, the human being encounters himself on all four levels of existence. In this way, the serpent also crosses himself four times.

Nine and four together form the number thirteen which is the number of absolutely overcoming the lower zodiacal influences, up to the thirteenth aeon, the reality of the Christ. This is why the head of the serpent shows a serene smile that, strangely enough, reminds us of that of the Buddha or of some Indian and Egyptian images of God.

### 31 Mystical Gate

After the sacred gathering in the cave of Bethlehem, which is inimitably described in the book *On the Way to the Holy Grail*, the initiate was led outside through the great door and accompanied to the *Mystical Gate*. He steps outside as a new human being, as a *pur*, as a *parfait*, a pure, perfect human being. This did not mean that he no longer had to learn anything. It refers to the restoration of the original unity as to spirit, soul and body that had now been realised. The human being has become whole and is, therefore, able to begin his mission in the world. He was shown the way of the Cathars that led over mount Thabor to the castle of Montségur, at the time the 'headquarters' of Catharism. There he would receive his specific task, a task that, in the words of Mr. Gadal, is summarised as follows:

The Cathar Brothers and Sisters testified to this on the basis of the deeply experienced knowledge: God is Love! Accompanied by the blessing: Deep Peace! The Beautiful Consolations of Bethlehem!

However, before leaving the initiation complex, he celebrated his first service on an altar table that was placed on a lower terrace. We will no longer find the granite stone of this altar at this place, because it has received a very special purpose, as we will see later.



### 32 Rose Garden of Albi

Building a spiritual school follows the same pattern that determines the three stages of individual initiation. The period of its development up to and including World War II (1924-1945) may be compared to the stay within the Églises, the preparatory stage. At the time, this was still referred to as an esoteric movement, strongly coloured by related developments, both from the past as well as by the strongly changing frame of reference of that time. However, the goal to be achieved was already clearly envisaged and gradually, the way to be followed began to stand out ever more clearly. The period of the war naturally contributed to the notion that a period had definitively ended and that a 'new religious orientation' was needed in order to achieve a real deepening of the work.

This new direction was taken under the name Lectorium Rosicrucianum and under the seal of circle, triangle and square. In addition, the book *Dei Gloria Intacta, the Christian Mystery of Initiation of the Holy Rosycross for the New Era* by J. Leene, later known as J. van Rijckenborgh, was published immediately after the war. Nonetheless, a mystery of initiation cannot really be unveiled until there is an inner school. The right key for shaping it, however, had not yet been found. During the war years, J. van Rijckenborgh's attention had already been drawn by Hermetic texts on the one hand, and the history of the Cathars and 'Albigenses' on the other (*Magicians and seers* by Maurice Magre). With the discovery at Nag Hammadi, the aspect of the Christian-Hermetic Gnosis in the Spiritual School became even more topical. A wholly new, purely gnostic element was added to the esoteric methods used until then to make the consciousness more susceptible to the Christ power. The *spirit spark as eternal principle* became the central point of departure, and the purification of the heart became a primary necessity. This also was an important point of departure in the Brotherhood of the Cathars. This is why it is overly clear why J. Leene recognised in the Cathar tradition the preceding Brotherhood, in which this purely Christian path of initiation was practised. Hoping to find the right starting point, Mr J. Leene and Mrs Stok-Huizer, later known as Catharose de Petri, undertook a journey to the South of France in 1946 and visited, amongst other things, the Rose Garden of Albi. We can read about this in *The Triumph of the Universal Gnosis*, and in the book *Called by the World Heart*. In the central flowerbed, a choice had been made, for that year only, to plant a five-pointed, golden star, the symbol of the new soul vesture! Therefore, this visit marks in a special way the moment that a start could be made in the Spiritual School with the process that we described with regard to the two caves of the Hermit. It is the process of the endura, on the one hand, and of weaving the immortal vesture of the new soul on the other hand, both individually as well communally. We call this common, new vesture, which encompasses everyone, the Living Body of the Spiritual School!

Thus a whole new field of perception was opened to our Grandmasters during this blessed stay in the Rose Garden. The Light Treasure of the Triple Alliance of the Light was put at their disposal, and they saw the task implied by it before them, down to all



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its details. It is the task that underlies the Inner School. However, the new impulse also had a strong effect in the texts of the Rituals, the Temple Songs and the Conferences that have later partially been published in the literature of the Spiritual School.

To the above-mentioned starting point of the spirit spark, the new concept of man as *microcosm* was also added that was partly influenced by the modern, scientific insights of that time regarding the structure of the atom. Ever since then, the microcosm has been represented as a spiritual field of manifestation, with the rose as an eternal principle in its centre. This new concept underlies the construction of the Renova Temple.

### 33 Youth flag of Noverosa

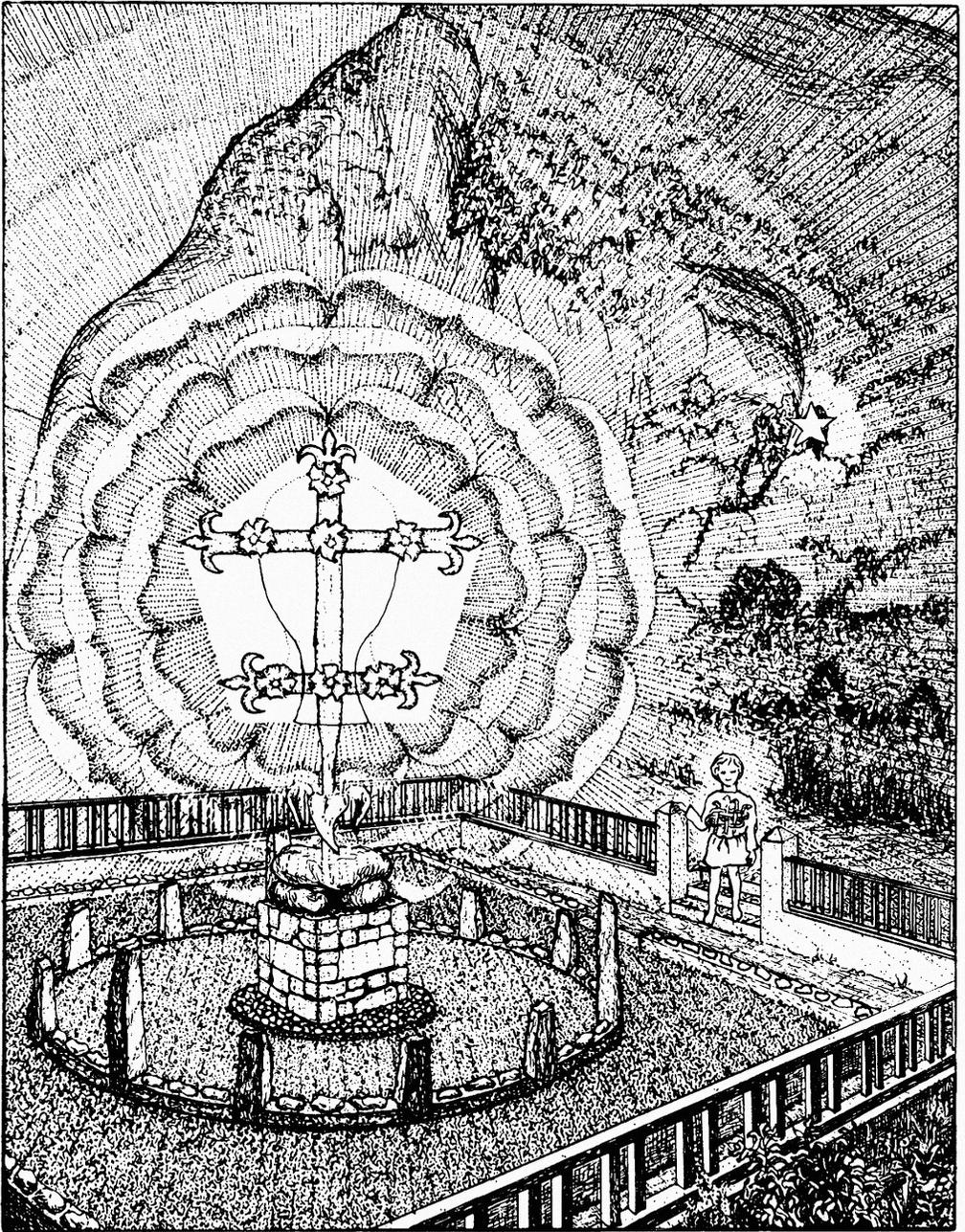
In particular, also the Youthwork bears the signature of the Cathar aspect. This can be recognised in the way the work is done, in the emphasis on the spirit spark that may open into a sevenfold rose in a pure heart, irradiated by the new vesture, the Golden Wedding Garment, symbolised by the Star of Bethlehem. All of this is summarised by the Youth flag hoisted in 1956, when the foundation stone of the dormitory building at conference centre De Haere was laid, which has been called Noverosa, 'the New Rose', from then on.

### 34 Monument 'Galaad'

While Mr. Leene and Mrs. Stok worked, together with a group of loyal friends, on the complete reformation of the Spiritual School, they often felt the need of an elder Brother in matter to confirm for them the proper execution of their task. It was not until the year 1954 when, after intensive correspondence, they came into personal contact with this elder Brother in the person of Mr A. Gadai. This encounter was mutually experienced as the complete manifestation of the activity of the Triple Alliance of the Light in the material reality. This is why it was decided to express this by erecting a monument in the valley of the Ariège, at the foot of the Holy Mountain: the monument Galaad, the Heap of Stones of the Testimony, based on the seal of the circle, the triangle and the square.

However, if a two-dimensional symbol is made visible three-dimensionally, something is added to its meaning, namely the element of realisation. This may be compared to a plan of construction on the one hand and the constructed building on the other. The symbol of the Spiritual School represents the three basic principles of construction underlying macrocosm, cosmos and microcosm, the spiritual principles that enable creation and re-creation, eternal genesis and becoming conscious.

In the circle of eternity, the field of eternal genesis of primordial substance, the creative, Divine Word vibrates unceasingly. It is expressed in seven active aspects, three of which are referred to as the ideation powers, the three principles, as the Father, the Word and the Spirit. The other four aspects represent the form-giving principle in all fields of spirit and matter. They are the powers of realisation. In their eternal interaction, the three ideation powers and the four formative forces are expressed as the number twelve.



This number has always been linked with the image of the circle, and its activity is sometimes referred to as the twelfefold, eternal stream, here expressed by the twelve granite pillars. It is the exalted reality behind and above the twelve aspects of the zodiac that should take shape in living people. Think of the circle of twelve apostles around Jesus the Christ, who is the first as well as the thirteenth. Also think of the twelve knights around King Arthur, who are considered worthy to sit at the Round Table. In the centre of this circle, the Grail Cup is formed, into which the Spirit descends in the figure of a host, the Christ, or the dove, the Paraclete. This is also why images of the Grail are often accompanied by the number twelve.

Thus, all the necessary conditions for the process of re-creation, of rebirth of the original, microcosmic human being are present in the symbol, the seal of the Spiritual School. On this basis, the gnostic building is erected, and we see it being expressed before our eyes in the monument 'Galaad'.

### 35 Symbolic drawing of 'Galaad'

From the square as basis, the cube is formed on the basis of the familiar *fivefold* gnostic formula. The awakening of the spirit spark grants the human being new *insight*, a new guideline, a new point of departure, a new ensoulment. Because the newly awakening soul is fundamentally one with the Essence of the Logos, the striving human being will experience that he is broken off from his divine origin. A deep longing for becoming whole again makes itself felt, the *longing for salvation*. From the realisation that this becoming whole will not be accomplished automatically, the need arises to be continuously focused on the goal to be achieved: *one-pointedness of purpose*. This is only possible if this directedness is applied in practice in our mode of life: the *new mode of life*. If these four aspects have achieved an absolute balance with each other, the topside of the cube will be closed as a logical consequence. The results are then combined as in a quinta essentia, in a *renewed consciousness* that, in its turn, will support the direct inflow of the ideation powers of the threefold Logos, represented by the three stones on top of the cube.

Now a human being has a new soul power at his disposal that may open itself to the three ideation powers of the Spirit. To the extent that he is able to turn these spiritual impulses into a living reality, the Spirit-Soul figure, the body of the resurrection, will develop, and the new being will raise itself *to* and unite itself *with* the essence of God. Beholding this great perspective, the thought occurred to Mr A. Gadal that something was still lacking in the envisaged construction, namely the number one, referring to this crowning, the return to the primordial source, the divine Father. After deep reflection, he therefore proposed to the Grandmasters to place the altar stone from the outside terrace of the cave of Bethlehem on the mentioned, matching three stones that had already been selected for this purpose. This idea met with great approval and thus the whole altar table of Bethlehem rests on the monument Galaad, the altar table on which, according to Mr A. Gadal, the new parfaite celebrated his first service, as confirmation of



his complete sacrifice as to spirit, soul and body.

The twelve granite pillars around the monument give us still another, subtle hint. Three of them are clearly longer than the other ones. In the power of the threefold Logos it is not only the original, perfect man that has again become manifest as to his ninefold nature, but in this way also the three witnesses in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Spirit. These have become manifest as the three witnesses on earth: the spirit, the water and the blood, first of all in Jesus, the Christ, and after him in all who have followed in his steps: the Brotherhood of the Triple Alliance of the Light, the Brotherhood of Life! How grateful should we not be then to this Brotherhood that supports and protects the processes of initiation within the Inner School with its Light power.

### 36-38 Montségur

As said before, the new *parfait* set out for the castle of Montségur via the Way of the Cathars. Close to the beginning of the road, we find the entrance to the cave of *Fontanet* or, according to Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Fontane-la-Salvatge*, where Parcival met the hermit, who explained to him the mystery of the Last Supper that is also the mystery of the Holy Grail. The road leads via the foothills of mount Thabor across the mountain pass of the Pic de St. Barthélémy. There you have a magnificent view of Montségur, with behind it, the wide expanse of a region that was permeated by the Cathar ideal, the Kingdom of Love, until first the Crusades and later the Inquisition smothered this rebirth of the Christ impulse with all its original purity in blood.

Upon his arrival at Montségur, the initiated Cathar received the task assigned to him that was always devoted to serving and comforting his fellow human beings. Modern research (the results of which have, amongst other things, been recorded by the authors Yves van Buyten and Willie Vanderzeypen in their book *Cathars of Europe*) depicts a very objective image of the Cathar mode of life. They did not use churches, but considered their community the Body of Christ and the participants in it its members. There was a spiritual hierarchy, headed by a few bishops who supervised a certain region. They were referred to as *ancien* and were assisted by a *filz majeur* and a *filz mineur*, an older and a younger brother or son. They did not receive compensation for their spiritual tasks, on the contrary, every Cathar was obliged to support himself or herself. They were helped in their tasks by the deacons.

Initiated Cathars lived in community of property, as was also the case in the early Christian communities. One of their tasks was administering the consolamentum. This consolamentum might be received by every person who had expressed the serious desire for it. Afterwards, they were counted amongst the 'good Christians', or good men and women, *bons hommes* and *bonnes femmes*. We may see this baptism by the laying on of hands as the first touch by and link with the Holy Spirit. In this sense, consolamentum means 'consolation'. To them, it had the same meaning as the sacrament of the baptism in the Spiritual School. We see the sacrament of the baptism as being linked with the *descending* stream of the Christ radiation to support the



process of self-realisation. In principle, the Cathars saw it in the same way, but they linked it with the condition that only adults were eligible, those who chose it with full understanding. To the *initiated* Cathar, however, the consolamentum meant the 'sealing' of the link with the *ascending* stream of the Holy Spirit, the pinnacle of a period of initiation. We may compare it with Parcival's partaking of the meal in the Grail Castle where he sees the Grail for the first time, however without being able to surmise or fathom the mystery, and likewise with the same event at the end of his quest. It was not until then that he experienced the true meaning and was able to accept his task as Keeper of the Grail.

Because the Cathars had, in principle, completely liberated themselves from any self-interest, they were able to be independent and very objective in life. Because they lived, after Jesus' example, absolutely without struggle and were not allowed to tell lies, they were often asked to mediate in conflicts. All such matters may have cropped up during their visit to Montségur, whereby each one's specific talents were certainly taken into account. We see in these illustrations the remnants of the castle in its current state, from the front side, from above and from the backside. The higher part of the building housed a consecrated assembly room that we call the *Chapel*.



### 39 Chapel of Montségur

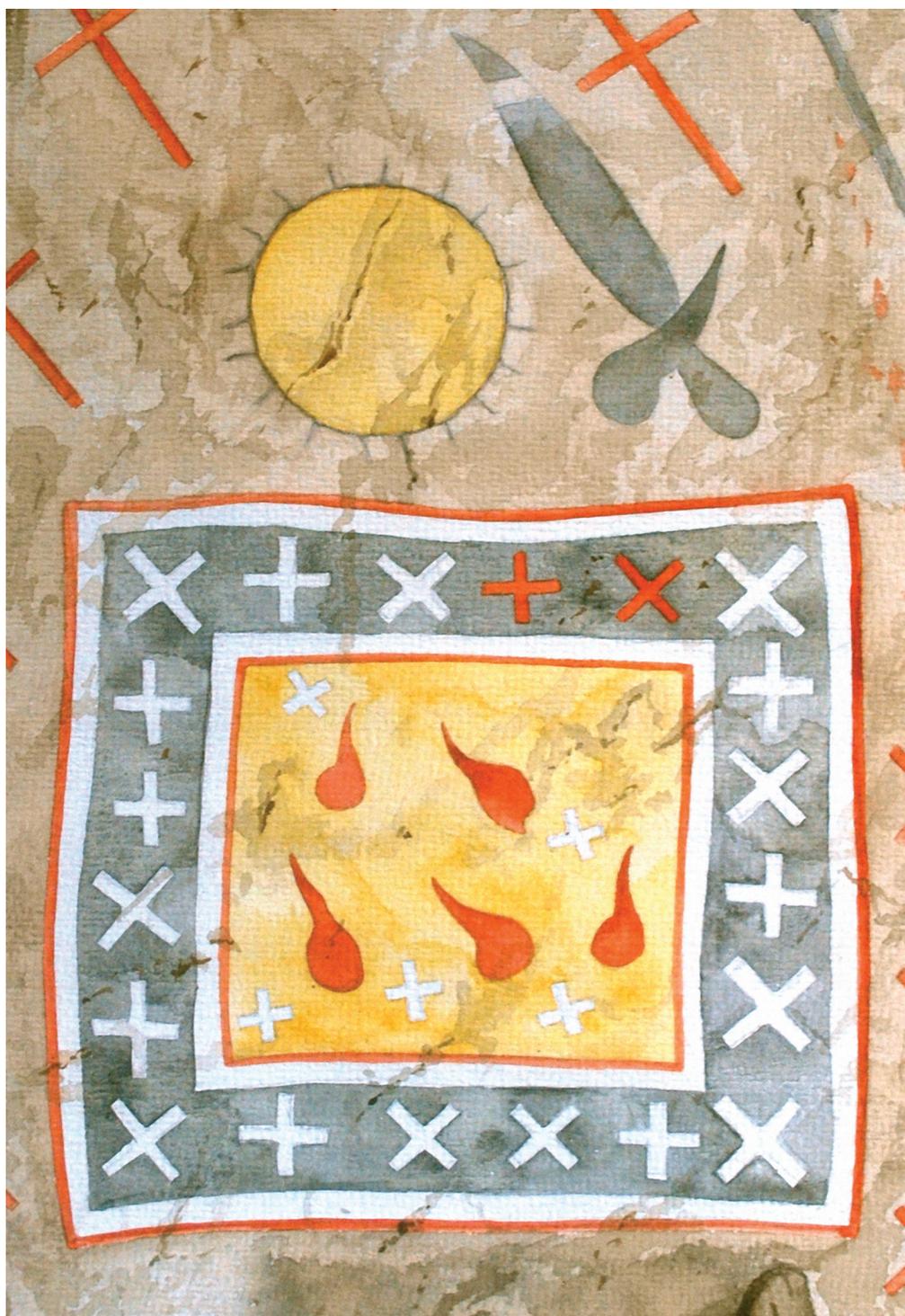
In the museum *Salle Gadal* in Tarascon, are two drawings in which Esclarmonde had been drawn twice. The first drawing shows a young girl with a white dove in her hands. This goes back to the legend that she received a small, ceramic dove from her father, the count of Foix, as a sign of her future task in the service of the healing and comforting Spirit, the Paraclete. Such a dove has indeed been found at Montségur and has been preserved. The second part of the drawing shows her as Arch-deaconess of the Cathar Brotherhood and in her hands is a drawing of the so-called 'Grail tableau' (see illustration 41), to be found on one of the walls of a small double cave, belonging to the former castle of *Montréal de Sos*. Both drawings were made by Mrs. S. Coigny-Saint Palais. Being herself of noble descent, she went deeply into the history of the ancient, southern French country and that of the noble families, their knights and vassals. She completely related them to Catharism and the tradition of the Grail. One of her books is devoted to Esclarmonde of Foix and it also introduces us to many influential women who played a major part in spreading the Cathar message.

At the time of the Cathars, fortified villages were established, sometimes built around a castle or central tower. Such a *castrum* often had a slightly round structure or followed the irregular forms of a hill or mountaintop. At the time, Montségur was also such a *castrum*. The current village, situated lower down, did not yet exist. In some of these castra, more, or even predominantly Cathar families lived. There were also the Cathar houses, amongst which were those that also served as the women's convent. Thanks to the family ties that might consist of several generations, these houses ensured the strong, social roots of Cathar thought in society. In her book *Donjons et Castels*, Coigny-Saint Palais also wrote about Montségur. She was a close friend of Mr A. Gadal. In the time that he lived and worked in Paris, she examined, together with him, the libraries and archives, seeking as complete as possible an image of the historical backgrounds of a long period. With her, we find much information that may be seen as the result of their common quest. She says that at the appointed times, services were celebrated at Montségur by what she calls the Paladins of the Paraclete, devoted to the worship of the Holy Grail. This certainly did not involve the worship of a precious relic, but was meant to maintain the link with the Spirit.



#### 40 Grail cross

The 'Grail tableau', or what is left of it, can be found in a small cave with two openings in the slope of the rock, where the fortified castle of *Montréal de Sos* once stood. Here Mr A. Gadad situated the Grail castle, of which Wolfram von Eschenbach speaks, *Montsalvat*. At a small distance, on a protruding rock, near the village of Sem, with a beautiful view of the peaks of Montcalm, we can find the impressive granite dolmen, a Druid sanctuary. In the past, this Grail cross stood near this dolmen of Sem. We can no longer verify from which time such so-called Cathar crosses originate, but they have their own character and are only found in this region. This copy is characterised by five rose-like flowers. Above the middle, we see a sun with rays. On either side, we see the sword and the spear, of which Von Eschenbach speaks and in addition, two cups with different forms. The foot of the left cup has the peculiar form of a triangle with a downward point. We might interpret this as the Grail, descending from heaven, filled with the heavenly essence. The right cup gives the impression of having a double meaning. It has the form of a flagon, an object that was mainly used to draw from a larger reservoir, in order in this way to be able to give everyone what he needed. Therefore, this cup has a receiving as well as a giving function. If the human soul is able to combine both functions within itself, it is able to be of service to others. We will see that the spear and the sword refer to the same principle.



#### 41 Grail tableau Montréal de Sos

Mr A. Gadal associated Montréal de Sos with the knights of the Temple. Initially, it was not quite clear what he meant by this. Modern researchers assume that, for instance, the Grail story of Chrétien de Troyes should be seen as successful propaganda material, in which violence against pagans, heretics and dissidents was legitimised. In addition, the characteristic, narrative elements conflicted with the Cathar points of view and were of a purely ecclesiastical nature. There is certainly some truth in it, but the question is whether or not it is the whole truth. The troubadours were usually commissioned by a noble patron and were dependent on the hospitality of the various courts. Whatever their conviction, they had to cloak it in a generally acceptable and appealing way. With Robert de Boron, for instance, we find a strong emphasis on the necessary obedience to the Church of Rome. However, the story of Wolfram von Eschenbach differs in many respects and according to his own words, he went back to a certain Kyot de Provence, from whom no texts have been preserved. His knowledge of alchemy and Hermeticism (see *The Story of the Grail*, by Yves van Buyten and Willie Vanderzeypen) introduced another element. It is a fact that the nobility and many knights from Northern France and Flanders sided with the Crusaders and the Inquisition. On one hand, this was because the Church promised that their sins would be forgiven as their reward, so that a place in heaven would be certain, while they would share in the spoils of war here on earth. On the other hand, many lords and knights in the counties of Occitania in Southern France had another interpretation of the idea of knighthood. They appointed themselves as defenders of the non-violent Cathars *against* the armies of king and Inquisition.

Was there perhaps a knightly ideal in the South, in which the quest for the Grail symbolised a spiritual, inner path to perfection? Might it perhaps be the case that an educated troubadour was quite well able to write a mythical story that might be understood on different levels by the good listener? As early as the beginning of the third century, Origen said that the Holy Scriptures may be interpreted literally, morally as well as allegorically. In their Bible exegeses, the Cathars used this possibility in a very wilful way. In a newspaper interview, the Jewish thinker and author, Martin Buber, said that history leaves traces in two different forms: in a more or less well-preserved historical line, and in a mythical form that shows something of a certain era as well as of an elusive, underlying content that is timeless and always keeps its expressive power. According to him, the importance of the myth was insufficiently appreciated and should, on the contrary, be seen as a valuable complement.

Modern research of the Cathar history has in many respects become more objective, but still leaves too little room for the possible meaning of historical remnants that do not fit in the rational approach. The original Christian symbols on the walls of the caves of the Holy Mountain are dismissed as deliberate falsifications or are ignored. Nothing is said about the presence of the mysterious Pentacle of Bethlehem or about the granite altar table. And even if the Grail tableau near Montréal de Sos



is mentioned, people do not hazard a description and even less an explanation of its undeniable presence.

Nevertheless, this rock painting of Montréal de Sos sheds a special light on the Grail tradition. Here we see a picture of the Grail tableau, commissioned by Mr A. Gadal. Noticeable is the image of the broken sword. In this context, he undoubtedly had a Grail story in mind like that by Robert de Boron, in which the knight acquires a Grail sword that is broken. This sword can only be welded again if it is held in a certain well at dawn. This refers to the human state of being broken off from his origin. If the spirit-spark wakes up, the original ensoulment will flow again as in a new morning of manifestation and the broken state is repaired. In our Spiritual School, we see the sword as the symbol of the serpent-fire system that is ignited by a new fire. Sometimes, people also speak of the sword of truth. Robert de Boron also mentions a visit by Joseph of Arimathea (son of Joseph) to a vault, in which twelve tombs were placed with the bodies of knights, fallen in battle. Their swords were lying on the tombs, but raised up when the Grail was brought in by Joseph, who is the keeper of the Grail in this story. This greeting by the swords refers to their immortalised soul. On the original rock drawing, a *complete sword* was depicted.

Another remarkable point is that the Grail on the tableau is emphatically not depicted as a vase, cup or chalice, but as a radiant sun, which reminds us of the cross of Sem, described above. This confirms that it absolutely did not concern any object, but rather the Christ himself as the giver of imperishable life. According to a certain vision, the rays of the sun are also interpreted as a crown of thorns. History indeed teaches that the birth of the Light of the Christ in the world, or in the individual human being, is accompanied by grief, scorn and persecution.

The bleeding spear refers to the Roman soldier, Longinus, who, after his death on the cross, pierced Jesus' side with the spear to see if he had died. At that moment, the blood, the essence of Christ, that in a threefold way testified to the Father, the Word and the Spirit, flowed from his side. The spear, as well as the arrow, also symbolised the directed striving, necessary for acquiring this essence. The blood that dripped off the spear had the power of healing.

The sword refers to learning to deal with the new values, justice, in the right way. The striving of the true knight depends on service and willingness to sacrifice. The struggle that must be fought is, first of all, a struggle within our own being, like Arjuna's struggle in the Bhagavad Gita.

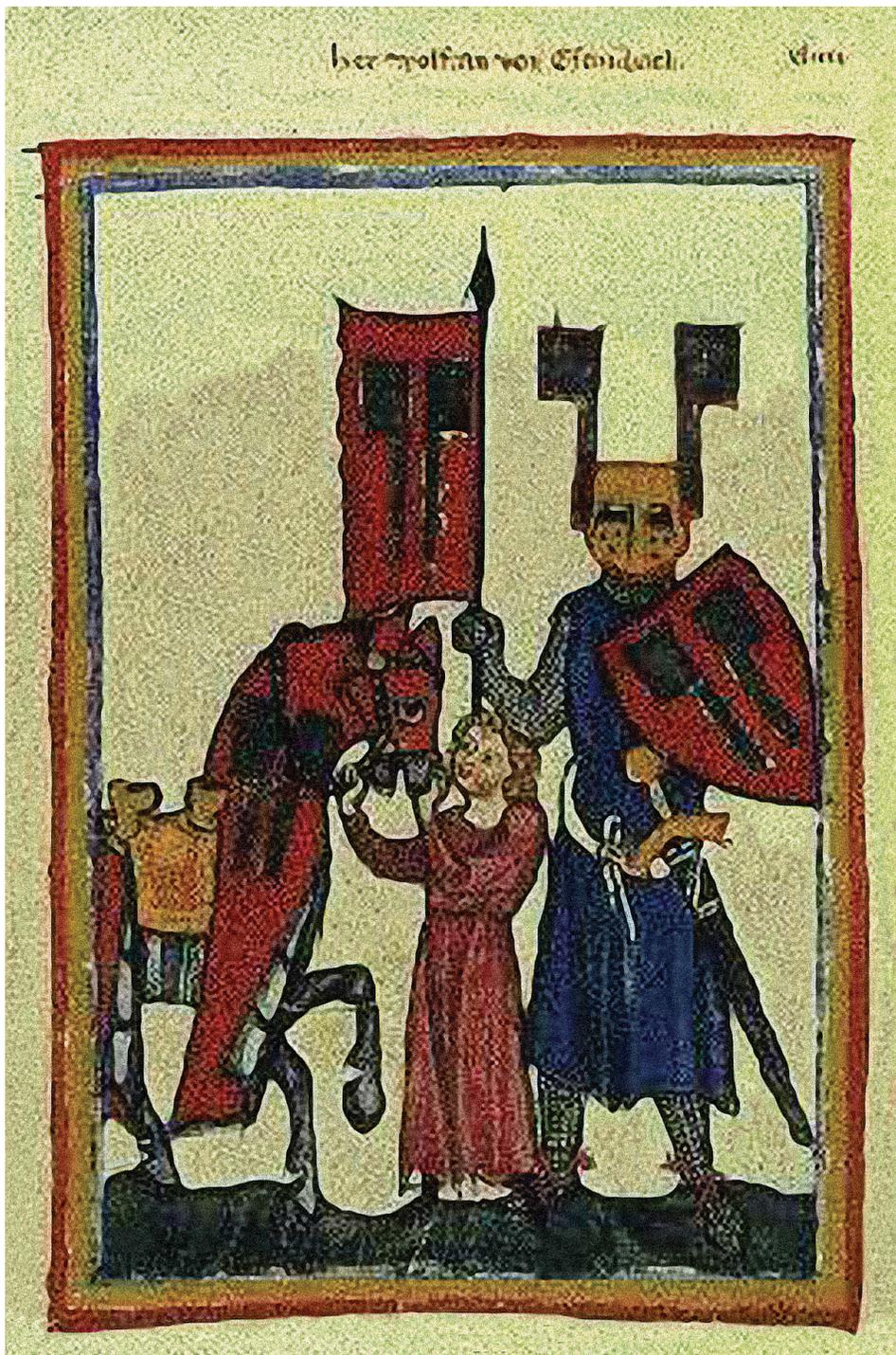
The rectangle, adorned with five red drops of blood and a large number of small crosses, refers to the laborious path that the candidate will have to walk to reach his goal. The five drops of blood refer to the five wounds of Jesus, but may also be compared to standing in the Pentacle. To the extent that a human being has died as to his old nature, he is clothed with the new soul vesture. Therefore, next to each drop of blood, we see a white cross. Just as in the Pentacle, there is also a subtle reference to a sixth and seventh stage of development. Top right, in the outer border of the rectangle,



two crosses have been painted red. They are the *Iesmon* and the *Chrismon*, symbols of Jesus the Christ. Attaining spiritual knighthood means that the Word has become flesh. Then all conditions have been satisfied to take one's place in the Circle of Brothers that are grouped around the thirteenth who is also the first, the Christ. In the tableau, this is represented by the large cross, surrounded by the twelve smaller ones. Wolfram von Eschenbach combined all these elements in *Parcival* in a light way, but also with much insight into the human psyche.

#### 42 Puivert

One of the courts where Wolfram von Eschenbach was cordially received was the troubadour castle of *Puivert*. The pleasant location on a wide, beautiful, flat plateau in the foothills of the Pyrenees, just east of Montségur, made it eminently suitable for courtly entertainment. Within its walls, there was room for a large tournament field. In the high, central tower, two large halls were located above each other, one meant for making music and the other for reciting songs and poems respectively. At least, this is the conclusion we may draw from the applied decorations, the sculptures on the buttresses of the vault. The lower hall shows the musicians, each of whom plays a different instrument, and in the upper room, the human figures have pages in their hands that refer to their performance. That Wolfram stayed here may be derived from his *Parcival*. This not only concerns the meaning that he assigned to his version of the Grail story, but it is above all the atmospheric description into which he situated it. We are above all struck by the special room he made for women in his epic poem. With great subtlety, he described the most diverse female characters, which often appear to be linked with the Grail family. Time and again, they play an important role at psychological moments of *Parcival*'s path of experience. Just think of his mother, his beloved Condwiramurs, but also of the inimitable Kundrie, who often held up the mirror for him to see the many mistakes he made on his way, but who ultimately wants the best for him with regard to his great goal. Do we not sense the non-sexist atmosphere of Occitania here, where women were treated respectfully? And then there is the encounter with the helmeted knight, who is, like *Parcival* himself, so lost in thought that they get into each other's way. They engage in a knightly fight in which they prove to be equally strong, noble and courteous. Tired, but respectfully, they cease fighting, take off their helmets and introduce themselves to each other. It then appears that the other knight is *Parcival*'s paternal half-brother, called Feirefisiz, the spotted one. This is because his mother was a Muslim of high birth. He is informed about *Parcival*'s quest and would also like to visit the Grail castle to see the mysterious procession with his own eyes. When *Parcival* finally, after many experiences, arrives at the Grail castle, Feirefisiz is there, too, and although he himself does not see the Grail, he does see the cushion on which it rests and he sees the lady who carries the cushion even better! He asks her to marry him and assumes his place within the Grail family. Ultimately, he lets himself be baptised, so that the Grail also becomes visible to him! Does this reference



to the baptism place this element of the story in the light of the Church of Rome that persecuted the Muslims as heathen, unless they 'repented'? Or does this story refer to the atmosphere of very tolerant Occitania where, until the Crusades, converted Jews, Muslims, Christians, Cathars and others lived together without problems?

#### 43 Coat of arms of Wolfram von Eschenbach

The troubadour, Wolfram von Eschenbach, descended from an old, Frankish family of knights and was particularly renowned as author-poet of *Parcival*. He is also depicted in the *Manesse Manuscript* and in this context, something extraordinary draws our attention that correlates with what we said about him before. His helmet, shield, colours and even the battle dress of his horse bore a symbol that was extremely unusual in heraldry. This concerns the *Resch P* to the left and to the right. This is a reference to God the Father and God the Son. Little seems to be known about Wolfram von Eschenbach, so that it is hard to prove whether these signs can be reduced to the old coat of arms, although this seems highly unlikely. If this is not the case, where did he then become acquainted with these ancient Christian characters? Would it not be possible that he became so deeply acquainted with the Cathar world of thought during his visits to the southern French courts that he chose them as his personal, heraldic identifying mark? Should we, when considering these arguments, not only interpret the Grail stories literally and morally, just as the Bible, but also allegorically? And if we look at the mythical value, the allegorical meaning, and draw the conclusion that this certainly concerns the process of gaining individual consciousness with a profoundly religious meaning, does this also change the moral conclusion? Anyway, in our time, the Grail stories still have a large power of attraction. They also touch the modern human being on a deeper level, with an archetypal power. This certainly does not only concern the romantic image of the courageous knight and his beautiful lady. Nor are these stories still read because they purportedly legitimise murder and manslaughter in a disguised way. Their attraction is found in the mystery of attaining a goal of virtually supernatural sublimity, beauty and dignity, by a thoroughly human path of experience, in which we can still recognise ourselves.



#### 44 Courtyard of Puivert

The Crusades and the Inquisition brought a cruel end to a high culture, at the cost of unspeakable grief. This period of development, which we increasingly consider the first Renaissance, was halted in a forced way. The Kingdom of Love was destroyed and the traces were erased as much as possible.

A spiritual winter began in large parts of Europe, but regardless of the iciness that froze the surface of the earth, deep below this surface rested the seeds that were to germinate at the first sign of a new spring. The prophetic words of a troubadour would become a hopeful certainty: 'After seven hundred years, the laurel will blossom again!'

