

THE GRAIL AND THE ROSYCROSS

The Grail and the Rosycross

Crystal series

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What is truth?

Behold this crystal: how the one light is manifest in twelve faces, yea in four times twelve, and each face reflecteth one ray of light, and one regardeth one face, and another another, but it is the one crystal, and the one light that shineth in all.

The Gospel of the Holy Twelve

INTRODUCTION

Seeking the Holy Grail?

Numerous spiritually oriented groups use the symbol of the Grail in their colours. The Grail is of current interest. It has perhaps gradually become as widely known and sought for as in the Middle Ages. At that time, the Grail legends were the 'garment' in which the age-old message was brought to humanity again. It is a universal symbol for seeking the Truth: the eternal Truth a human being is confronted with when he has reached the limits of his own possibilities. That was the case in the Middle Ages, and it still is today. But in the meantime, humanity – and each person individually – has developed, for better or for worse; upward to ascend to the Divine Spirit, or downward to become ever more engrossed in matter.

Every period in history offers specific new opportunities, but has also well-defined limits that must close off the past. It is meaningless to break through these limits only to look at the past for things that are supposedly still the same. Only the Truth has not changed, although it may appear differently every second. And over and again humanity is invited to join that process of renewal as conscious participants in Creation.

Hence the present-day Grail is not the same as the Grail that existed centuries ago. Nor will it in future be the same as it is today. But its essence does not change. And only that essence can help a seeker to make progress on his path of life. One Grail legend is

more beautiful and symbolically more pure than the next, but they don't bring the seeker any further if their inner message is not understood from within and people do not try to realise it in their own life.

That is why this book from the Crystal series about the quest for the Holy Grail is not a historic report, but testifies of a conscious and honest search to realise the Modern Holy Grail, as a living mixing vessel in which the divine Love can be received and transformed into the power that shows and illuminates the path of life for others.

Hence, the authors who have contributed to this book, did not draw from the rich past of humanity, but focus on the glorious future that will open up for humanity, especially in this era.

The texts form the reflection of the Grail Symposium held in Conference Centre Christianopolis in Birnbach, Germany, on 24 May 2001, and in Conference Centre Renova in Bilthoven, The Netherlands, on 30 November 2002.

The Mystery of the Holy Grail

The time has arrived to remove the veils of esoteric delusion of the past centuries from the Mystery of the Holy Grail and to etch its reality into the heart blood of modern humanity. The original fairy tales, myths and legends, as they have turned up in their various guises through interminably long times, were instruments to link developing humanity to the primordial wisdom by means of moral values. A few of these mysterious Grail stories have been included in this book in order to give you an impression. If you let their meaning truly penetrate into your being, you will know the essence of the Mystery of the Grail.

Veiled language has to a certain extent had its time for the coming new era. This also applies to the mysteries, the legends and myths about the Grail. Although the lord of this world has changed his appearance and is sowing the seed for the next catastrophe under the guise of freedom of conscience and human rights, also now countless people suffer due to his deception. And also now, just as in ancient times, the person whose soul is heavy of suffering and in whose heart the phantom of doubt crops up, is comforted by the holy illegal message of his brethren: *'Jesus is living! Go out and meet Him!'* This revivifies his frightened soul... and grants courage... and power. A supernal joy illuminates his countenance marked by suffering. And he laughs with joy when he thinks of Parcival, and Lohengrin

and the holy Mont Salvat, the key of which he receives.

With his head held high, he passes under the jewelled gates of the Holy Mystery and he knows that he is like Merlin the magician, who was a son of God and a son of man. Now he begins to learn the secret of structural rebirth as the sacrifice of the whole dialectical self to the Jesus manifestation in the microcosmic field of life, in order for the New Man to be born! That is why we will not tire ourselves with feeling out the rather careful expressions of the mysterious language of the past, because our age demands and requires unmasking and declaration and a clear, concrete representation of matters.

The Holy Grail is the chalice in which Jesus dipped, when Jude wanted to betray him: that is why it later, as the symbol of the Saviour, possessed the power to distinguish pure ones from impure ones. Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood of the Crucified One in the same chalice and then took the Grail with the blood under his protection. Later, his successors took it to the West, where it rests until this day.

This fundamental idea of the Grail myths has been completely safeguarded in the gospel. All four gospels emphatically mention that, after Jesus had died on the hill of Golgotha:

... a rich man came from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of the dead Master. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new

tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed. Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were there. They prepared spices and ointments and rested. And the next morning, on the first day of the week, the two Mary's came again to the garden of Arimathea and witnessed the miracle of the resurrection.' (Matth.27)

For the seeker for the Truth this sacred language, as opposed to that of the myth, should not hold any hidden meaning or veiled symbol, but a positive message that can be fully grasped. For those who can read, it is plainly stated here that the process of salvation for the world and humanity in Jesus Christ is accomplished as to its major stages in and through a prepared power field – a Spiritual School. Joseph of Arimathea points to the same symbol as the Old Testament Melchizedek. This name literally means 'the Hierophant of the Holy Mountain, who radiates and lives in the light of the Holy Spirit'. He is the King-Priest of Mont Salvat, the Mountain of redeeming powers. This New Testament King-Priest is linked with Jesus the Christ. Just as Jesus the Christ is referred to as a high priest of the order of Melchizedek, we can also call him a high priest of Arimathea, of the Holy Mountain.

From that mountain Jesus the Lord descended for his primary sacrifice. And then, after he had laid down his life for the world and humanity, he withdrew into the garden of Arimathea, into a new tomb, with the help of all his brethren. In other words, we are dealing here with a totally new effort to affect dialectical reality.

The two Mary's were present during this entomb-

ment, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother. Mary Magdalene is the human being who turns to nature and descends into the vault of the tower in order to break through to the ramparts of the tower from below upward. Hence, Mary is the seeker, like Parcial the fool. And secondly we see Mary the mother, the human being whom the Holy Language portrays as giving birth to God out of herself and the Holy Spirit, Merlin the magician, born of God and man, the new human being in the microcosmic field of life.

These two Mary's prepare their ointments and spices. In other words, they consecrate Christ's sacrifice and safeguard it within themselves. They see how the resurrected flame of the eternal Light rises up from the grave in the garden of Arimathea, and becomes widely active as all-controlling power of heaven and earth, forging a link between the kingdom of heaven and the dialectical world order.

Now you can imagine why the Grail myth says that Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood of the Crucified One. After all, Master Jesus is the Hierophant of Arimathea, high priest of the Universal Hierarchy, which is manifested in what we now call the Spiritual School. And hence everything the Christ hierarchy did and does for humanity can only be understood and grasped through that Spiritual School. The blood of the Holy Grail is the power of the Spiritual School. That is why it is also said that Hierophants of Arimathea bring the Grail to the West. Hence, whoever wants to receive the mysterious blood of the Grail, will have to be prepared like Mary Magdalene to break out of the darkness and encounter the Light.

From the new grave, hewn from the rough hard stone in the garden of Arimathea, the blinding light of Christ's sacrifice still radiates. This means that the power of the Immovable Kingdom is still being brought into this hellish world as an atmospheric force, and that the Grail is still present among us. This cosmic power that is present in our world, but cannot be explained by this nature, has two spheres of activity: a more general one and a very concentrated sphere of influence. And these two highly spiritual flows determine the development and the aspects of everything that we should consider as the coming threefold world revolution. To that end, the Spiritual School of the Golden Rosycross possesses seven focal points in matter and seven focal points in the invisible realms. With their help, the Christ power affects the seven aspects of the dialectical world and the seven aspects of dialectical humanity.

And thus, guided by the divine law, the world rushes towards a crisis. The message resounds: *'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'* It is up to every human being whether he will celebrate this encounter with burning or with extinguished lamps. Everyone will meet the Grail, in a regenerative way like Mary, or in a degenerative way like Jude, the classical traitor of the Holiest Mystery. May God give that the seeker for the one truth may find and ascend the tower of Magdala, with the ointments and spices that are necessary for the process of rebirth, so that he will be allowed to greet the rising Light.

J.v.R.

*The Book of Kings of the Persians of
Antiquity*

For ages, Iran, former Persia, has been the centre of the Arab world. In the West it is often overlooked that the various Arab countries have quite different traditions and roots. Persian mythology as far as we know it dates back to long before the establishment of the Islam.

Research shows that the efforts to make people conscious of their true destination are universal. Testimonies in word, writing and pictures can be found all over the world, as a golden thread linking seekers of all nations and cultures through the ages.

After the Islam had become the Persian state religion, movements and impulses remained active that tried to revivify the ancient spiritual Iranian heritage. They sought the inner teachings that had been preserved and adapted them to their own time. Thus the golden thread was restored and kept alive – if necessary.

In the 12 th century, the Persian philosopher Shihab ad-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi (1154-1191) linked the teachings of Zarathustra and the ancient Iranian traditions with the Hermetic wisdom and Greek neo-Platonism. He drew from these sources to modernise his ancient message, because both philosophical movements were well known and appreciated at the time. In one of his

stories he brings in just a few sentences the image of the Grail to life, a clear and powerful image that radiates the profound truth of the teachings of spiritual salvation. The origin of his remarks about the activity of the Grail lies hidden in Persian prehistory.

Every Iranian knows and reveres the *Book of Kings*, the Shah-nameh, which has been compiled by the great poet Firdausi in the year 1000 AD and contains more than 50,000 verses. In Iran, it has the same value as Homer's *Odyssey* or Dante's *Divine Comedy* in the West. The *Book of Kings* is an enormous epic that tells about ancient times, when wise kings ruled their nations justly and made their cultures blossom forth. Jamshid, the fourth king of that period, was more important than his predecessors. He is said to have had a throne in the air and a magical chalice with seven circles. In Persian mythology, this chalice is known as the *Chalice of Jamshid*. Later it was also called *The chalice reflecting the Universe*. However, when Jamshid became enchanted by his own works, he became subservient to the Evil One. '*On earth I only know myself. The royal throne has never before seen such a famous man like me.*' Thus gone astray in his own mind, he was removed from the throne by a young man, who acted on orders from the Evil One. That act was the beginning of the continuing struggle between good and evil, symbolised by the struggle between Iran and Turan.

King Jamshid was not invented by Firdausi. His descriptions of the Iranian past and of the first 17 kings tie in with the work of the great sage Zarathustra (around 628-551 BC), who propagated the monotheistic

teachings of Ahura Mazda and his opponent Ahriman in Persia. Jamshid was the primordial king Yima from the traditions of Zarathustra, the roots of which go back to prehistoric India.

Yima's government is known as the Golden Age, in which neither sickness nor death ruled. He was a wise and just king and was known as the Good Shepherd. The number of immortal ones rapidly increased under his rule, so that he decided to expand the Earth by a factor three. The demon Mahrkuscha, however, sent an enormous tidal wave, followed by hot summers and great drought and only Ahura Mazda could prevent humanity from becoming extinct. He ordered Yima to construct a subterranean abode in which people and animals could find a safe refuge and where water, trees, flowers and fruits would be available in abundance.

It is said that the catastrophe was caused by Yima's arrogance. He supposedly had turned his back on his Creator and had cloaked himself in lies. Then the Golden Age passed away and Yima became a mortal being. When he spoke his untruths, the *Light of Glory* (Xvarnah) withdrew. According to Iranian views, all legitimate kings possessed this light. Zarathustra says: *'It illuminates every heaven that is shining brightly above and extends to this earth and around it, just like a garden established in the spiritual world, shining over the three parts of the earth.'*

These ancient myths tell us about a phase of human development, in which the king-priesthood still existed. The kings possessing the *Chalice of Jamshid* or

the *Light of Glory* were the leaders of humanity. They were linked with the Divine Spirit and had the task to protect their people by means of an ordered and just society, so that the people could develop. Not only the Persian, but also the Old-Egyptian myths speak about such priest-kings.

In the stories and legends about the struggle between Iran and Turan, a man appears who occupies an important place in our quest for the Grail. His name is Kay Chosrou, the eighth and last king of the dynasty of the Kayanides. His life shows numerous parallels with that of the knights of the Grail legends that we know in the West.

His grandfather – the king of Iran – did not know what he was doing, when he attacked the realm of the demons. His opponents took him prisoner and made him blind. By the help of the hero Rustam, who walks a sevenfold path of dangers, the king ultimately returns on the Iranian throne. His son takes over the struggle against Turan, but forced by circumstances, he joins the enemy and marries the Turan princess Farangis. Shortly afterwards he loses his life due to betrayal. Farangis was already pregnant and after her husband's death she gave birth to a son, called Kay Chosrou.

The entanglements between Iran and Turan show that at the time of Kay Chosrou – in the earliest history of Iran – the realms of Good and Evil were already linked and interwoven. The new king, Kay Chosrou, is the prototype of this mixture. His grandfathers were the kings of Iran and Turan respectively.

Just as in the western Grail legends, the guardians of the magical chalice prove to be rather weakened. A powerful action is needed to return the *Chalice of Jamshid*, the chalice with the seven circles reflecting the universe, to the earth for the liberation of humanity.

Kay Chosrou's youth is similar to Parcival's. The latter's father, too, was killed due to betrayal. Both are children of a princess and grow up with their mothers in the loneliness of the forest. Already as young boys they are attracted by knighthood. When Kay Chosrou stands before the ruler of Turan for the first time, he pretends to be ignorant and gave no hint that he knew his true origin. Also Parcival behaves as a Simple Simon who does not know his own name.

Ultimately, Kay Chosrou reaches Iran, where his grandfather soon makes him king. Kay Chosrou swears to take revenge for his father's death, and not to rest before he has defeated the evil ruler of Turan.

Both Kay Chosrou and Parcival intend to restore the original state of divine justice. And then the Grail appears again: a young Iranian has fallen into the hands of Turan. To rescue him, Kay Chosrou dresses himself with a special garment on the Persian New Year's Day, and puts the crown of the Kayanides on his head. Then he takes the magical chalice with the seven circles, in which the Universe is reflected and looks if he can find the young man in one of the seven worlds.

Soon, the final battle between Iran and Turan takes place. Kay Chosrou defeats the king of Turan, who flees to his splendid palace in Gangbesht. After a

long siege, Kay Chosrou defeats his opponent and now a period of enlightenment begins that lasted for 60 years.

At the end of his life, Kay Chosrou travels to a high mountain, accompanied by eight knights. When he warns his companions for an approaching blizzard and advises them to return, three knights follow his advice. The other five continue with their king until they reach a well. There the king bids farewell to his knights, takes a bath in the water of life and has not been seen again ever since. The knights have been seeking for him for a long time and ultimately perish in the blizzard.

The Persian legend about *the chalice with the seven circles reflecting the universe* strongly resembles the well-known Grail legends. This chalice has a link with the original light that cannot be approached by our ordinary consciousness and which is watched and attacked by the forces of darkness. In this same context, the tradition of Zarathustra tells about Xvarnah, the *Light of Glory* that encompasses the Earth and grants the dignity of kings to the Iranian rulers. A hymn of Zoroaster relates how the *Light of Glory* is passed on to eight successive kings. The last one is Kavi Husravah, that is the Zoroastrian name for Kay Chosrou. Zarathustra, too, calls the eight kings of the dynasty of the Kayanides light bearers. The number eight – eight kings and the eight knights who accompany Kay Chosrou – reminds us of the Western tradition with regard to Joseph of Arimathea, who received the blood of Christ in a chalice that is protected by eight descendants.

Now that we have become acquainted with some concepts from the Old-Persian Grail legend, the exciting question arises how and to whom this heritage has been passed on. Where does the golden thread continue? Because every culture has its own language and characteristics, people from each era have another task and other possibilities to achieve their goal by passing through a process of inner change. It is interesting that in the 12th century the Grail legends experienced a renaissance, not only in the West, but also in Persia.

In the Persian-Arab world, Suhrawardi took up the theme of the Grail and added – as mentioned before – Zoroastrian, Old-Persian, Hermetic and Greek elements. He wasn't particularly interested in pure philosophy or theology, but in the practical experience of the seeker for the truth. After many experiences, such a person could take a look into the *chalice with the seven circles* and in this way be linked with a new, higher field of life. Hence he no longer spoke of priest-kings acting as substitutes of the Creator, but of the inner 'substitute' in every human being himself.

In Persia of Suhrawardi's time, many symbols pointed to the Light land of the divine Spirit. A rich heritage from Zarathustra's time was available, but also from Mani's extensive Kingdom of Light many elements still continued to be effective. Even though Mani was considered and treated as a heretic by Islam, fragments of his teachings have been preserved in texts of later Persian mystics and gnostics. In his hymns and psalms, Mani described God's Light land, after which mortal and blinded humanity should strive. The following Manichaean text shows that Mani's roots can

be found in the tradition of the Old-Persian wisdom, while he called himself *Apostle of Jesus Christ according to the will of God*.

*'The Spirit of Truth came
and detached us from the world.
Looking into it, we see the Universe.
It shows us that there are two orders:
the order of the Light
and the order of darkness.
The order of the Light pervades the order of darkness.
From the beginning, the dark order is
separated from the light one...'*

In the 12th century, Suhrawardi used this source and established the Ishraq, the *Flows of Enlightenment*, also called *The Radiations of the Dawn*. He left behind a large number of works. Partly in Arab, partly in Persian, he wrote theological treatises but also allegorical Hermetic tales. He explains in different places, which spiritual tradition he feels linked with, and time and again he emphasises that knowledge is not what matters, but concrete experience. *'With regard to the friends of the path we can state that they behold lights in their souls, which bring them in a state of extraordinary ecstasy, because they are still living their earthly life. For beginners it is a flashing, fleeting light, for the advanced ones a constant light, and for the perfect ones a dark, heavenly light. With regard to the dark light, which leads to the small death, we can say that the last one among the Greek who truly knew it, was the wise Plato; and of the great ones, whose names were preserved in the course of history: Hermes.'*

Suhrawardi devoted a few lines only to the chalice or Grail. He assumed that his readers would know the story of the mythical king Kay Chosrou.

'The Grail, the mirror of the Universe, belonged to Kay Chosrou. Everything he wished he could read in it; he could see hidden things and recognise things manifested. It is said that the Grail was placed in a conical leather cover that was sealed by ten strings. When one day Kay Chosrou wanted to see some of the invisible things, he had the cover unwrapped. When all the strings had been untied, the Grail was invisible. When they were fastened again in the wrapping workshop, the Grail was visible (again).'

The Old-Persian motif of the chalice as *mirror of the Universe* originates from a very distant past and was still known in Mani's time.

Suhrawardi's words point out that the Grail descends into the nature of a human being in order to liberate him from it. What is immortal descends into mortality. Earthly nature is the cover in which the Grail lies bound. Inside this cover, the new soul must now be awakened in order to be able to receive the Spirit. In principle, Kay Chosrou already possessed this link. Still in his body, the Grail became visible, in other words: actively working in our earthly nature. As soon as he untied the ten strings and completely turned to the invisible things, the Grail was no longer visible. For ascending in the Spirit means leaving matter behind.

Suhrawardi wrote: *'On the day that the sun was in the*

spring equinox, Kay Chosrou turned the Grail towards the sun. When a powerful light fell on it, all signs and pictures of the world were manifested in it.' And he concludes: 'When I heard from the master the description of the Grail of the Jam, I myself became the Grail of the world, the mirror of the Jam. In the Grail of the world, the mirror, they remember that every Grail is a flame that makes us die.'

Again and again Suhrawardi points out that the natural human I must die, before a new soul can be born. By the activity of the Grail, the lower gives way to the higher. This is his message to the people of his time: their own deed, their own transformation.

Those teachings had a lasting effect after his death. He had established his brotherhood, the Ishraqiyun, which also called itself the Chosrawiyun, after the legendary Kay Chosrou. This brotherhood continued to exist after his death and traces of it have been found until our modern times.

The journey from East to West

One of the many Grail legends tells how the mysterious chalice has reached the West. Long before Merlin was born, an oriental called Joseph possessed the Grail. How he had obtained the chalice was unknown. Nor was it known who had made it and what the chalice derived its miraculous powers from.

At certain times, Joseph invited his relatives and friends for a meal at a silver table. When all were seated, he brought out the Grail and placed it in a shining mist in the centre of the table. Then he asked an old fisherman to descend to the river and catch the silver fish that supposedly was swimming there. The fisherman had already made that journey several times and every time he had returned with a large, shining fish. Then Joseph ordered him to prepare the fish on a fire of brightly burning coal. And when the fish was ready, the guests were given its delicious meat – regardless of their number! Whoever had eaten of this miraculous silver fish felt happy and joyful and appeared to be strong enough to do what is good and to resist what is evil. After the meal all went home again. And although the ceremony was repeated uninterruptedly for hundreds of years and for that reason, many had been allowed to live a happy life, only Joseph and the old fisherman knew the secret of the Grail and the Fish. Thus they were allowed to help their fellow human beings.

But at the time there were not only good people like them. The country in which Joseph and the fisherman lived, was ruled by a malevolent king who had tried to steal the precious chalice more than once. But even in prison, Joseph did not betray the hiding place of his treasure. And hence his enemies kept on seeking and threatened Joseph and his relatives and friends, but to no avail.

One day when Joseph was working in his garden, he was visited by a shining figure who advised him to take the chalice to a country far away, across the sea to the West. Joseph asked him how he should do that. 'I am only a gardener and I am used to work in the cornfields. But I have no ship and I don't know anybody who could navigate one.' However, the figure told him not to be afraid. 'Be confident. Gather your relatives and friends, take the silver table and the chalice and leave!' Then he disappeared and Joseph went home and sent for the fisherman. He asked him to gather the companions for the voyage and to prepare for the great journey into the unknown.

Soon all were ready and they left: Joseph, the fisherman, their children and their friends. Together they carried the silver table and Joseph carried the Grail chalice in a small case that was beautifully set with hundreds of precious stones. For days they walked and finally reached the sea. The blue ocean stretched before them, sometimes glowing mysteriously with a pink and purple shine. Low clouds on the horizon looked like islands, enveloped by the golden rays of the setting sun. Was that where they were heading? Were those the islands in the West Joseph had told them about? Be-

tween the travellers and the islands was a wide and deep water with long, whispering waves. However, in order to cross that water they needed a ship, but no sail could be seen. There was nothing with which they would dare to set out for the great crossing. Joseph stood on the shore and those who had put their trust in him looked expectantly at him. Then a voice floated over the water towards them and all could clearly hear the voice saying: 'Joseph, take your white undercoat, and spread it on the water!' Joseph did what he was told. He took his white linen coat and spread it on the rippling water. And look! The coat turned into a little ship. And again the voice resounded, as the light twinkle of a bird's song late in the evening: 'Now board, Joseph, and let all follow you.'

Joseph took the small case with the chalice and boarded confidently. The white coat proved to be sufficiently strong to hold it and the ship lay quietly and stable as if an anchor kept it in place. Then the others followed. They carried the silver table on board and put it in the centre of the ship. When everybody had occupied the seat at the table intended for him, the little ship began to move as if propelled by a mysterious power and quickly they were sailing for the Land in the West.

The sun set, the moon rose and the small ship still sailed on, faster than any other ship would have been able to. But also the moon set and behind them the sun rose again. In the golden rays that woke everything to life again, Joseph now saw the white beaches and the high rocks of the Land in the West. It looked beautiful. But when the travellers came closer, they discovered that they had exchanged the warm summer with

heavy-laden fruit trees for a country where winter ruled. It was cold and everything was covered by snow. The rocks glistened with ice the night had spread over them and the whispering of brooks and rivers was hidden under hard crusts. The ship made of a coat carried the travellers to a small open bay and in the cold northern wind they hurried ashore to seek cover. Joseph was the last one to leave the ship and the voice commanded him to take his coat again and to wrap himself in it. O miracle, the coat was dry and warm and comfortable!

In single file the travellers climbed upward. Joseph in front with the small case, behind him the fisherman and then those who carried the silver table and all who were their companions on this adventurous journey. They walked across mountains and through valleys until they reached a pleasant spot. Joseph leaned on his staff and looked around to see if this was a good place to settle. And while he was standing there, the staff began to vibrate and buds appeared covered in a veil of white flowers. The branch had taken root in the frozen soil. The tree grew fast and became so large that Joseph could easily stand under it. When he touched one of the flowers, snow began to fall and the small white flowers emanated a delicious fragrance.

Joseph called the fisherman and his followers and asked them to put the silver table under the tree. And all were seated. Then Joseph sent the fisherman to seek the silver fish. And in a brook close by he discovered it, waiting for him as usual. He took the silver fish and brought it to Joseph and next prepared his catch on a fire of burning coal. In the meantime, Joseph had put

the Grail chalice in the centre of the table and now all were ready to partake of the magical meal so familiar to them. Under the blossoming tree they received that first meal in the Land in the West, while the hills and valleys around them gradually disappeared under a thick layer of snow.

While they were sitting together and partook of the miraculous meal, they were observed by an old man in a long coat. It was a Druid who happened to pass by. Amazed he stared at all those dark people in their colourful oriental clothing, who were having a meal sitting at a silver table under a flowering tree. But he was especially attracted by the chalice, veiled in a shining cloud. When all had finished their meal, one of them stood and carefully took the splendid chalice in his hands. The others also stood and took the silver table and then they walked away from the flowering tree in the snow. The Druid walked to the tree and touched it. The tree was real, the flowers were real and he smelled their delicate fragrance. Then he returned to his own abode and there he wrote down everything that he had seen and experienced.

The king of the Land in the West donated the ground where the tree was now standing to Joseph and his followers. There they built their chapel and for many years they were allowed to assemble undisturbed around the Silver Table and dwell under the protection and healing influence of the Grail.

*Origin and meaning of the Grail legends
of the West*

Montsalvat, the Grail Castle. Legends tell us that the Order of the Knights of the Grail, the guardians of the Grail, could be found there. Like King Arthur and his knights, they formed a Round Table. When they had assembled and the Grail was carried into the hall, they were all nourished in a miraculous way. Merely by looking at the Grail they were given eternal youth.

The legends speak of the Grail as the chalice that Christ used during the Last Supper. It is said that Joseph of Arimathea has possessed this chalice, and he is said to have received the blood of the Saviour in it. The Holy Grail that can procure miracles is a motif found all over the world. Legends from the European Middle Ages have relationships with traditions in many countries. In various religions, the sun and the moon have been represented as such chalices, filled with divine foods. As a reward for their noble deeds, heroes were allowed to receive strength from them. Greek philosophy speaks of a mixing vessel or a 'crater', into which the supreme deity mixes the building materials of Creation with sunlight. This chalice was offered to the newly created souls, so that they would receive wisdom.

A Greek initiation mystery tells about a mystical celebration that shows a strong resemblance to the com-

munal meal of the Knights of the Grail. From a holy vessel, the 'kernos', they received a drink that could grant them access to a higher world. Such a concept is also known in the Celtic tradition in the form of a kettle or 'cauldron', the content of which can effect spiritual rebirth. In some legends, a precious stone or pearl is used as symbol instead of a holy chalice.

Most legends tell us that a special temple or castle was built to preserve the Grail, for example a tall, round temple with a golden dome, on which the sky was represented by gems and the orbits of a golden sun and a silver moon were depicted. According to some scholars, such a temple was supposedly built on the holy mountain Shiz in Persia. There the holy fire burnt and in that place – the most important sanctuary of Persia – Zarathustra was said to have been born. In Buddhist legends, we can read about the mystical mountain Meru in Japan, which according to the descriptions also reminds us of a Grail Temple. The Buddha is sitting on its top with his Boddhisattvas, the sun and the moon, revolving around them.

All these legends testify of the fact that a confrontation with the spiritual values of the Grail will completely and fundamentally change our lives. In other words, every human being possesses the inner faculty to receive a very special power and to work with it. This power of cosmic origin is also called the divine blood. Whoever succeeds in finding and receiving that energy, will be changed radically and be enabled to receive the divine wisdom firsthand. Then the mystery of the Grail is not an external process, but it takes place on the highest level the soul can reach.

If we want to unveil that mystery to a certain extent, we should consult the bonafide Rosicrucians. Their mysteries have a direct link with those of the Grail. Their starting point is that there is not only a visible and tangible world, but also a higher order of life that cannot be observed by our senses. The visible world with all its aspects – including humanity – is born, develops to a certain peak and will disappear again. On the basis of this experience, each of us can draw the conclusion that there is nothing perfect in our world. However, it is supported and nourished by an imperishable, eternal world. According to the original teachings of wisdom, the inhabitants of this higher world are perfect and hence immortal.

Now we can ask the fundamental question – and that question forms the link with the mysteries of the Grail – if there is a bridge between the world of perfection and the world of imperfection, a sphere or realm or dimension in which eternity and transience can coexist. Strictly speaking, this is not the case. A little eternal or a little perfect and a bit transient or a bit imperfect – that is impossible. Apparently there are two fundamentally separated fields of life.

Yet there is a realm of transition, in which those two worlds can work together for a brief period. That realm is manifested by a pulsating movement and then withdraws again. Perfect beings from that eternally existing field are linked with the inhabitants of the transient field of life in a rhythmic movement in order to raise them to a higher plane of life. That process is sometimes visualised by the symbol of the cross. Eternity – the vertical beam – descends into the world

of transience – the horizontal beam – and thus breaks mortality. It is a crucifixion in which the perfect world sacrifices itself to the imperfect one by linking itself with it.

The great teachers of wisdom like the Buddha, Zarathustra and Jesus have built, reinforced and explained this bridge between both worlds in order to serve humanity. In this way they sacrificed their pure blood. They showed the way and exemplified it. They opened the gate between both worlds. The spiritual bridge built by them is still maintained by those who follow them by pure words and by pure acts.

Such a bridge is a miracle. In many legends, this almost impossible, temporary link between eternity and time is called the Grail, the chalice or mixing vessel in which time and eternity are mixed. It is a space, a protected field of life, a third nature order, in which the seeking soul can learn to find its way through the world of opposites in order to be allowed to discover eternity.

The different Grail legends describe how the knights of the Grail set out to perform heroic deeds. This is still as topical as it was centuries ago. But present-day humanity cannot observe the world of perfection – its ultimate goal – just like that. His senses are not attuned to it. However, he experiences that there must be something, but he has no clear picture of it, which upsets him and stimulates him to seek. He wonders what his purpose of life is and why so many people – perhaps including himself – must suffer hopelessly. Unsuspecting – just like Parcival – he sets out and his path will certainly cross that of a knight of the Grail. Whoever

sets out in this way will encounter, or perhaps has already encountered the Grail, though still unconsciously.

During the night, when we are asleep, something can happen that may not be possible during the day. Then part of our personality is detached from the body and turns to the invisible realms that correspond to our inner life. When we strongly, but yet unfocused and unconsciously, are longing to fathom the meaning of life, the higher aspects of the soul will turn to the corresponding realms during the night. Then the seeking soul can reach the field of transition between both worlds. There our soul is touched by the pure energy of the Grail. This happens during the deepest sleep in the period without dreams, when the consciousness is switched off to the extent that it cannot form a hindrance. This happened to Parcival, when he entered the Grail Castle for the first time and did not understand what was happening there. He left the Grail Castle just as ignorant as when he arrived and had first to live a long life of privation, before he could begin to seek consciously and find the way.

The path shown by the Golden Rosycross is intended to awaken a new, uninhibited soul within us and to bring it into contact with the divine Spirit. In other words, the Golden Rosycross opens up the path for the unconditioned seeker – Parcival. This path leads to the Grail Castle, the original field of life of the soul. All Grail legends describe this path, although content and form are not always the same. Often they describe only a few stages of Parcival's development. For example, the tale of *Parcival* by the French poet Chrétien de

Troyes (12th century) is a fragment only. It does not tell that Percival returns consciously to the Grail Castle. *Parcival*, as described by the German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach (around 1170-1220), does show the whole path, but the author merely outlines in a veiled form that it requires a new consciousness to be able to walk it to the end. A source well hidden in a human being must first be discovered.

In the legends about King Arthur we find a clearer account. They tell about a knight called Galahad, the irreproachable one. Together with Percival and another knight of the Round Table he sets out to seek the Holy Grail. When they approach the Grail Castle, they see a light, which does not come from the sun. Galahad becomes the King of the Grail. He is the perfect one and represents the new soul consciousness that has been awakened in a human being. Thus, he also symbolises an unknown aspect of a human being. After all, a person is not who he thinks he is, but an inner dormant consciousness represents his true nature: either that he is striving after the highest good or that he is striving after the greatest power. As soon as the former consciousness is activated, the path to consciously experiencing the Grail is opened up.

Hence, an as yet unknown aspect is still slumbering in a human being, an aspect of the Grail. The Rosicrucians say that awakening this element is the true purpose of life on earth. And as humanity is nowadays confronted with the high and thick walls of its own impotence, the moment has arrived that the mystery of the Grail can be unveiled again, for the way out lies hidden in it.

The legends about the Grail appeared almost simultaneously in the western as well as in the eastern part of Europe, and even in Persia, around the 12th century AD. Was this a coincidence? Servants of the Grail recognised that the time was approaching, in which the link with the higher world would fade into the background or even disappear completely for most people. Under the influence of science and technology, people would develop a mentality that would cut them off from the spirit-soul world. That is perhaps the reason why the Grail legends were being circulated at that time, so that during the centuries to come human hearts could still be touched by those stories with their wonderful mysticism and romance. One day, the profound symbols might serve as signposts in times of great soul distress.

Even in these turbulent and uncertain times, the old Grail legends may still touch many human hearts, because they show that this ancient inner path can still be walked today, especially today. That it can be walked means that present-day seekers, just as the knights of King Arthur's Round Table, can partake of the higher world.

Numerous legends speak of two Round Tables: that of the knights of the Grail and that of King Arthur. That shows that the unity of the higher world – symbolised by the Round Table of the knights of the Grail – must also be realised in the lower world: the Round Table of King Arthur. The participants who prepare for the encounter with the Grail, must gradually purify themselves inwardly and liberate themselves from the influences that keep them in the grasp of lower life. In that

process, they will gradually merge with the higher Round Table in accordance with the words of Christ: *The Father and I are one, and you shall be one with me.* On this path, the Last Supper is no longer taken symbolically, but directly and concretely. Every member of the group will assimilate the divine energies to the extent that he is suitable for it and is able to assimilate those energies.

By this assimilation he enters a process of inner transformation: The Grail is erected within him. Because this also happens in the other members of the group, the invisible, spiritual chalice is manifested in the group of like-minded people and is placed in the centre of the world.

In the *Corpus Hermeticum*, an ancient Egyptian book of initiation, we can read: *'He sent down a great Mixing Vessel, filled with the powers of the Spirit and He appointed a herald and bade him proclaim to the hearts of men: "Immerse yourselves in this Mixing Vessel, you souls who can; you who believe and trust that you will ascend to Him who sent down this Vessel; you who know for what purpose you were created." Those who gave heed to this proclamation and were purified by immersion in the powers of the Spirit, became partakers in the Gnosis, the living knowledge of God, and as they had received the Spirit, became perfect men.'*

From: *The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis and its Call in the Eternal Present*, Jan van Rijckenborgh, part 2. Rozekruis Pers, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 1987.

The Celtic Grail and the Arthur legend

The European origin of the Grail legends is to be found with the Celts. The Celts did not have a well-defined form of government, but were a society based on Druid impulses passed on to the people by bards in the form of tales and songs.

Carnutum, present-day Chartres in France, is regarded as the most important assembly point of the Druids. There was a subterranean cave in the surrounding forest, where they kept the image of the Virgo Paritura (the Virgin that will give birth). There the Druids waited for him, who would descend into the abyss and overcome it. Many traces of this religious culture can still be found in Brittany, Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Celtic mythology was recorded, amongst other things, in *The four branches of the Mabinogion*. In it, the Grail is also mentioned, although in a different form from the one we are familiar with.

In this case it was a kettle or cauldron which serves as an attribute of initiation. In fact, there were two kettles: the kettle of rebirth and the kettle of perfection. About the first kettle it is said that, should a fallen hero be submerged in it, he would come back to life. The other kettle was filled with food needed by the reborn hero to be able to continue his path. This kettle appeared empty to those who approached it without having lived the life of a hero.

Ceridwen was a Celtic Mother Goddess. She possessed a cauldron in which she prepared the potion which could bring about rebirth or transformation. Should a young boy drink merely one drop of this potion, he would know all secrets and after a series of transformations become reborn as the great Druid and bard Taliesin, first as a pupil to Merlin and, at a later stage, to be named Merlin himself. The name Taliesin means 'radiant forehead'. Kettle and chalice symbolise the female, receiving principle, while lance and sword are symbols of male power.

The Celtic high cross shows aspects of a mixture of Eastern Christianity with the wisdom of the Druids of the West. Apart from being an image of the physical body, it also reflects the encounter between Spirit and matter. Often a sun wheel or whirling is found in the centre of the cross, together with intertwined trinity symbols. The erected cross also symbolises the human being, arms spread and feet firmly on the ground. At the intersection of both beams, the sun is located which encompasses head and heart: an image of the human being renewed by the Spirit of God. From the link of the Eastern Grail movement with the Grail tradition of the Celts of the time of the Druids, Celtic Christianity and King Arthur's Round Table emerged.

Merlin was a great initiate in the mysteries of the Druids and as such had knowledge of coming events. According to the legends, he had access to all spheres of life and could create the conditions for Arthur's birth in Tintagel, a castle on the coast of Cornwall, in Southwest England. Merlin had agreed with King Uther Pendragon that he would take the young prince

and educate him in a safe place. When Arthur's father died, dissension arose over his succession, because nobody knew that the king had a son. On Christmas Eve suddenly a stone appeared in the market square, with a sword stuck into it. On this sword was written in flaming letters that whoever could pull the sword out of the stone, would become King of England. Many a knight tried his luck and ultimately it was the young and unsuspecting Arthur who took the sword from the stone, without any effort. Thus he gave away his family descent and his calling.

Merlin, who had arranged all of this, as the legend tells us, became counsellor to the young king and together they brought peace and prosperity to the country. At the time when the Grail was brought to England, Merlin was instructed by the great fisherman to establish a Round Table. King Uther Pendragon had asked him to pass on this heritage to his son Arthur, who was expected to be suitable for this task. He would establish a new brotherhood, uniting all who would combat evil by word and deed. Merlin provided Arthur with the magic sword Excalibur to be used for this good cause. The bearer of this sword – a present from the Lady of the Lake – was invincible.

However, the people did not only want a victorious king, they also wanted a queen at his side. That lady, Queen Guinevere, brought misfortune to the brotherhood of noble knights. Her relationship with Lancelot, King Arthur's best friend, caused many problems. However, King Arthur did not react with jealousy, hatred and anger, but with understanding. He also had problems with his half-sister Morgan le Faye, who

seduced him and bore him a son, Mordred, who became King Arthur's great opponent. Morgan le Faye tried to break the Round Table, but was confronted with the high morality of the fellow knights. Galahad in particular did not allow her to influence him.

When Galahad was led to the Round Table by Merlin, he sat without effort down on the thirteenth seat, which was known as the 'dangerous seat'. At that moment his name appeared on the backrest of the chair: he was the knight for whom all had been waiting for so long. At the same time, the Grail was carried in by angels and every knight received the most excellent food from it. This event so touched the knights that they decided to search for the Grail, which had disappeared from sight in the meantime. Only King Arthur stayed behind in Camelot. Sir Gawain spoke the parting words: *'You must turn back now, because you are not one of us.'* Also Merlin did not join the search for the Grail. He had completed his task and withdrew from the Round Table.

Ultimately, King Arthur had to fight his own son Mordred. His counsellors consulted the stars and advised him not to leave his tent the following day. That night the king dreamed that he was chained to the Wheel of Fate, which was kept in motion by the Goddess Fortuna. At one time he found himself a king at the top, to be a beggar at the bottom of the wheel at another time. Now he understood the uncompromising law of the Wheel of Incarnation. He looked back upon his life and realised the relativity of all striving for worldly goodness and perfection.

Armed with those insights, he engaged in the battle with his son the following day. They mortally wounded each other. Mordred died and King Arthur was brought to a nearby lake by his friend Bedivere. There they returned the sword Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake. A boat with nine women brought King Arthur to the glass isle of Avalon, to nurse him there and to prepare him for his return when the time would have come. *'Arthur, King! Now and in the future.'*

The search for the Grail continued. Although many knights perished or were lost, the holy chalice was found by three of the knights: Bors, Parcival and Galahad. However, only one of them was allowed to approach the Grail, and the legend tells us that 'thereafter he disappeared from the world'.

Who would not be moved by the nobility, courage and tragedy of this wonderful history? 'Look, talking of heroes! Arthur, Lancelot, Parcival and Galahad. If only they still existed!' Through the centuries, we have been led to believe that the true hero is someone outside ourselves. That is why, after reading such a beautiful story, we can turn around without any qualms to continue with our daily affairs. Life goes on. Eating, drinking, sleeping. And perhaps we make a little detour during our holidays to visit Tintagel to see if there is still anything to be found...

But what about the message of the Grail, echoing through all aspects of this noble history? It is the story of our life, of the ingrained realities of our pilgrimage through life, and of our ideals, our desponden-

cies, our discoveries and our disappointments. What have we been seeking? What are we seeking now, in this time of fast machines and synthetic materials? Our whole life is no different from that of the knights searching for the Grail. One is driven by a lofty ideal and the desire to serve his fellow creatures, another by a craving for power over nature and its inhabitants. And so everyone carries the different aspects of the quest within him. King Arthur lies hidden in all of us.

Hence, a good king is never a tyrant, but is conscious of his responsibility for all life that has been entrusted to his leadership. Equally, he does not use his subjects to achieve his own ends and he does not exploit them. Like a true knight he does not fight for his own benefit. Do such knights still exist?

Everyone still possesses something of this inner voice – his conscience – encouraging him to follow the straight path. To be able to perceive something of that voice requires inner quiet and silence. Listening to that voice, the errant knight can recognise his true purpose of life, discover it and achieve it.

Parcival – the path of the seeker

The European Middle Ages showed great restlessness. The Church was trying to maintain its place in society. Freedom of speech was not allowed and non-conforming spiritual life was destroyed. The West was called to march on Islam. However, Middle-Eastern culture of that time stood at a significantly higher level than that of the West and the crusaders brought home many new impulses for their own culture.

The inquisition was set up for the purpose of destroying any new shoot of renewing spiritual life within the accepted dogmas prevailing at the time. Therefore, the urge for spiritual renewal looked for ways, entirely of its own, to express and share its ideas. The history of Parcival and his search for the Grail, as for example told by Chrétien de Troyes and Wolfram von Eschenbach, is connected with this. Superficially, they are adventure stories about knights and their heroic deeds, loyalty, courage and knightly love. They describe the beauty and virtue of the chosen ladies and the trials the knights had to endure for them.

But we can also see them as a veiled path of initiation, easily recognised with the help of a few clues. In rich, fairytale images, Bogomils, Knights Templar and Cathars thus kept their age-old wisdom alive and managed to pass on their body of ideas to posterity.

Although Wolfram von Eschenbach made use of the unfinished romance by Chrétien de Troyes, he indicated that he had drawn on a different source. He referred to the Magician Kyot, an initiate who had discovered the story of the Grail in a forgotten manuscript in Toledo. That manuscript originated from the Eastern philosopher Flegetanis, who had read about the Grail in the stars. *'A host of angels carried it to the earth, and then they flew back to the stars.'* Kyot tried to discover what had happened to this precious gift and he finished up at the family line of Anjou. That was not an existing royal family, but a family line which had achieved pure spiritual vision.

Additionally, Wolfram von Eschenbach indicated in several other ways that the Grail legend did not originate with him. He wrote that he was not a scholar, but an illiterate knight. Of course, we need not take this literally. It is meant to show that von Eschenbach was a modest man, and that he regarded his colourful imagination of the highest good as inadequate. After all, he described in the local colour of that time how the soul that longs for God eventually merges with the spiritual powers of the Grail, through many purifying experiences and trials. That path is as important now as it was then, although in our time it has been adjusted to the possibilities and impossibilities of present-day humanity. With goodwill and correct interpretation, these symbols can often explain developments and processes in the reader's own life.

Wolfram von Eschenbach described the path of a human being returning from his earthly nature to his divine origin. In his arrogance, Adam had let go of the

hand of God. And obedience was precisely the only demand God made of a human being for achieving immortality. *'Thus all of us know sorrow and joy since Adam's generation,'* was Trevizent's explanation for human existence. Joy: God never forsakes his creatures. Sorrow: we all bear the burden of sin. And so Amfortas, the original divine human being, lies mortally ill in the Grail Castle and waits for his deliverance. Every human being carries this Amfortas within him and the Grail Castle surrounds him as a symbol of the microcosm. Should the pre-remembrance – that is: the memory of that which existed before humanity started on its path of life and death – begin to speak in a seeker, then he could become conscious of Creation and his place in it.

A prophecy foretells that only a pure fool, enlightened by compassion, can save the incurably ill king. Percival's inner heritage has placed him on the path of salvation. As a brave knight, his father had gathered everything earthly life had to offer and his mother symbolises the suffering soul. She has been sent to give a child the opportunity to find the path to the Grail again, and thus to make the path of salvation visible to others. Hence in Percival, the collective heritage of the experiences of all of humanity (the father), is working together with the idea of his divine calling (the mother). The fool's dress symbolises the pure and natural receptivity of the soul. Thus the education by his mother is only focused on his soul. Should a human being take those directions purely literally, he will cause suffering and become burdened with guilt. First of all, Percival must learn the difference, through many experiences. A beauti-

ful and lovely woman may be experienced as a natural being, but also as a symbol of a pure soul.

Several times during his travels, Parcival encounters Sigune, who in this case signifies the pre-remembrance. That is why she calls him by his name and tells him about his descent. *'Parcival is your name. That word means: Going through the centre.'* His journey to true knowledge leads him through the depths of earthly nature. Yet, even there he does not find his inner purpose and he longs for the outward knighthood, symbolised in its most noble form by King Arthur's Round Table. This group of knights has achieved everything possible within earthly nature.

The knights, kings, ladies and other characters, which Parcival meets during his quest, can be seen as reflections of his feelings, insights and longings. He continuously comes face to face with limitations which he needs to address and solve within himself. And thus he liberates Kondwiramur from the hands of her enemies and marries her. That is the permanent bond with the person who 'leads him to love' (*conduir à l'amour*), the new soul! Driven by his original longing (depicted by Von Eschenbach as longing for his mother) and guided from within by Kondwiramur, Parcival sets out for the Grail Castle. Because he is still too much influenced by Gurnemanz's instructions, he does not understand what is expected of him in the Grail Castle. He cannot ask the redeeming question yet.

Amfortas' sword helps him to distinguish between the earthly and the divine. He learns to see and correct his mistakes. Cundrie's curse makes him conscious of his

negligence with respect to his higher purpose in life. He recognises his powerlessness and from now on only longs to find the Grail and to be united with Kondwiramur, the new ensoulment.

As a knight in search of the Grail, he also becomes embroiled in countless fights. Von Eschenbach uses the character of Sir Gawain to express Parcival's many experiences. In the first place, he fights the human delusions. Although he is successful on many counts, his victories do not bring him any closer to the Grail, because they are still achieved with his earthly will. Nevertheless, they are the starting point necessary to find the Grail Castle.

Discouraged, desperate and with a heart full of hatred towards God, he wanders around. He suffers because he cannot find the miraculous chalice. In his ultimate desolation and helplessness, God's help can reach him again. He encounters a grey knight, who travels with his family barefoot through the snow. This knight tells him that it is Good Friday and that on this day he may hope for the mercy of God. Reflecting on those words, he allows his horse free rein and it brings him to the hermit Trevizent. Trevizent links a new understanding of Good Friday with Parcival's consciousness. After all, that is the day on which he can love God! Parcival sees that he must surrender his will to God to be able to understand Jesus' sacrifice of Good Friday: '*Lord, Thy will be done*'. That is genuine love. Only through this inner surrender can the divine powers strengthen the human being and lead him to salvation. On this basis he can now endure the last three fights. He has fought his outer fights with the

sword of the red knight. With Amfortas' sword he fights his inner opponent. Gramoflanz represents the striving for earthly power, Gawain the striving for earthly goodness and Feirefis the striving for earthly wisdom and knowledge. Feirefis is described as a knight with black and white spots, because he has gathered within himself all the wealth and knowledge of this world, both good and bad.

The three conflicts in the final stage strongly resemble the three temptations of Jesus in the desert. However, the misleading earthly powers may not be killed, but must be overcome in order to bring about reconciliation. By his threefold victory, Percival has become a pure fool. That is to say: somebody who no longer fights with his I and no longer seeks gratification for that I. He has learned to recognise how far humanity has strayed from God and that he has removed and alienated himself. And so within him the longing for healing has been awakened: the yearning for salvation, the longing to become whole again and to surrender to the will of God. That is why Trevizent says: *'Nobody can pursue the Grail, who is unknown in heaven, so that he is called to the Grail by his name.'*

Once the conflicts in our own life have been overcome, the messenger of the Gods can show the way to the Grail Castle. There, in our own microcosm, the conscious encounter with Amfortas takes place. Only now Percival can ask the redeeming question, with genuine love and deep compassion: *'Uncle, what is confusing you?'* It is the question everyone will have to ask himself one time or another. And then he will be able to realise the answer – the healing of the suffering mi-

crocosm – within himself and in his fellow human beings. A part of Parcival's task was to bring along a brother to the Grail Castle. He chooses Feirefis, who is sent out after having been baptised to bring the Grail to humanity and to deliver it from its suffering.

Parcival – the Grail king with Kondwiramur at his side: purified heart and renewed mind united. Lohengrin is the son, the renewed human being, who goes out into the world to save it.

The story

The mysterious Grail was a lapis ex coelis that nourished all gathered around it with its energy. It was guarded and protected by the old and sick King Amfortas who lived in a castle that was difficult to approach. The King could only be healed by a knight who would prove his knighthood by his pure and noble mode of life and would be able to find the Grail castle. There he would have to ask the King a specific question in order to be able to solve the enigma of his suffering.

It was Parcival who aspired to this knighthood and also achieved it. His parents had royal blood. His father was the militant knight Gahmuret of Anjou, his mother, Herzeloide, a queen from the Grail dynasty. Gahmuret died during a campaign before Parcival was even born. Subsequently, Herzeloide withdrew with her son in a forest, so that the adolescent Parcival would not come into contact with wandering knights. In that way she wanted to protect him from sorrow, illness and death. But when, one day, young Parcival did encounter a group of knights, he was so impressed that he had only one wish: to become a knight himself. He wanted to go to

King Arthur's court, where he could be made a knight, the knights had told him.

Herzeloyde didn't want to let him go. She made a fool's costume for him, hoping that he would be laughed at and would return disheartened. She also gave him some advice and when she had bidden farewell to her son, her heart broke. However, he had already left in high spirits, and not long afterwards he reached the castle of the knight Gurnemanz. The latter taught him how to use lance and sword and more particularly, what rules should be obeyed if he were ever to become a true knight. Liaze, Gurnemanz' daughter, told Parcival that her niece, Queen Kondwiramur, was being besieged by a king who wanted to marry her by force. Immediately, Parcival set out to seek this attacker. He found and defeated him and married Kondwiramur.

However, he soon left her to visit his mother. On the way he came to a lake in a deserted area. A richly dressed fisherman showed him the road to a castle where he was received very courteously. During the excellent supper the guest sat next to the fisherman, who was also the lord of the castle and was suffering from a serious illness. A bleeding lance was carried into the hall, and a chalice from which a miraculous activity emanated. Subsequently, the host presented Parcival with a precious sword with a handle set with rubies. Parcival was highly astonished, but didn't ask anything. When he woke up the next morning, he found the castle empty and irritated he left.

On the way he met his niece Sigune and she told him that he had been in the Grail castle. To his dismay he

realised that he should have asked the sick king some questions in order to deliver him from his illness. That is why he decided quickly to atone for this omission and after an adventurous journey he arrived at the camp of King Arthur. There he was taken up in the Round Table of knights. But then Cundrie, the messenger of the Grail, appeared. She cursed Parcival for his behaviour in the Grail castle. The young knight felt disgraced and went out into the world to seek the Grail castle and atone for his mistakes. His endeavours were in vain and his journey lasted many years. Although he emerged victorious from all arenas, he remained rebellious, defeated by God and fate.

At the low of his despair, Parcival was sitting in full armour on a splendid horse that he had taken from a defeated knight of the Grail. He let the animal follow its own way and thus reached the cabin of the hermit Trevizent, his mother's and the sick Grail King Amfortas' brother. In the past, Trevizent had been a famous knight, but he had withdrawn from secular knighthood, when Amfortas had incurred his incurable wound. That the sick Grail King was still alive was due to the activity of the Grail that continued to give him new energy.

Parcival stayed in the humble abode of the hermit for fourteen days and was taught about the miraculous chalice and everything happening in relation to it. He rediscovered his faith in God and tried to alleviate the grief he had caused by his ignorance. Wolfram von Eschenbach wrote: 'There he was liberated from his sins by his host and the latter advised him also to partake of the life of the knights again.' Thereafter he returned to his life as a knight and was faced with the three hardest

fight of all. Only after he had fought them, he discovered whom he had fought against! The last fight was against an equally invincible knight as he himself was. The fight was so fierce and so hard that Percival ultimately broke his mighty sword on the helmet of his opponent. The heroes were facing each other and revealed who they were. Both appeared to descend from the same dynasty Anjou. Both were the sons of Gahmuret. The older one, Feirefis, was one of the wealthiest men on earth and he possessed many kingdoms. His skin had black-white spots and he worshipped Jupiter and Juno.

As the most famous and valiant knights, both brothers were admitted to the Round Table by Arthur. And at that moment Cundrie appeared with the message that Percival had now been elected Grail King and that he was allowed to select a companion for the execution of his task. Percival chose Feirefis and Cundrie accompanied both of them to the Grail castle. Totally focused on the Grail, he now asked the question: 'Uncle, what did confuse you? Uncle, what are you lacking?' After these questions Amfortas recovered in a very short time and now Percival was the new Grail King. Queen Kondwiramur was also invited to come to the Grail castle and there Percival met for the first time his twin sons Kardeiz and Lohengrin. One day, the latter would become his heir and successor.

In the Grail castle a celebration was organised. The virgin queen Repanse de Schoye, Amfortas' sister, carried the Grail into the hall. Plates and goblets were now filled from the miraculous chalice and passed around. When Feirefis saw all of this happen, he spontaneously fell in love with the carrier of the Grail,

although he himself could not yet see the Grail. An as yet unknown and irresistible love forced him to detach himself from his gods, to divorce his wife and to be baptised. After he had done this, he could also behold the Grail and Repanse de Schoye became his bride.

The Cathars on the path to the Holy Grail

The appearance of the Cathars in the region around the Mediterranean coincides with the golden age of the European Grail stories. At royal courts, troubadours told the epic of the Grail and sang in mystical metaphors of divine love. The Cathars, however, didn't stop at the narrative and contemplative side of things. They searched for the Grail in a daily applied mode of life of purity and courage.

In 950 AD, the Bulgarian Bogomils took the pure Christian-gnostic spiritual teachings of Mani further West. After 1000 AD, the Cathars continued to carry the torch of the Christian teachings of salvation, and within a short time a large and flourishing movement developed that spread its influence throughout the West. At the end of the 12th century, hardly anybody in Europe had heard about the Grail, but by the end of the 13th century this began to change. The vessel filled with the forces of the Spirit, as Hermes Trismegistus called it, had appeared in Europe to pour the redeeming message of Divine Love into mature human souls.

The centre of the Cathar movement could be found in Aquitania, in the South of France. An extraordinary high culture developed there. Especially in the Languedoc the minnesinging thrived and the pure Christian message of the Cathars was propagated. The path to the Holy Grail leads the modern seeker to the region of the Sabarthez, and particularly to the valley of the Ariège.

The coat of arms of the Sabarthez bears the motto *Sabarthez, custos summorum*, Sabarthez, guardian of the most high. This most high is symbolically represented by the winged Holy Grail and a radiant sun.

The Sabarthez with its capital Tarascon lies in the lovely valley of the Ariège and extends to the high valley of Sem. It was surrounded by the county of Foix. On a rock about a hundred metres above the town of Foix, the majestic castle of the counts of Foix, patrons of the Cathars, still stands today. In the Middle Ages, this castle was famous for frequently welcoming troubadours like Chrétien de Troyes, Bertrand de Born and Wolfram von Eschenbach as visitors.

The Ariège valley has a wide branching system of caves, reaching many kilometres into the mountains. These caves, some small, others large with high ceilings, provided shelter to the Cathars. But even before them, others had found refuge and healing in this extensive complex with its warm springs and very specific atmosphere, turning it into a sanctuary for those wanting to practice their faith freely. The rock drawings which were found in this region show traces of a history of human habitation dating back about 12,000 years. The hills and caves of the Sabarthez were also used by the Celts and Druids as places of worship. Traces of Manichaeans, Paulicians and Priscillians, all of them predecessors of the Cathars, and similar groups based on the Gnosis and its teachings of wisdom, have been found.

The name 'Cathars' has been derived from the Greek 'cátharos', meaning 'pure'. The Cathars simply called themselves Christians, and the population spoke of

them as the ‘bons omes’ and ‘bonas femas’ – good men and good women. Amongst themselves, they used the names ‘amici Dei’ or ‘amicz de Dieu’ or ‘crezens’. The word Cathar was first used in the mid-12th century to indicate a group of heretics from Cologne. Later it was mainly used in official descriptions. The church gave them the name ‘Albigenses’, used for all so-called heretic movements in Aquitania. The word Albigenses is not related to the town of Albi in the South of France. It was used by the Church and the French from the North to describe heretics who were not Waldenses and lived in the south. Heretics in England were also called Albigenses, by the way.

It was not possible to become a Cathar merely by being baptised or by a declaration of joining that religious community. A long preparation in the Christian way of life after the example of Jesus was required. The Cathars realised only too well that no service of outward forms with imitated and mutilated rituals could liberate the soul from its captivity. To that end, first the Christian Mystery of Initiation of the Holy Grail had to be accomplished by a consistent and sincere Christian mode of life.

When we follow a young candidate on his path, we will feel best the seriousness and devotion of the Cathars to the process of inner transformation. The determined candidate renounced civil life, marriage, earthly possession as well as the consumption of meat and wine. He practised the *endura*, a voluntary process of neutralisation of everything binding him to earthly life in order to awaken and develop his soul. The time of preparation, which lasted several years, was spent in the

caves of Ussat-Ornolac in the Ariège valley. Some caves served as temple, others as dwellings. The entrance to these dwellings was sometimes closed off with a wall and a doorway. These so-called spoulgas were inaccessible.

Until the 13th century, these caves were at the bank of a great lake stretching out to Tarascon. The candidate who had decided to follow the path of the Holy Grail, first had to pass a symbolic wall. In that way he bade farewell to the world and was granted access to the world of those who searched for the Divine Spirit. With the help of his elder brothers he followed that path step by step. These stages were accomplished in silence, in a daily routine of fasting, work and learning. Thus the candidate acquired knowledge of the wisdom of the stars (astroso-phy), medicine, and particularly the mysteries relating to the stages of his inner development.

The Cathars knew that only liberating knowledge and a life of service would lead to the Holy Grail. Shortly before his initiation, the candidate 'died' a symbolic mystical death after a forty day period of fasting. In the cave of Keplèr he had to stay for three days in a tomb in order to die as to his earthly nature. In this way, his soul could regain its freedom and in imitation of Jesus speak the 'Consummatum est,' it has been accomplished.

The mystery of the Grail is closely linked with dying as to our earthly nature. The inscription on the Grail chalice, by which the candidate is called to the brotherhood, can also be considered as an epitaph. However, the endura has nothing to do with physical death or with any pain or torture. The endura was, and still is,

solely a process in which all ties binding the consciousness to the past are broken. In that process, the old I surrenders to the renewing Christ power in order for the soul to be reborn.

On the third day of his stay in the cave of Keplèr, the candidate was raised from the tomb by his guide. Then he could receive the consolamentum, the sacrament of consolation, and his pure soul could be linked with the Divine Spirit. This momentous event took place in the cave of Bethlehem. The candidate entered this cave through the 'mystical gate'. In the cave of Bethlehem stood a granite altar covered by a white linen cloth, on which lay a Bible opened at the Gospel of John. In a niche in the rock wall, hidden behind a curtain, the Grail chalice was placed. The symbol of the Pentagram, chiselled in the rock wall, was of Druid origin just as the altar stone. To receive the consolamentum, the candidate had to stand in the chiselled Pentagram. With his head raised and legs and arms spread, he formed a five-pointed star.

The birth of Christ became a physical reality for the candidate during this initiation. Antonin Gadal, the Patriarch of the Cathars and guardian of their treasure, testified: *'Nothing would be able to make the Man, born in Bethlehem, tremble or leave the right path. Nobody in this world could overcome the Mysterious Power he represented.'*

As a new parfait, the candidate who had accomplished his path and had become perfect, left the sanctuary through the mystical gate. He celebrated a ritual and blessed his companions. Then he walked the famous

way of the Cathars that still exists today: across the Montagne Sacré to the Montségur, where the parfaits assembled before they went out into the world to bring the Light to their fellow human beings.

Built on a high rock, Montségur is shaped like a ship. This castle had been built at a place where in ancient times a sun temple had been, in which the mysteries of Zarathustra were linked with humanity of those days. In the chapel is a window admitting a ray of sunlight on the 24th of June, St. John's Day, at 12 o'clock noon, lighting up the symbol of the Sun Logos on the opposite wall.

When in 1244, the army of the inquisition forced the inhabitants of the castle to surrender, the Cathars obtained a temporary respite in order to finish their spiritual work. On the evening before they were burnt at the stake, all members of the Brotherhood standing by their confession received the Consolamentum from the hands of their Grandmaster Bertrand Marti in order to link their souls with the Divine Spirit. The mysterious treasure of the Cathars was hidden in the caves of the Ariège valley. On 26 March 1244, 205 men and women surrendered voluntarily to the flames of the stake. Legend tells that on that day, when the Cathars walked hand in hand and singing into the flames, a troubadour who was among the spectators prophesied: 'After 700 years the laurel will blossom on the ashes of these martyrs.'

In 1944, the patriarch of the Brotherhood of the Cathars, Antonin Gadat, climbed with seven witnesses to the Montségur and thus fulfilled the prophecy of this troubadour. Once again it had been proven that the seekers for the Holy Light that is differentiated in the

Holy Grail, can be persecuted, tortured and murdered, but the Light itself can never be destroyed. It will always return to the place where it once shone.

In Albi, the persecutors of the Cathars built a fortress-like cathedral to show their victory over Catharism. The cathedral still stands today and dominates the town. Thus one of the darkest pages of the history of the 'Christian' church was closed. However, the all-forgiving love of the Grail and the corresponding absolute conflictlessness of the Cathars have also left their mark. In Albi wonderful and unexpected processes have happened, which have led to a spiritual revolution and have given a new impulse to the spiritual path of liberation of humanity.

In 1167, not far from Albi, the Brotherhood of the Cathars had been called upon by the Bulgarian patriarch Nicetas to propagate the mysteries of Christian initiation in Europe. Humanity had to be liberated from the historical Christ and the dogmas related to it, for these images kept and keep humanity from the liberating potential brought about by the cosmic Christ power as a Grail, filled with the Light that drives all darkness from human souls. Whoever is touched by that insight becomes afflicted by an incurable wound driving him to seek the universal truth. He will strive for the rebirth of the soul, and shall no longer let himself be led astray by the songs of his I that only seeks to reaffirm the security and power of its own small world. Humanity must learn to live out of the love sacrifice and the miraculous feeding of the Grail again.

In the year 1954, in the Rose Garden of Albi, next to the

stronghold of the Inquisition, the Universal Light has been passed on to the Young-Gnostic Brotherhood of the Golden Rosycross in order to continue and develop the work started by the Cathars all over the world. Jan van Rijckenborgh, the Grand Master of the Spiritual School of the Golden Rosycross, received the Seal of the Grand Master from the hands of Antonin Gadal. It was the same seal the Bulgarian patriarch Nicetas had entrusted to the Brotherhood of the Cathars in the 12th century.

As a visible sign of this spiritual link, on 5 May 1957 a monument called 'Galaad' was erected in the Ariège valley. The name Galaad or Galahad frequently occurs in the Grail legends. Literally translated it means: 'Stone Heap bearing Witness'. On the square of the monument lies the altar stone at which the parfait after his initiation in the cave of Bethlehem celebrated his first ritual. It has been given to the Young-Gnostic Brotherhood by the patriarch of the Cathar Sanctuaries. This monument represents the uninterrupted effort to save humanity from its spiritual captivity, expressed by the Triple Alliance of the Light: Grail, Cathar, and Cross with Roses.

It is obvious that even today, for example, the cave of Bethlehem and the Cathedral of Ussat-les-Bains are still special places where the atmosphere of inner purity and service are still tangible. The 'Cathedral' or cave of Lombrives has an 80 metre high space where the Cathars celebrated their services. In 1328, eighty-four years after the fall of Montségur, this cave was finally closed off from the outside world making it impossible for the 510 inhabitants to be fed by the

community. Their remains have been recovered later.

Although the message of the Grail may have been passed on to humanity in colourful images, it is certainly not a fairytale but a living, vibrating reality in our modern age. That reality cannot be discovered by idolising or digging in the past. It is a dimension to be unlocked by the sober practice of the endura, that is: by giving up earthly interests and by striving for the link with the Divine Spirit, the Universal Gnosis.

According to the hermetic law 'As above, so below', the Grail has a macrocosmic, a cosmic and a microcosmic aspect. The macrocosmic aspect is the All-Manifestation. The cosmic aspect is related to the Earth as an abode for humanity. The microcosmic aspect is the Grail chalice within the human being. That chalice has to be found again, cleansed and prepared to receive the sanctifying power of the Spirit.

That miracle is possible for everyone. And hence, the image of the living Grail stirs the deepest layers of our consciousness and awakens the slumbering and encapsulated soul. The recollection of its reality that has once been and that humanity is confronted with over and over again, turns a human being into a seeker for God. The timeless question: 'Do you wish to receive the Grail?' is answered by the equally timeless words: 'There is but one law. A holy, deep longing!'

Eckbert von Schönau, *Sermones contra Catharos*, 1163.

A Gadal, *Op weg naar de Heilige Graal* (On the path to the Holy Grail), Rozekruis Pers, Haarlem, The Netherlands. 3rd edition, 1991.

Kitesj – symbol of an undamaged cosmos

The Grail is a symbol of a spiritual reality that cannot be grasped by the ordinary human consciousness, and that cannot even be approached! This symbol emanates a dynamic, creative power that heals and renews everywhere. In addition, this power activates and energises the consciousness and the resulting human activities, and it opens the gates for intuitive insight that can enlighten our ordinary every-day consciousness.

The Grail is described as a beaker, a goblet, as a precious radiating gem, as a pure fire, as a supernatural penetrating tone, as a power that heals and sanctifies everything making any other nourishment superfluous, as the pure light of wisdom and also as a hidden city. Apparently, the high spiritual reality cannot be described or labelled accurately by our earthly consciousness. That is perhaps why the Grail is an idea that profoundly appeals to human hearts all over the world.

The Grail in its non-material form is a fiery, spiritual energy that no mortal human being can approach without thorough preparation and a clear plan, as all legends without exception explain. If he were to do otherwise, that unique, unearthly energy would burn him.

The cosmic Grail is everlasting. Its impulses appear periodically in the world: on the one hand by symbols

that represent the force lines of its energy, on the other as liberating and renewing energy itself. The symbols appeal to the intuitive consciousness of people sensitive to them in order to stimulate them to seek and to act in a new, conscious way. This new way of acting may generate a new type of human being who transfers the control of his life to the immortal inner principle. This principle is the basis of the eternal soul. With its faculties, the prepared person can consciously approach the Grail and serve it. To serve the Grail means: to know the divine plan with the world and humanity and to cooperate in its execution. The purified, renewed and hence eternal soul can be taken up into the great, ancient, world-encompassing Brotherhood of the Grail.

From this point of view, it becomes a bit clearer why all Grail legends show uncertainty about the nature and direction of the search. Where can the Grail be found? What is the right moment to begin seeking? What is the correct starting point for the quest? Initially, a human being is only seeking the reflection of his own thoughts. That is a realm, where the Grail will certainly not be found, but at best refined and idealised representations of reality. And so it is no wonder that many seekers and idealists, despite their honest and courageous efforts, are still standing empty-handed at the end of their lives. The human being who has improved his path of life and has searched for inner knighthood, cannot find the Grail and become its guardian, until he has left everything behind; until he no longer thinks, feels and acts as to his earthly consciousness; until all those elements of his earthly consciousness have died in him

and room has been made for the living, eternal soul.

In mediaeval Russia, a brotherhood of knights existed that was striving after honesty and inner nobility. They wanted to serve God, protect the fatherland, and help the poor, the sick and the weak. At the royal courts and in the homes of the wealthy, philosophy, astrology, alchemy and Christian magic were practised just as in the rest of Europe. At the time, Russia was always strongly influenced by the highly developed Persian culture, in which the oldest traces of the Grail legends have also been found.

Apart from the brotherhood of knights, also the legend of Kitesj played an important role. In 1907, the Russian composer Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908) wrote the opera *Skazanije o nevidimom grade Kitesje I deve Fewronii* (About the invisible city of Kitesj and Lady Fewronia). In this opera, the preparation for being admitted to the Brotherhood of the Grail has been represented more clearly than in the West-European legends of the Grail.

The author of the libretto, W J Belski, has created a synthesis of the essence of Russian myths, sagas and legends, in which an episode from *The saga of Lady Fewronia from the city of Murom* forms the nucleus. Meledin's *Chronicle of Kitesj* (1251) about the construction of Minor and Major Kitesj in 3 years, about the 75 years both cities have existed and about the destruction of Minor Kitesj in 1239, forms the historical context within which the story unfolds. Belski expressed, in intensive co-operation with Rimsky-Korsakov, the wisdom of the mediaeval popular soul.

The opera does not have much dramatic action, so that, according to W J Belski, the emotions of the singers are more clearly shown. In the poetic-lyric music by Rimsky-Korsakov, the subtle affections of the soul become alive – just as in Mozart’s ‘Magic Flute’. They clearly express the three stages of consciousness:

- the practical intellect that is limited to the everyday phenomena of life on earth;
- the intuitive mystical experience of the light that does not cast shadows. The human soul that consciously absorbs the light expresses the pure faith of original Christianity. It is the faith that gives wisdom;
- the spiritual consciousness that is awakened in Fewronia, after she has endured superhuman trials that lead her further in the field of spiritual development.

The spiritual consciousness links Fewronia with the light of the Grail and with the realm from which the Brotherhood of the Grail draws its powers in order to be able to work in the earthly field of life. In the opera, this link is expressed by the paradise birds Alkonost and Sirene. They appear whenever Fewronia has passed a trial and is guided to a higher level of consciousness.

Minor and Major Kitesj had been built as strongholds of the original Christian faith. For 75 years, their citizens could follow their mystical path and in this way develop their souls, the true purpose of human life. In the legend of Kitesj, the king has a deep mystical-religious consciousness, on the basis of which he exemplified his ideals for his people. That mystical conscious-

ness united all citizens and guided them directly to a new soul consciousness that explains the purpose of life.

Lady Fewronia is living alone in a vast and wild forest on the banks of the Volga, opposite the town of Minor Kitesj. Fewronia is the prototype of a pure, natural human soul that shares its wisdom. She works with medicinal herbs and gives generously of her knowledge to humans and animals alike. Intuitively she understands the processes taking place in the vegetable and animal kingdoms and she envelops her fellow creatures with insight, compassion and help, and supports them with love. The living beings of the forest trust her. She is living in harmony with them and understands, respects and promotes the natural processes in which all those creatures have been taken up.

Fewronia has completed an important phase of her development. She possesses a radiant soul, the light of intuitive insight and thirdly, the highest form of love a human being can reach. On that basis she is tested and led through experiences that could not be endured by an I that is too much linked to this nature.

The tests begin with the encounter with prince Vsevolod. During a hunting party, he got lost in the forest and wanders about, tired and wounded. Then he sees Fewronia. She is singing and is surrounded by birds, a bear and deer, while she is seeking medicinal herbs. Astonished, he looks at it. He is captivated by this sight: a human being, perfect as to earthly standards, in the wilderness of the forest.

Fewronia watches him quietly and she sees that the prince is suffering and struggles with inner conflicts. She wonders how a basically noble human being – a prince – can hunt and kill. He is religious, but not more than that. He still needs ceremonies and moral-ethical rules of behaviour in order to be able to continue his path through life. Although he certainly has a great faith, he has not yet been able to awaken his spiritual nucleus. Hence he acts according to the suggestions of his trained intellect only. He has not yet developed intuitive insight. Hence, Fewronia turns to him and examines if it is possible to stimulate his still dormant higher faculties.

Vsevolod is welcomed with simple words that open his heart. Fewronia gives him bread, honey and water, esoteric symbols of spiritual food.

The prince realises that Fewronia in all her simplicity is superior to the most educated women of Minor Kitesj. In a completely harmonious way, she has occupied her place in creation and co-operates with nature and its creatures, whenever possible. After all, Christ is living in every human soul, and has compassion with every living being. She is able to pass on the light that enlightens her consciousness to the suffering prince Vsevolod. He accepts that help gratefully and in this way learns that from now on he should no longer consider the animals and other creatures as prey, but that he should protect and support them.

After this inner change of the prince, Fewronia can accept his offer. As Vsevolod's bride she is taken from her familiar world to the unknown life of the city and

its inhabitants. She sees the citizens of Minor Kitesj. She observes them with astonishment and compassion. The way in which these people pass their days is completely foreign to her.

Because the citizens of Minor Kitesj experience that Fewronia radiates light, she is called the Lady of the Light. Because she is so much appreciated, she tries to impart her thoughts about life and the purpose of humanity, and tries to stimulate self-reflection. Her humility, wisdom, her power of discernment, compassion, goodness, truth, tolerance, joy, strength and righteousness appeal to few people only.

The citizens of Minor Kitesj are mainly focused on material life and hence their minds have become slow. Fewronia sees the limitations of that superficial life and observes that the city-dwellers prefer to ignore her love and wise words.

Because they are closed off from the renewal of their ideas and mode of life, they can no longer fend off violent change. The Tatars were marching west and on their destructive campaign through South and Central Russia they approach Minor Kitesj in order to conquer it. Next, certainly Major Kitesj will fall as well. Now the inhabitants of Minor Kitesj are confronted with a decisive choice: to surrender to the Tatars, become their slaves and renounce their faith, or to remain loyal to their faith and perish in the struggle for their ideals.

In this crisis, many citizens hear the inner voice urging them to follow the spiritual impulse, and to engage in battle for the sake of their souls and the preservation of

holy Major Kitesj. In the meantime, Prince Vsevolod has gone to Major Kitesj with a small group of knights to ask for help. However, the Tatars appear sooner than expected. In the terrible fight that then breaks out, all citizens except Fewronia and a drunk are killed. No one had been prepared to help the Tatars by showing them the secret way to Major Kitesj.

The consciousness of the drunk has been darkened by his indulgence. He is no longer conscious of a soul or higher values and clings to life in matter. When the Tatars start torturing him, he is soon prepared to guide them to Major Kitesj in order to save his life.

The Khan of the Tatars takes beautiful Fewronia along as war booty and she becomes his slave. When she is captured together with the drunk, she tries in vain to convince her companion that he acts as Jude when he betrays the secret way to Major Kitesj. Then she turns to her inner being and prays for the protection of the citizens of Major Kitesj, because in their daily lives they let themselves be guided by the power of the true faith. On that basis they can be saved.

The earthly powers and forces – symbolised by the Tatars – try to win over Fewronia, but she proves to be inviolable and invulnerable. She does not fear violence and only feels compassion for the murderous Khan, who sinks away intoxicated by alcohol.

Now a new series of dramatic events develops. With a small group of knights, Prince Vsevolod goes to war against the Tatars. His armour consists of the Helmet of Hope, the Shield of Faith and the Sword of the

Spirit. These attributes show that he has set out to seek the Grail and to engage in battle against anything that tries to prevent him. He has become a pure knight of the Grail, for the legend tells that he faced the Tatars without fighting.

Such remarks in the legend of Kitesj – and in many other Grail legends – show that the issue is the description of inner, spiritual purification processes, to which every human being will be called one day.

Prince Vsevolod and his knights expose themselves to the Tatars and die. The citizens of Major Kitesj and their King Juri ask the heavenly mother to envelop and protect them with her pure powers. And a miracle happens: the city is veiled by a mist of fire. The shepherds, watching this, sing: *Kitesj becomes the head and heart of the world*. Kitesj sinks into the crystal-clear lake Swetli Jar, and at the same time rises up to heaven. The army of the Tatars on the banks of the lake is filled with inexpressible fear and flees to the surrounding forests.

Fewronia sees how Major Kitesj is taken up into a new dimension. The two mystery birds – now visible – invite her to join the city in its ascent into the light. Thus she has achieved her goal: for her, death no longer exists. Clothed in light, she is welcomed by the knights of the Grail. She meets Vsevolod, who has been resurrected after his death on the battlefield and is now accompanied to his goal as a knight of the Grail. Vsevolod and Fewronia become the Grail King and the Grail Queen of Major Kitesj.

The hermetic path of initiation of the Grail

Until this day, official Christianity has not paid special attention to the Grail, although the Grail is considered as the chalice used by Christ during the Last Supper. In the language of Occitania the word *grasal* means a medium-sized vase, but also a cup. And the feminine form *grasalo* is the word for a large deep chalice. According to one of the legends, Joseph of Arimathea has caught the blood from the wounds of Christ in such a chalice or cup. After the resurrection he is accused of having stolen the body and tradition says that he was imprisoned. Then Jesus appeared to put the chalice in his care and to initiate him in a few mysteries. In the year 70 AD he was released and together with his sister and wife he fled on a ship. It is assumed that he landed on the coast of the Languedoc and travelled from there to Brittany and crossed over to Britain, where he founded the monastery of Glastonbury near Avalon. In Ireland too, myths and legends refer to Joseph of Arimathea. By the end of the twelfth century the Grail was still almost unknown, while two centuries later that had completely changed. Grail movements developed and some castles became known as Grail castles. That is where the Grail was supposed to be kept.

In earlier times it was believed that the earth was over-arched by an upside-down chalice. The gods used this mythical chalice to perform miracles that remind us of

the more recent Grail miracles. Thus the Vedas relate how the god Indra takes the fire from the sun and the divine drink soma from the moon. Indra is represented with a spear or lance, with which he makes the dry land fertile. In some Grail legends, Parcival carries a lance by which he makes rivers and brooks flow again by healing the sick king.

In Greek philosophy, the chalice is the divine mixing vessel, the crater, into which the deity pours the raw materials of life and hands them out to the souls created. Plato speaks about the crater of Hephaistus. That is a blazing beaker in which sunlight is mixed. And Hermes Trismegistus writes in his *Corpus Hermeticum*: *'It was His, God's will, my son, that the link with the Spirit should be obtained by all souls; however, as a prize for the race. He sent down a great Mixing Vessel, filled with the powers of the Spirit and He appointed a herald and bade him proclaim to the hearts of all men: Immerse yourselves in this Mixing Vessel, you souls who can; you who believe and trust that you will ascend to Him who sent down this Vessel; you who know for what purpose you were created.'*

Deviating from this representation of the Grail as a beaker or mixing vessel is the stone Grail of Wolfram von Eschenbach. He speaks of *lapis elixer*, sometimes also of *lapis ex coelis* (stone from heaven), the Stone of the Elixir of Life or the Philosopher's Stone. This points to a relationship with the alchemical meaning of the Grail. Some say that the word Grail has been derived from the word *gradalis*. *Gradus* means step or degree of initiation. The path to the Grail is then a *via gradalis*, a path with steps. In the ancient mysteries

there were seven degrees of initiation that carried the names of the planets. Whoever was elected to be Grail King, had to have passed through all seven planetary degrees of initiation. That is why Cundrie, the messenger of the Grail, spoke with Parcival about the seven planets, when the young ‘fool’ was called to this office.

When the true meaning of the Grail fell into oblivion at the end of the thirteenth century, a richly-hued literature about King Arthur’s Round Table and about the numerological symbols of the Grail legend developed.

Everywhere striving for the Grail has been linked with the realm of death. Whoever does not know death, will never be able to find the Grail. Before Parcival can go to Trevizent, who is living near the Grail, he must fight with a Knight of the Grail. The reason for this is: *The castle of Mont Salvat should usually not be approached too closely. Whoever is so audacious must endure a dangerous fight. Or pay a fine that is called death outside this forest.* And the link between Grail and death becomes even more obvious when the letters, appearing on the Grail when someone is elected for the brotherhood, are referred to as epitaph. However, death is not experienced here as a definitive state, but as a gate on the path to the resurrection. The Grail encompasses the whole process on that path.

Such a death – the daily dying Paul writes about – is the endura of the Cathars, so often fiercely fought and completely misunderstood. Thick volumes have been written about this ‘ungodly’ method of suicide of the brotherhood from the South of France. Yet, this so-called ‘ungodly’ method is minutely described in the

four gospels. The endura of the Cathars is following Jesus the Christ in the holy process, in which everything unholy in the microcosm is killed.

Whoever begins this endura has first convinced himself that his microcosm does not correspond to, is not in harmony with the Divine Law. It has, so to speak, sunk into a death sleep and should be awakened and purified, sanctified. The second Letter to the Corinthians confirms this in chapter 5: *For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* Hence the method leading to the evangelical rebirth, to the total resurrection of original nature, has been fully described in the gospels for those who want to read and can understand it.

Many have already tried to achieve I-demolition, but all their efforts were in vain. This is not illogical, because the I that wants to dissolve itself in fact maintains itself, strengthens itself against all those efforts. That is why the Grail descends to humanity to pour out the Light that can undo the I. Hence, not the I performs the endura, but the Gnosis, the liberating and healing Light from the Primordial Fountain of all Life. Or expressed in Christian terms: the Christ in the human being.

The seeker for the Grail will discover that all events, persons and places that are mentioned in the legends have nothing to do with geographical places or historical figures, but are allegorical representations of aspects within himself. Denying this fact has already caused many misunderstanding and lack of insight.

Hence the Mystery of the Grail cannot, as has been explained, be approached with earthly means and faculties. A Cathar prayer expresses this as follows:

Who or what is God?

Let us who have assembled here, be silent.

Let us not speak His Name.

Let us be silent, let us pray in silence.

*Whoever wants to tell who he is,
must be who He is.*

Once the microcosm has been divine. By the fall, the state of separation, another human being than the original one had to be built in order to make the path of return possible. That is why it is necessary that the seeker for the Grail has sufficient knowledge of the two natures represented within him: the original, divine one and the undivine one built later. Unfortunately, the undivine aspect is dominant and the divine aspect has been reduced to a dormant nucleus. The result of this situation is that everything a human being receives of divine inspiration, is turned to the earthly level by his undivine nature. Then it becomes obvious that such a structure is unsuitable for the endura, because during the endura the earthly aspect must withdraw for the benefit of the divine aspect.

The true seeker always receives the instructions he needs on his path for reaching his goal, as we can read in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says:

*But when you pray,
go into your room (your heart)
and shut the door*

*and pray to your Father who is in secret.
And your Father who sees in secret
will reward you.*

Doesn't this remind us of the instructions Parcival received from Trevizent? The prayer meant here points to the realisation of the unity of head and heart that is severely disturbed in earthly humanity. In human beings of this nature there is a constant conflict between head and heart. Either one is dominant, or the other, but a balance is hardly ever reached or only very temporarily. That is why we speak of rational and emotional human beings.

By the activities of their heads and their hearts, human beings are linked with electromagnetic fields. They mutually maintain and nourish each other and with every thought and each emotion those links are becoming stronger. In this way, human beings build their own prison. Human beings think according to the thought field they are linked with and feel according to the emotional field they draw from. The I is unable to break through those cycles, because the self plays an active role in them and does not have the powers that could lift it above them at its disposal.

Hence it is self-evident that the I cannot break through its own cycle on its own power. Only when it has gathered such experiences that it is thrown off balance, some room may develop for something that does not belong to this cycle. The Bible calls that which does not belong to this world *the Kingdom of God that flesh and blood cannot inherit.*

The blood is the symbol of our life of thoughts, emotions and actions. All processes of life are expressed in it, can be pointed out in it. Emotions can activate the endocrine glands and other organs, thoughts can drive up the blood and change its composition. That is why the seeker for the Grail is advised first to purify his blood. And he doesn't do that by diets, herbal treatments, magical methods or breathing exercises, but by dealing with his thoughts and feelings. That is the beginning of the path that leads to the Holy Grail. It is the path that is based on the liberation of the divine principle in the microcosm.

Many religions point to that principle, the seed of grain of Jesus, the jewel in the lotus, the pearl in the field, and in the modern terms of the Golden Rosycross: the spirit-spark. That divine principle resides in the human heart. The Grail is the symbol of the restoration of this divine principle, of awakening and liberation, so that it can develop. That is why it is sometimes said that the Grail should be erected in the heart. Pure Grail legends present the gnostic message in all its simplicity, albeit veiled according to the time in which they are told. They relate where and how the Grail can be found, how it must be protected and maintained.

The human body possesses forty-nine chakras, centres of rotating forces that nourish the different vehicles of the personality. The seven large ones are, top down:

- the crown chakra, corresponding to the pineal gland;
- the frontal chakra, corresponding to the pituitary gland;

- the throat chakra, corresponding to the thyroid gland;
- the heart chakra, corresponding to the thymus;
- the chakra of the solar plexus, corresponding to the spleen-liver system;
- the sacral chakra, corresponding to the reproductive organs;
- the coccyx chakra, corresponding to legs, feet and the sacral plexus.

All these chakras and the 42 other ones are open for astral and etheric forces and immediately pass them on to the endocrine glands, the blood and the consciousness.

When someone is open for astral-etheric influences not belonging to the dialectical world, this also directly affects the consciousness, among other things. Then a process of renewal begins, in which the influence of earthly nature is gradually eliminated, so that the new nature, the new consciousness, the new man can develop.

That quest for the Grail, although with different words and concepts, can also be found with Hermes Trismegistus in Egypt, Lao Tzu in China, the Buddha in India, Zarathustra in Persia, Jesus in the region around the Mediterranean and Mani in Mesopotamia. With Mani, we can also find the primal form of the western Grail legends.

Mani taught that in Adam a part of the not yet liberated light has been concentrated. That is why Adam – humanity – is touched to regeneration from the King-

dom of the Light. However, this Adam has been created blind and deaf by matter. He is unconscious of the Light that is present in him and hence is deeply asleep. Then his redeemer approaches, called Ohrmazd or Jesus, the radiant light that awakens him, opens his eyes and liberates him from his oppressors. The light shows him the light soul imprisoned within him and thus unveils his dual origin: on the one hand the divine Spirit, on the other his dialectical body. The light illuminates Adam with its liberating knowledge, the Gnosis.

This ancient knowledge has remained unchanged through all ages, but the images used to pass them on are always different in order to be able to reach humanity in its current stage of life. Whoever discovers that path and has the courage to walk it, will be granted to encounter the Grail. In the Grail chalice he will then learn to erect in his being, one day the life-giving Spirit of God can descend and link the reborn soul with itself. Then Galahad, Galaad has been resurrected.

The Grail in the struggle against the past

The well-known Grail legends provide only a modest picture of the enormous effect their message has had. They show a spiritual path that is still of great importance to the human being in his modern hectic life. Their source is the Gnosis, the Universal Truth perceived by human beings and disseminated through a living, renewing way of life.

Hence, the search for the Grail is no literary fiction. Neither is it a piece of history for scientific or philosophical discussion. It is a way of life, which directly and deeply affects the seeker on his path to the living truth. To grasp the magnificence of this age-old, ever relevant impulse to some extent, the seeker must become linked with the redeeming message hidden behind the heroic deeds of the historic knights. This process has two aspects, two dimensions. On the one hand a human aspect, expressed in the many colourful adventures of the knights. On the other hand the divine dimension, to be reached after having accomplished heroic deeds. The human aspect becomes clearly apparent in the fight against egotism, insensitivity and the disgrace of ignorance concerning higher life. Those are the characteristic enemies of the human being in search of the Grail Castle within himself.

Parcival is successful in overcoming these enemies with the help of an inner force, granted to him time

and again. But in spite of his courage and resourcefulness, he often seems still unable to find the light. Restlessness drives him on; restlessness, nourished by his longing for the Grail. After his victory over the red knight he is able to enter King Arthur's castle. The red knight may be seen as the natural soul, focused on the earthly way of life. This is the first obstacle the bonafide seeker has to surmount to achieve higher soul life. Also his character based on his blood heritage, together with the circumstances he is living in, are hindrances to be overcome. This overcoming means a process of purification of the soul preparing for its encounter with the Spirit of God.

The place where this inner conflict is enacted lies between the conscious and the subconscious. In the subconscious those forces are found that developed by separation from the original, divine order. Those are ancient, very powerful concentrations of forces which still continue to be nourished. They form the collective heritage of humanity, in which the whole of its history has been recorded. Moreover, they contain the individual legacy from previous lives that forms the basis for the structure of the development of a new personality. These in particular are the enemies and obstacles Parcival has to conquer during his quest for the Grail. He does not let them thwart him. He possesses the inner strength to handle a sword, which becomes more powerful and sharper as he progresses. This sword is a spiritual weapon, the indispensable help for those, who want to deal with the demons in their own underworld.

Hence, the Grail Castle is for the seeker not a ruined stronghold somewhere in the Pyrenees. At best, those

witnesses from the distant past can stimulate the seeker, but they are not the purpose of his journey through life. The Grail Castle built for modern humanity is a field of renewing energy, maintained by a community of souls, concentrating entirely on the former's development. This Holy Grail is formed and supported by people living on this earth, who have found the Grail through inner struggle and purification. In this living Grail, the regenerating energy of the cosmic Christ is received and poured out over all of humanity. Whoever comes into contact with this power shall welcome it and receive it with joy and shall want to bear witness to it. But this power must be assimilated and then it forms a spiritual sword for Parcival to fight with. This is the sword of which Jesus speaks in Mathew 10:34: *'I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.'* That sword has the ability and the power to separate the pure from the impure.

The modern Parcival follows the path of inner liberation within a group that can be compared with the Round Table at the court of King Arthur. This Round Table, this community of like-minded people, is entrusted with the task of preparing itself as a grail, a mixing vessel, a crater, for receiving the divine forces and to pass them on to all who are longing for them.

The world is full of seekers for the Grail. In all walks of life we find people who are consciously or unconsciously occupying themselves with this search. For as long as that process remains unconscious, they will quarrel over their finds and they fight the red knight in vain. But as soon as they, like Parcival, are driven by the inner desire to serve their fellow human

beings, they start to become conscious of their struggle for life. Then this struggle becomes an inner purification, a preparation of the soul. And in their words, writings and actions they testify of the help and comfort they are experiencing over and over again, as long as they remain focused on the Grail as their purpose. After all, the purpose, the Grail, nourishes them even from a distance.

As long as the soul allows itself to be nourished by the suffering and strife of earthly human beings, it will not be able to distinguish the Grail as the purpose of its life, because its powers of observation are too mutilated. Therefore, the old structure of the soul must be replaced by a new one, which can be nourished by the renewing power and can react in the correct way. Once that is the case, what will be able to harm it? Death? After all, it will then have overcome all aspects of death – the daily existence of unconscious living! That is why the Grail is the mystery of the renewing soul on its path to eternity.

That is one of the reasons why the Grail processes could be described in the colourful symbolic language of the past. Those who were ready for it, could understand it. To others, they were magnificent stories, able to nourish the longing for a higher, better life.

Whoever embarks on the search for the Grail, will have to descend into his innermost being. There lies the beginning of his journey and nowhere else. The point of departure is the longing for the mystery of the transformation of the soul. For the consolation emanating from the Grail presents the pilgrim with the joy of a

growing authentic knowledge, indicated as the Gnosis. Long before he can be a guardian of the Grail, he will already be linked to it, even if he does not know this yet and experiences his search as long, painful and uncertain.

The Grail is present in every human being

'You are perhaps familiar with the very ancient legend of the Holy Grail. The Grail is the chalice which Jesus the Lord used during the Last Supper. According to this legend, Joseph of Arimathea received the blood of the crucified Lord in it, and then took it under his protection. Later his successors transferred the Grail to the West, where it has been kept concealed till the present time.

This legend has been misused by the mystics in every way possible for emotional speculation. During the Middle Ages it was used as the subject of many poetic creations by mystical imitators. In its simplicity, it fully shows the gnostic values needed to comprehend what the Grail is, how it must be constructed and where it can be found.

In order to fathom this mystery, we refer you first of all to the story in the Gospel of the commissioning of Peter and John to prepare the Last Supper. It is the pupil himself who must construct the Grail that later will be used by Jesus the Lord.

Anatomically, the Grail chalice is described by the three plexicircles mentioned before, that is the plexicircle of the larynx, the plexicircle of the lungs and the plexicircle of the heart. The upper part of the Grail chalice corresponds to the laryngeal system, the stem of the chalice

stands in the lungs and the base of the crystal bowl is planted in the aorta. Consequently, the possibility of constructing the wedding chalice is present in every human being.'

From: Jan van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri, *The Universal Gnosis*, Rozekruis Pers, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 1980.

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