850 YEARS AFTER THE CATHAR CONFERENCE

THE CONGRES OF SAINT-FÉLIX-LAURAGAIS MAY 12-14, 2017

The spiritual mission of Nikètas of Constantinople

'Give us today our supernatural bread'.

The Bogomil and Cathar interpretation of the key phrase of the Lord's Prayer

Dick van Niekerk

Awakening in the Holy Spirit

Anne Baring

The Ideal of Brotherhood, the Core of the Gospel of the Cathars

Eduard Berga

The Way of the Cathars: a Hermetic Gnosis

Pierre Gohar

Bogomils, Cathars and the Universal White Brotherhood

David Lorimer

The forgotten Cathars of Mont Aimé

A word of the Catholics of the Ariège with regard to the Cathar drama.

Text spoken in the church of Montségur on Sunday, October 16, 2016 by Jean-Marc Eychenne

Advocate of the heretics rehabilitates the Bogomils.

Gottfried Arnold about the Witnesses of the Truth

Teachings and inheritance of the Friend of God from the Oberland

Jean Moncelon

Additional texts:

'The true church of Christ resides in the heart of man'

Initiation with the Bogomils

An evening in Mostar.

An Impression of a meeting with Pop Bogomil

Peter Deunov: Master of Wisdom and Love
"Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood under the Sign of Love." Under that motto a congress took place in May 2017, in St. Félix Lauragais (France). This conference, organized by the Bulgarian scholar Damyan Popchristov and the association "Bulgarians in the Pays d’Autan", wanted to contribute to a spiritual unification of Europe “from a historical and spiritual perspective.” The underlying motive was the mission of Niketas in 1167, now 850 years ago. The purpose was to investigate how the crucial Bogomil-Cathar synod over which Niketas presided, could promote a similar 'convivencia' in our modern age. The various texts bore the character of testimonies, while the meeting itself instigated a great impulse. The participants experienced that the pure and intelligent Christianity of the Spirit is still internationally active. It is spiritually very much alive in a time in which our society changes drastically. And again, the Occitan region is the scene of action.

The “Council of the Cathars” in 1167 was led by Niketas, patriarch of the seven churches of Asia. During this synod – with the allure of a great medieval knight and damsel meeting – tens of the sons and daughters of the nobility were sealed again with the consolamentum of the living. It was proof that the Cathar ‘Church of the Spirit’ formed the heart of Occitan society. The young Esclarmonde of Foix was also present.

It was in 2017 that Damyan Popchristov brought an international group of speakers together such as the English Anne Baring, the grande dame of esoteric thinking on the impact of the Light Message through the ages. She proved how this “Church of the Spirit” was firmly anchored in the ancient knowledge of the connection between humans and cosmos. Eduard Berga discussed an old Bogomil text. Dick van Niekerk treated the impact of the Bogomil version of the “Our Father”. Pierre Gohar spoke of the “universal community of the rose” – which forms a meeting place for all light-sparks and Petra Augrandjean opened the day with a specific focus on the work of the patriarch Niketas.

Pentagram offers only a selection from the various presentations. Not all texts were available at the time of publication of this issue. For the “World images”, the editors chose modern images of some cities and places where the two brotherhoods undertook their work in earlier times. The accompanying texts are derived from David Lorimer’s contribution.
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World Images

© Photo: Young people in a square in Timisoara (Romania) © Adonis, Always Wanderlust

The texts accompanying the World Images are quotes from David Lorimer’s contribution to the Conference ‘Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood under the Sign of Love’, in St. Félix de Lauragais, entitled ‘Bogomils, Cathars and the Universal White Brotherhood’.

“All growth originates with creative individuals or small minorities of individuals, and their task is twofold: first the achievement of their inspiration or discovery, and secondly the conversion to this new way of life of the society to which they belong.’

The photos of World Images are from places where these groups were active in the past.
The spiritual mission of Niketas of Constantinople

The religion of Occitania has always been a simple pure Christianity, a Christianity according to the doctrine of John: not the sword, not the dogma, but Love.

It was the church of the Paraclete and those who belonged to it called affectionately “Joana”, their beloved, the church of the spirit, of the wisdom of the holy spirit. Originally their church was known as the ecclesia fumae. Later on, after 1167, after the meeting of its leaders in St. Félix, this was the name for the northern French diocese, which from then on came under the leadership of Bishop Robert d’Espernon.

In the tenth and eleventh century, there were few controversies in this area. Theirs was a simple Christianity that both nobility and the people experienced collectively. It did not come from Bulgaria, or Italy, nor from the Balkan. It was born and grown in freedom and nurtured in Spain in the early Middle Ages. We’ll get back to this later.

The Pyrenees mountains, their religious experience could develop in peace. Where to the ordinary Occitanian his religious feeling in which God the Father is the starting point of the human state, love makes everything grow and thus also the human soul: formation – reformation – transformation. That is pure Christianity! God is love!

Never ever did the Pyrenean croyants place a church, priest or pope between the human soul and the divine world and personal interpretation, the initiated bonhommes were also found in all levels of society. It did not aim at deviation, special rites or official worship procedures. It did not come from Bulgaria or Italy, nor from the Balkan. It was born and grown in freedom and nurtured in Spain in the early Middle Ages. We’ll get back to this later.

The name Cathars is misleading and not one that was used in medieval times. They were known as the Frères d’Amour, the faithful ones of Love and the easy name bonhommes or bon femnas was a synonym that was used in everyday language. It was an experience that found its religious response in every layer of society. In the province of Septimania or circles with dedication, consecration, initiation, person to person: Ancien to jeune.

Thus we may say that around the middle of the twelfth century the Christian Occitan mind was like a latent atmosphere, without a hierarchical organization, special rites or official worship procedures. It did not aim at deviation, it was not controversial but an open religious feeling in which God the Father is everything and encompasses everything. In which the Son serves as the Light – which is consciousness – which elucidates the Father in his creation, and the Holy Spirit which is a great mystery that can only be grasped by the Homme-esprit, the spiritual man. Never ever did the Pyrenean croyants place a church, priest or pope between the human soul and the divine world and personal interpretation, the initiated bonhommes were also found in all levels of society. It did not come from Bulgaria or Italy, nor from the Balkan. It was born and grown in freedom and nurtured in Spain in the early Middle Ages. We’ll get back to this later.

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the year 800 he was also imprisoned in Aachen. Since then an unbelievable number of people were sacrificed in order to break the irresistible movement of the Spirit that went through the world! Henry III ordered bonshommes or parfaits as they were also called, to be captured in 1052, in Goslar, Germany. Tanchelm was brought to death in Antwerp in 1115. "

Around the year 1000 this faith of southern France became more visible, at the time when the infrastructure initiated by Charlemagne, lost its strong central organization. This gave the local noble families and houses more influence. In that free atmosphere, the emerging Romanesque culture thrived, casting ideals in its own language, which was spiritual and noble. Sons and daughters of the noble houses followed this lead to obtain important positions. They were the leading group. They provided a shelter in which faith and the people could flourish. And in the loose unforced structure of that day there was freedom of thought and mutual understanding in a minimally organised ecclesia.

Roger-Bernard – Count of Foix at the time of the visit of Nikètas – had, despite his impetuous character and his strong ties with the kingdom of Barcelona, a soft spot for the people who professed this pure form of faith. People who did not seek material goods – who radiated a strange gentleness and whose unusual sobriety was accompanied by selfless charity. These characteristics were ideal to advance health and humane existence in his area. His wife Cécile, a daughter of the house of Trencavel, was a support and an anchor for these new Christians. His children – including Esclarmonde who would later become a Cathar princess – cherished these ideals and absorbed the stories and teachings that the Fidèle d’amour brought to the castles during their visits. On the other hand, you couldn’t say that this new coexistence, this ideal convivencia, was embraced by the entire elite of the Occitan society.

For us, people of the twenty-first century, it is almost impossible to evaluate the view and perception of medieval man on the world.

Our modern perception prefers to attribute a mysterious character to the Cathar teachings, full of secrets and esoteric knowledge. One cannot be more mistaken.

Medieval man had a great need to be part of and to be active within the vested order of society. Their natural order is the order that God has given to the world and the social order results from it. There is a king far away and there is a count or a gentleman farmer in closer proximity. There is a bishop far away and there is a deacon in the region. This order is both his soil as well as the field of existence in which medieval man wanted to spend his life.

They did not think in a language or texts or in the theoretical frameworks that historiography, looking backwards, wants to impose on them.

Philosophical thinking, reading and writing in the Middle Ages were reserved for the relative few, in the monasteries, in ecclesiastical palaces and offices, and these were of a different order. The common man would not be part of these circles except when delivering their spiritual mission of Nikètas of Constantinople.

The medieval man has a great need to live within the order of things.
The Occitan mind did not find its essence in political or theological argumentation, the social order is all-determining, and man plays a role herein that the cosmos has given to him or to her. In the Doat reports, the Inquisition determined that were so aptly incorporated by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie in his book “Montaillou”, the local victims are shown to have a spiritual and philosophical view on life that is childlike and sometimes even naïve. This is perhaps shocking to those who like to see a Cathar dualistic, esoteric religion with strict ideas but this was not so. These developed later under the pressure of the institutions of their opponents, as well as through the influence of Nikètas. Whoever keeps this in mind can probably imagine Occitan Christianity in its free, non-hierarchical and certainly not dogmatic form.

Nevertheless – and this is very special – the path of initiation – reformation – was open to everyone. The parfaits founded houses in which they would receive the weak and the sick. They also founded communities and schools where the first principles of free Christianity were taught and taken in, in a spirit of unity and love. The enthusiasm for a pure life, the path of initiation – reformation – was not so. These developed later under the pressure of the institutions of their opponents, as well as through the influence of Nikètas. Whoever keeps this in mind can probably imagine Occitan Christianity in its free, non-hierarchical and certainly not dogmatic form.
of Occitania – it is the knowledge that there is a hidden stature within man, an angel-stature, latent in the inner being, similarly as they saw within the world a purely spiritual sphere, belonging to the stars of the cosmos. They derived their inspiration from this source. Through this they found the strength to bear the immense suffering that awaited them. And it explains the otherwise baffling testimonies, that in many cases they threw themselves into the flames, holding their hands before their countenance. Whatever then was the reason to invite Nikétas to Occitania, that wise and authoritative bishop of Constantinople? Was his presence actually needed? They had heard that this patriarch had been traveling for several years and had worked in Bulgaria and Lombardy, where he reinstated the original structure of the first Christian communities. They hoped that through him they could reconnect with the source from which stemmed their belief also. The Occitan Christianity is not Manichean, not Paulician, not Bogomelian, but the original Christianity. In May 1167 Nikétas came to confirm this in Saint-Félix de Caracman. Due to him, the original hierarchy was reaffirmed: for each area a bishop with a circle of twelve deacons was ordained, all under the spiritual blessing of a patriarch. Many new candidates, most of them related to the noble houses of the region, received the consolamentum of the living from his hands. At the same time the new and old bishops discussed the organization of their church which was extended from four to six departments.

Eighty years later, the first act of the drama of the Albigensians was completed, the Romanesque culture destroyed and, despite the flames of countless pyres, thousands of souls had acquired their freedom on the way of the stars in the spiritual fields of the kingdom of Love. Again eighty years later Rainerius Sacconi writes that from Constantinople up to the Atlantic Ocean, there were 16 different heretic churches, all of which were named after their city or region. In his Summa which he wrote in 1250 as a handbook for the Inquisition he calls those sixteen by the name Cathari. And he mentions: “Forgive me, that I use the name of ‘churches’ but this is what they call them themselves.” He also mentions that after the fall of Montségur there would be no more than 4,000 perficts. But the joyous event in St. Félix de Foix, at that time 15 years old. It was the outpouring of a tremendous blessing, a huge impulse from the world of the Paraclete. From Nikétas, the patriarch of the seven churches of Asia and his strength, the confirmation was given to them that the realm of Love was a realistic, spiritual reality. Through him they inwardly perceive the original structures of this spiritual realm. Their souls were filled with courage and hope, and he encouraged them by connecting them to other apocryphal churches that existed in the world, the churches of Bulgaria, Dragovitsa, Melinguie and Dalmatia. And over his Occitan brothers and sisters he spreads the harmonic order of the kingdom-within, which is eternally preserved in the field of the Holy Spirit.

Bogomielengebed

“Cleanse me, my God, purify me inwardly and outwardly, purify body, soul and spirit so that the seeds of light may grow within me and make me into a flaming torch. May I be a flame to transform everything in and around me into Light.”

© Photo: New party at the main square in Sibiu, Transylvania. © Cain Stan, Shutterstock
In June 2006, I visited Paris for an interview with the Bulgarian filmmaker Maria Koleva, in her private cinema on the Boulevard Saint Michel. She had just completed three beautiful films about the Bogomils, and announced her new movie productions with the subtitle: "The Cathars are back in Paris 800 years later." She was most surprised by my arrival; an unknown Dutchman who had travelled to Paris by TGV to see a movie about the Bulgarian Bogomils, and to speak to the Bulgarian producer in France.

Maria Koleva is the daughter of Nedialka Karalieva, who made a famous soundtrack about the Bogomils, which was broadcast in the dark sixties every Sunday afternoon by the Bulgarian state radio.

Warm and hospitable Mrs. Koleva – she is now 77 years old – could barely wait for my questions. She immediately began to discourse, giving a somewhat academic lecture about the Bogomils: "God-loving citizens of Christ who did not have any need for a church obsessed with self-esteem." She described the Bogomils as an independent gnostic movement of true Christians, who knew how to penetrate into all layers of Bulgarian and later also Byzantine society. A movement also that provided an example of freedom and personal responsibility for each individual, as well as freedom of thought and an independent spiritual movement of the Christians who knew how to penetrate into all layers of Bulgarian and later also Byzantine society.

"Give us today our supernatural bread"
Origenes: ‘Ask for the heaven and the earth will be given to you also’

absolute equality of man and woman. Although there are few concrete remnants of the Bogomil era (between 950 and 1450), she emphasized that the Bogomilis still continue to live in the collective consciousness of the Bulgarians and that Bogomil thinking has nested, among other things, in the highly developed thoughts of the Bulgarians on health and in their administration of justice. But Maria Koleva showed herself most impressed by the fearless attitude of the universally respected Bogomil parfaits, who “demonstrated every day that the true church of Christ resides in the heart of man.” According to her, the Cathars extend- ed the Bogomil ideas, and were able to crown their understandings with even further refinement. “There were two fire- places and one flame! Not for nothing, the Bogomils are called the Cathars of the East.” When I said goodbye at the begin- ning of the evening, Mrs. Koleva made a solemn prediction. “Listen, dear friend, within 10 years, Europe will discover that Europe, at least the spiritually free people of Europe, began in that small village of Saint Félix – would be almost un- possible to cross the Alps in order to give the con- 

Nicetas 850

First of all, I would like to pay tribute to the today’s silent protagonist; a spiritual leader, papa Nicetas of Constantinople. He is one of the most important figures in European history, but we hardly know anything about him. There has always been a mysterious haze hanging around this Nicetas or Niquintus. Many theories about his origins are around. He could, for example, be from the former Bulgar- place called Lychnidos or Latin. Those Latins were mainly scien- 

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or her a parfait. The exclusive use of the Our Father is unique for the Bogomils. They were the first to place it central in their teachings. They explicitly rejected all other prayers and hymns, as they were a form of word abuse for them, an endless babbling: ‘monogoglagolanja’! The Bogomils made an ironic comparison: they, as true Christians, built their house on the rock of the Our Father, while the Orthodox church was built on the sand of all kinds of diverse prayers. The Our Father was also for them a specific holy prayer, according to one of their few preserved texts, the Intermogis Johani: ‘The seven heavens are inhabited by angels whose task it is to convey the glory of the

Father through the Our Father.’ We thus find that the Bogomils are worthy to be called the first ones who used the Our Father as the exclusive foundation of their teachings. In doing so, they proudly defied the established church. In the eyes of the church writers of those days they had to be prosecuted as heretics for this reason alone.

Epiousion or supersubstantialem
For the sake of clarity: the first three petitions of the Our Father are as follows: Your name will be sanctified, Your Kingdom will come, and Your will be done in heaven as

“Give us today our supernatural bread”
Peter Deunov: ‘Feed our souls with Your Heavenly Bread and strengthen us with Your strength so that we can progress on our spiritual path.’

well as on earth. The fourth petition is: ‘Give us our daily (or imperishable) bread.’ In this fourth petition, the Bogomils used a very special word: the Greek epiousion or the Latin supersubstantialem. This word epiousion was never used in the Greek language before the Bible was put together. It is a hapax legomenon, a word invention; we would call it now a neologism. It was the alert and witty church father Origenes (185-254) who was the first to mention it. Whoever invents a new word puts out a special alert to his readers: be aware, something is not common use here! This word is: epiousion, consisting of the prefix ἐπι and the noun οὐσία. Epi means upon or above. And ousia means entity, essence or substance. Here comes language expert and Bible translator Hieronymus (347-420), to elucidate us. He recognized the word as unique, and, in an inventive way, translates it into Latin also as a neologism: supersubstantialem. And then comes the following phrase, used first by the Bogomils, and later by the Cathars: Panem substantiam de noxi, ‘give us this day our super-substantial bread’. What does this ‘new’ word supersubstantialem mean? Substance or Substanz (German) now usually means ‘real physical matter with a tangible solid presence’. But the original meaning was exactly the opposite! Composed of sub (below) and sturr (standing, mho andmuu slo bolebo). Intuitively or not, Wycliffe and Hus later each had a profound influence on the Reformation. This year, hundreds of thousands of believers in Europe remembered 500 years of Martin Luther, 500 years of Reformation (1517-2017). There are large, regular events, especially in Germany. However, here on this special day in Saint Félix Lauragais, we give the only right and just rendering. Today, you and I together celebrate 850 years of inner reformation!

Love

The Cathars also gave an exclusive meaning to the Our Father: ‘They also assigned no value to other prayers or hymns. For the Cathars – in accordance with the Bogomils – the Our Father is a unique prayer with great magic power. According to some sources, they prayed it fifteen times a day. It is striking to note that they believed that it may only be prayed by those with a spiritual task, and also only in Latin. And as with the Bogomils, for the Cathars the Our Father is the leading prayer of the sacrament of the Consolamentum. So what did they do with the fourth petition? The Cathars took the Bogomilic explanation of the sentence to another level, to that of an anamalistic or holy imitation. Fortunately, we have a lot of Catharic rituals from which we can figure it out. The ritual of Firenze, for example, states the following: “Panem substantiam is the supernatural bread, the law of Christ coming from heaven and giving life to the world. Concise and True: It is Love with Capital Letters – Apoge.” From a fragment of “The Dublin Rituals” we touch the heart of the matter in its words: ”Christ also learns to ask for another bread (pain substantielle – epitouion), that is, the transubstantiative Love, the Love through which all substances are supported and connected. Love is called supersubstantiality for the reason that it goes beyond all substances, such as compassion, spirit, life, soul, heart, body, faith, hope. The power of Love holds together all compound substances and connects them.”

From this heart-warming Cathar explanation, it is clear that they are equally inspired by important early Christian gnostic thinkers like Valentine, Origen (mentioned above), and the mystical theologian Dionysius the Arealogist. Based on the prayer that Jesus himself taught us, the Cathars make it clear to us that the remarkably unique word epiousion or supersubstantialem holds perhaps the most important concept of the New Testament. It is the silent driving engine for inner, undogmatic Christianity, without the intervention of institutions or priests. It is the only necessary food, it is the quintessence for a person developing his spiritually, to meet the divine within QUINTESSENCE

The candidate must make the decision that he may not apply any of the old habits and methods in the new life-state. From his outlook he turns to the new living present and his future in it, and in the hour of victory he takes his new weapons and takes advantage of his new possibilities. What are they? He abides in the life-stream of the Great Universal Waters. That is: a new magical fire touches him, pervades him and sets up its abode in him. “The Voice of the Great Waters” sings in him with the five Proto-Sounds; they become one. And from that he takes the quintessence. In music, it is the fifth tone from the key-note; and in magic, the finest, the noblest, and the mightiest of this great power that has become his. So he steps forward as a servant in the great mansion of the divine intervention to fulfil the tasks before him in the harvest field. It is a core-power with which he may bring harmony, peace and tranquillity everywhere, even into the depths of hell: the peace of Bethlehem. Whoever may use, whoever can use, that power no longer needs to do battle as all strife arises from the hostility between the twin-powers of dialectic nature. He who no longer lives by those twin-powers overcomes strife and is a bringer of peace on earth for all men who live in darkness.

Taken from Jan van Rijckenborgh, The Nuctemeron of Apollonius of Tyana, Haarlem 1992.
I think this is a matter of divergent teachings, of taking different positions and especially of incompatible visions of God and humans. On the one hand, you have the approach of the free person who is capable of perfection, yes, of becoming a ‘Perfect’, and to develop on the spiritual path so as to participate in the Gnosis, and thus to testify from It. Such a striving man has no need of priests or institutes; rather he may seek fellow travellers on his way.

On the other hand, the theology of the established churches speaks of a God “descending” from on high, who comes to save a passive human being living in ‘sin’.

Dear audience, are we not here confronted by the essential difference between exoteric and esoteric Christianity? Was it not for this inner free Christianity, that broke through all the suffocating dogmatism, that Nicetas came here to Saint Félix? Did he not bear a luminous Christianity, full of élan, which the Cathars would shape with so much imagination?

Indeed! Nicetas showed us the path of Light and Love, the path of inner reformation, self-liberation and self-transformation. He brought us endless inspiration for a New Era!

Allow me to conclude with three remarks.

1. It is amazing how many church authorities had problems with this particular word epiousion. (see box). If you used the word in the Middle Ages, in some areas you were even treated as a heretic. Since the church father Origen pronounced his description of “supernatural” in the third century, the use of that word in the Our Father has been considered heretical. This is the whole period from Origenes to Wycliffe. The choice to use the word ‘cotidianum’, ‘daily’, was a way to avoid association with ‘heretics’ or free thinkers.

2. It is shocking how many people are deceived by the fourth petition in the Our Father, and only maintain a literal, material interpretation: that is, ‘our daily bread’. Jan van Rijkenenborgh, grandmaster of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum, warns his audience in a somewhat ironic way: “Pray only for spiritual support of your soul. Do not think that you can pray in order that you may soon have a reliable help in your household!”

3. What is the underlying reason that the established church did not accept the word epiousion-substantiæum?

For literature references please refer to the editorial staff.
Awakening in the Holy Spirit

This talk will look briefly at how the esoteric stream of Gnostic Christianity, Alchemy and Kabbalah kept alive through European civilization the ancient cosmology of the Divine Feminine which was slowly to disappear over the dark centuries of the Christian era. It will show how Gnosticism and the Cathar Church of the Holy Spirit, whose preising image was Sophia or Divine Wisdom as well as the cup of the Holy Grail, grew out of the original Essene or Nazarene teachings of Jesus and Mary Magdalene whose apostolic work spread throughout Provence from AD 44 and resurfaced in the twelfth century in the Languedoc.

We can follow the transition from the Great Mother of the Neolithic era into the Great Goddesses of the Bronze Age: Goddesses such as Isis of Egypt, Artemis of Ephesus and Cybele of Anatolia whose worship endured far into the Roman era. These Great Goddesses were worshipped as the source of life: one life manifesting as the life of each and all. Sexuality was seen as the vital expression of that life: a sacred, ecstatic experience associated with life’s own creative impulse eternally to renew itself. In the temple courtyards of the Goddess stood the tree of life — the sycomore and the olive. The dove and the serpent were from earliest times associated with her worship. Also associated with these Great Goddesses was the image of the rose because of the observation by astronomers of the exquisite rose petal pattern created by the eight-year orbit of the planet Venus. For many thousands of years the Great Mother and these Great Goddesses personified the principle of interconnectedness of every aspect of life and, above all, the sacredness of this great Web of Life. I think we can look to them for the origin of the feminine concept of the Holy Spirit as an all-embracing cosmic entity in whose life we live.1

Carrying forward these ideas to later Greek culture, we find in Plato’s Timaeus his influential concept of the Soul of the Cosmos, which he describes as a “Single Living Creature that encompasses all living creatures that are within it.” This idea was to re-appear in the third century AD as Plotinus’s concept of the Anima-Mundi or Soul of the World. Turning to another culture — that of Judaism — we find the most sublime evocation of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Proverbs where Wisdom tells us that she is the Beloved of God, with Him from the beginning, before the foundation of the world. (Proverbs 8:23-31) She speaks from the deep ground of life as the hidden law which orders it and as the craftsman of creation. The later Books of Ben Sirach and

A thousand years ago, a monk called Joachim of Flora living in southern Italy prophesied the coming of the Age of the Holy Spirit. Has the time come to enter this Age and call upon the Holy Spirit to guide us? This is perhaps the most crucial time in our history: a time of the utmost depravity and barbarism but also a time of tremendous opportunity for change. Millions across the planet are awakening to the need to create a more enlightened kind of civilization: one based on love, service and relationship rather than the pursuit of power and the old pattern of national rivalry, weapons and war. This awakening requires a radical transformation of human consciousness where a different understanding of reality comes into being, bringing with it different values which profoundly respect all forms of planetary life.

Where are we to look for the origin of the idea of the Holy Spirit? First of all, we need to look back to the Neolithic era when the cosmos was imagined as a Great Mother, whose three domains were the sky, the earth and the waters beneath the earth — from whose womb all life emerged. The most important idea I want to convey to you about this time is that there was no creator beyond creation: no separation between the Great Mother as Source and the manifest forms of her life; no separation between Spirit and Nature. The whole of the natural world and the cosmos itself was alive and ensouled, part of a living web of relationships, animated and sustained by invisible spirit. People felt they lived within a Sacred Order, the Order of the Great Mother.1

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ACROSS THE CARRION

The deceased with the arms crossed over the chest. Stèle Opravdici, East Bosnia

22 Awakening in the Holy Spirit

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Many Jews fled to the Greek city of Alexandria, taking with them their ancient temple traditions from the Goddess Asherah, the Queen of Heaven.
Christian teaching that hell and eternal punishment awaited heretics and unbelievers, laying the ground for persecution in centuries to come. The many Gnostic Gospels were destroyed; all meetings and rituals were forbidden under pain of death. Some of these Gospels, hidden at the time of this edict, were recovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, including the Gospels of Philip, Thomas and Mary. Most were lost forever.

As the Christian Church became more and more fused with the Roman model of Imperial power and more and more identified with the persecution of heresy, the Gnostic beliefs and practices and the feminine image of the Holy Spirit and Divine Wisdom had to go underground for many centuries. These beliefs and practices emerged 800 years later in the twelfth century Cathar Church of the Holy Spirit as well as in the parallel and very similar tradition of Kabbalah in the Jewish communities in Spain and south-western France, a mystical tradition wonderfully named as the “Voice of the Dove.” It is interesting that the earlier imagery in the Biblical Wisdom texts of the Queen of Heaven as Holy Spirit and Divine Wisdom re-appears in Kabbalah as the Shekinah, the Feminine aspect of the Divine. Until 1945 when the Gnostic texts were discovered at Nag Hammadi in Egypt no-one knew that some groups of early Christians had an image of the Divine Mother whom they named “The Invisible within the All.” The Divine Mother was identified with the Holy Spirit and the dove was seen as her emissary. However, by the late fourth century every one of the secret texts which the Gnostic groups revered was branded as heretical by those who called themselves orthodox Christians. Because of this, all the feminine imagery of the Divine was eradicated from Christianity. This is what happened.

At the crucial Council of Nicaea, summoned by the Emperor Constantine in 325 AD Jesus was declared to be the only Son of God, ‘of one substance with God’ (homoousious) rather than ‘like unto God’ (homoiousious). Naming him the Son of God meant that he had to be immaculately conceived, free of the taint of original sin, as well as celibate. This was later ratified at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD when the Virgin Mary was declared Theotokos or God-Bearer and Jesus was declared to have been conceived immaculately by the Holy Ghost. At these Councils all traces of his brothers and sisters and also of his marriage were erased.

At the same Council of Nicaea Christianity lost the ancient feminine imagery of the Holy Spirit in the new formulation of a male-Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Divine Wisdom was dissociated from the Holy Spirit and assimilated to the figure of Christ as Logos. Some fifty years later, in 381 AD, the Emperor Theodosius declared that anyone who did not comply with his edict that all must believe in the Apostolic Creed defined at Nicaea that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were of one and the same substance would be declared a heretic. It was at this time that the idea entered Christian teaching that hell and eternal punishment awaited heretics and unbelievers, laying the ground for persecution in centuries to come. The many Gnostic Gospels were destroyed; all meetings and rituals were forbidden under pain of death. Some of these Gospels, hidden at the time of this edict, were recovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, including the Gospels of Philip, Thomas and Mary. Most were lost forever.

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feminine aspect of the god-head. The Shekinah as the Holy Spirit, active and present in this world, supplies the missing imagery of divine immanness, sanctifying the whole of the phenomenal world: an idea which was lost or deliberately eliminated by the three patriarchal religions.

We also find in this mystical Jewish tradition the indissoluble union or sacred marriage of the feminine and masculine aspects of Deniy which is also tragically absent from the patriarchal religions. The great centres for the study of Kabbalah in Medieval Europe were Toledo and Girona in Spain, Narbonne and Toulouse in the Languedoc and Troyes in Champagne. Troyes was the city where the Order of the Knights Templar was founded by St. Bernard in 1128.

Now, I need to go back a thousand years in this complex story of the Holy Spirit to the role of Mary Magdalene, the Apostle who brought the Nazarene message of the divine element hidden within human nature to France. Mary Magdalene is the missing link in this story. In AD 44 she had to flee Palestine and sailed to Marseilles, landing, so the legend says, at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer or, as is more likely, further along the coast at the port of Narbonne (Narbo Martius). Mary Magdalene was the consort of Jesus and which recovered the original Nazarene message of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The Holy Grail was a deliberate attempt to recover the lost feminine image of the divine element hidden within the human nature to France. Mary Magdalene became the first bishop of Narbonne and was buried in Tarascon. Mary Magdalene taught for nearly 20 years in Provence and the Languedoc and was widely known and adored in this part of France. Towards the end of her life she is said to have withdrawn to a cave on the Ste. Baume mountain in Provence and was buried by Lazarus in a chapel at the foot of it when she died age 60 in 63 AD. This chapel, later a Basilica, was probably the most sacred and venerated place in France in the so-called Dark Ages, only rivalled much later, by Wetzlay and Chartres. 

In 1059 a church was dedicated to Mary Magdalene in the town of Rennes-le-Chateau in the Languedoc. There is a village called Les Labadous, near Rennes-le-Chateau where she is believed to have lived. There are many local legends about her. There was an Essene community there. Her memory was honoured by the Knights Templar who knew the true story of her marriage to Jesus and built magnificent cathedrals in her honour although, in the orthodox tradition, they are dedicated to the Virgin Mary. To the Templars, Mary Magdalene was ‘Notre Dame’. They identified her with Divine Wisdom (Sophia).

Now I can come to the last phase of this extraordinary story and to the Cathar Church of the Holy Spirit, whose presiding image was Divine Wisdom (Sophia) and which recovered the original Nazarene message of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The Cathars claimed that their teaching was descended directly from that of the Apostles and the early Church. They spoke of their Church as “The Cup that gives out manna” and “The Precious Stone”. It is impossible not to connect these images with the Grail and indeed the twelfth century quest for the Holy Grail was a deliberate attempt to recover and restore the lost feminine image of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Grail was the disguised symbol of the Church of the Holy Spirit. At the beginning of the twelfth century, no one had heard of the Grail; by the end of it, there was no one in Europe who had not heard of it. This secret teaching was woven into the many Grail legends and carried all over Europe by the troubadours, many of whom were initiates of the Church of the Holy Spirit. From early in the tenth century, they had received their training at St. Guilm-le-Desert, near Montpellier. The dove was a primary symbol of the Church of the Holy Spirit and the troubadours who wore red cloaks embroidered with the image of the dove. But the dove was also the symbol of the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabbalah, known as “The Voice of the Dove”.

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850 years ago in 1167 an extraordinary event took place in this town: a synod convened to plan the strategy for supplanting the Catholic Church in the Languedoc with the ‘true Christianity’ – the Cathar Church of the Holy Spirit. By the second half of the twelfth century it had virtually displaced the Church of Rome as the recognized vehicle of the Christian revelation in this area. It claimed to be nothing less than the true Church of Christ, handed down in the Christian revelation in this area. It claimed to be nothing less than the true Church of Christ, handed down in the Christian revelation in this area. It claimed to be nothing less than the true Church of Christ, handed down in the Christian revelation in this area. It claimed to be nothing less than the true Church of Christ, handed down in the Christian revelation in this area. It claimed to be nothing less than the true Church of Christ, handed down in the Christian revelation in this area. It claimed to be nothing less than the true Church of Christ, handed down in the Christian revelation in this area. It claimed to be nothing less than the true Church of Christ, handed down in the Christian revelation in this area.

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The Cathars believed the world was imperfect because of human enslavement to the power of the Demiurge, not in unbroken succession from the Apostles and retaining the power, which the false Church of Rome had lost or never possessed, of ‘baptising with the Holy Spirit and with fire’. The Catholic Church had withheld from men...
and women the knowledge of themselves as repositories of the hidden light of the Holy Spirit and barred their access to the true teaching of Christ.

Where the Catholic Church taught that the Redeemer is outside us and our ultimate redemption as Christians has been assured by Christ’s sacrificial death, the Cathar Church taught that man can become the redeemer or awakener of the divine spirit hidden within his soul. This gave great significance to the individual since the divine drama of redemption was consummated in and through him, not through the sacrifice of Christ. Catharism, like Gnosticism, taught a sacred rite of unification, an apotheosis, which ultimately awakened a man or woman to their indwelling divinity. This was identical to the later Great Work of Alchemy and to the original Nazarene was identical to the later Great Work of Catharism. No trace remains of the last two whose existence was revealed to the Inquisitors when they tortured the unfortunate people who fell into their hands. These books would surely have been the treasured possession of the libraries of the Cathar nobles in Foix, Carcassonne and Toulouse that were seized by the Inquisition. They also had texts of the Greek philosophers. These texts had been taken from Athens to Persia in the sixth century when the Platonic Academy was closed down. When the Arabs conquered Persia in the seventh century they preserved them, taking them ultimately to Toledo after their conquest of Spain. There they were translated from Greek into Latin and taken into France and Italy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. They might also have had the Gnostic writings of Valentinus and Basilides. It is more than likely that they had several of the Gnostic Gospels, copies of which had been secretly preserved through the centuries. The Cathar priests and Perfects carried with them a copy of the Gospel of John on their journeys through the villages of the Languedoc.

The Cathars were skilled in the art of printing and they translated these texts as well as some parts of the New Testament into the language of the Languedoc so the people they taught to read could gain access to them. This was one of their most remarkable achievements, unheard of in the Europe of their time. They emphasised brotherhood, compassion, loving service of the poor. They taught the people not to fear death and to trust in the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit. They had an extensive knowledge of herbs used for healing and were consummate observers of the stars. They saw all human souls as fallen angels imprisoned within the body. At death they were released to return to their true home. Hence they said that at death “they took the Way to the Stars”. The Cathar Church and the brilliant culture of the Languedoc were utterly destroyed in the thirteenth century by the infamous Albigensian Crusade and the Inquisition: a prime example of genocide. Although the Church of the Holy Spirit was eradicated, enlightened individuals drawn from different European countries and from a Jewish as well as a Christian background, managed to keep it alive. This underground stream of secret esoteric teaching, originating in the crucible of Hellenistic Alexandria with the exiled Gnostic communities there, was transmitted in the elaborate code of symbols known to Hermeticists and Alchemists as well as in the practice of Kabbalah, whose devotees were both Jewish and Christian. We owe an enormous debt to the courageous souls who kept these traditions alive in the face of horrendous persecution.

Bringing this story into the present time, how can we understand the Holy Spirit today? The New Story emerging in quantum physics is that the whole universe is a unified field. We live within a cosmic web of life which underlies and connects all life forms in the universe and on our planet. Every atom of life interacts with every other atom, no matter how distant. We are not connected through the Internet but through the infinitesimal particles of sub-atomic
matter. We are part of an immense Field or Network of Consciousness which sustains not only our world, but the entire Cosmos. A new cosmology is being born; a new vision of our profound relationship with an intelligent, living and interconnected universe. The realization is dawning that we are participating in a Cosmic Consciousness or Intelligence which is present in every particle of our being and every particle of matter. We are all individual expressions of a single Cosmic Organism. Spirit or God is not something transcendent to us. We are part of it, at the very heart of it. This is one of the great revelations of our time. The Old Order has been based on the principle of power. The new one will be based on the principle of relationship. The time of transition from an old paradigm to a new one is challenging and dangerous because the old one is so deeply established in the collective psyche and in the governments of nations and their unconscious political leaders. Yet there is great hope for a different future carried in the hearts of those who are working to establish the new vision and raise our level of consciousness to a more enlightened level. This time, it will not be eradicated.

Awakening in the Holy Spirit means embracing a new image of Spirit that includes Nature and all planetary life. It means recovering a very ancient understanding that the Cosmos has a Soul and an Intelligence and that Divine Spirit is immanent or present in every particle of matter: every stone, flower, tree and blade of grass. We are all engaged in a profound process of transformation that is manifesting as a new planetary consciousness which recognizes that we are part of a Sacred Web of Life, a Web of Life that might be called both Holy Spirit and Holy Grail. If we could hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and listen to her Wisdom we would awaken to the sacredness and divinity of life. We would begin to see matter and our bodies in a different light. We would treat them with greater respect. Once, long ago, the world was experienced as alive with Spirit. Nature was part of a sacred cosmic whole. We need urgently to recover that vision if we are to respond to the challenge of this crucial time of choice and heal our neglected soul, our culture and our raped and vandalised planet. Ours is a time of immense responsibility and also a wonderful time to be alive.

Notes and references:
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4. The Gospel of the Nazarenes or The Gospel of the Hebrews
9. Reeves, Minou, Europe’s Debt to Persia, Ithaca Press, Reading 2013

Website: www.annebaring.com
The ideal of brotherhood, the essence of the gospel of the Cathars

CONTRIBUTION – SYMPOSIUM SAINT FÉLIX:
EDUARD BERGA

The ecclesiastical council of Saint Félix de Caramàn which took place there 850 years ago signified a turning point in the history of Catharism. It stood for a new Europe, founded on the symbolic union of the Seven Churches of Asia. In the Declaration of Niquita (also rendered as Niquinta – Nikètas – Nicoetas) we read: ‘They (the seven churches) agreed that no one would do unto another what he would not have done to himself.’

Much research has been done with regard to this Council. There is only one document that acknowledges it but some historians believe that it could have been falsified, either in the 13th century by editors who wanted to provide a reason for the inexplicable influence of this terrible heresy in the Western world, or in 1660 by Guillaume Besse who forged a ‘copy’ of the document. I shall not enter into this discussion. I would rather discuss a certain part of this document which shows us society in those times, straight from its first words:

‘In the year 1167 of the Incarnation of the Lord, in the month of May, in those days the Church of Toulouse brought Father Niquita to the castrum of Saint-Félix, as well as a great host of men and women of the Church of Toulouse and of adjacent churches who came together to receive the Consolamentum.’

This ‘great host of men and women’ shows us a rather more joyful gathering of a popular religious group than the pomp and circumstance of

The feudal community, the second of three classes in The regime of the Princes. Gilles de Rome, early fifteenth century.

Female figure. Stèle at Zijemlj Polje in East Herzegovina

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the Ecclesia, a hierarchical structure with the dogmas that were ordained by the Councils of Rome. Furthermore, this group consists of women as well as men, both from Toulouse and from further away in the region.

What we encounter here is the Occitan tradition of ‘parage’, the total equality between people of all walks of life. It is in this concept that we recognize one of the pillars of European social thinking. It embodies the idea of the ‘burgher’ in medieval Gaul as opposed to the liegeman or vassal which were characteristic of the absolute monarchy. And the document adds: ‘…and came together to receive the Consolamentum’. I would like to go deeper into the concept of the Consolamentum in order to better understand the essential elements of Catharism and its evangelical ideal.

The Consolamentum

One of the characteristics of Catharism was the rejection of the sacraments of the Gregorian church. These sacraments were gradually introduced to formalise a human behavioural code within the structure of the church hierarchy. In this way, the Roman church ruled its members directly from their birth until time this force may be shared by each individual possession while at the same transformed into a living force that is an inner man.

This process consists of 3 stages.

In the first stage the candidate becomes conscious that there are two natures within him: the worldly personality and a spiritual being. The ritual starts with the words:

We have come here for God and for you and for the Order of the Holy Church to give service and do penance and ask forgiveness for the sins that we have done, and for unfulfilled things we have said or thought or done from our birth until this day. We beg God’s mercifulness as well as your so that you will pray to the holy Father for compassion and that you will forgive us. This phase of service, servisi in Occitan, is regarded as a phase of cleansing and forgiveness for deficiencies and mistakes. But in a deeper sense it can be regarded as the phase of the recognition of the spiritual essence that lies hidden within the heart of every human. As the Occitan ritual says:

O Lord, judge and condemn the vices of the flesh. Have no pity on the flesh that was born in corruption but have pity on the spirit that lives imprisoned.

This shows a clear recognition of the existence of two nature orders as we also find in the ‘fact of the anonymous Ca-thar’, preserved in the Liber Manichei by Durand d’Osca in which is said: ‘We proclaim that there exists another world and other, unblenched beings in which is vested our joy and our hope.’ He who reaches this phase experiences a deep homesickness urging him to return to the house of the holy Father where His Spirit dwells. Fully determined, he enters the way of truth and righteousness.

The second phase is characterized by the dialogue between the mortal personality and the Spirit. For this to take place the candidate places himself within the framework of the Church of God, of a Christian brotherhood community. The ‘bonhomme’ of that time addressed the candidates with the words:

You must be aware that when you stand in the Church of God, you stand before the Father, the Son

> Aquest Sant batjament, per loquen Sant Esperit es dat, a tenent la glòria de Deu dels apostols en us, es us venent en el seu dom, en us homenem en us homes entre ous, es o fam entre la fi del segle’. 9

> Nos em vengut denant Deu, e demant vos, e demant l’assensament de sant glòria, per recreu servisi, e perd, e penedència, de tuix nostre pecat, li qual avm fuit ni dig, ni pescat, ni obent del nostre robament entre fin acon, e quissin misericòrdia e Deu et a vos, que nos preque per nos le paire Sant de misericòrdes que nos perd. 10

> Vos devetz entendre que can ez demant la glòria de Deu, que vos ez demant le paire le fill Sant esperit. 11

> Quèz aquiens on se doi o tri æpaç tain el meu nom, ex so aqui e meg de lor. 8

> For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. 12

> O Senhor juíza e condamne os voses de le cor, no ain mece de le cor, node de corrupçion, mais ain mece del esperit pouant e cresce. 13

> Vos devetz enténder que can ez demant la glòria de Deu, que vos ez demant le paire le fill Sant esperit.
and the Holy Spirit. For the Church stands for the togetherness of true Christians and thus for the Presence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. 11  

It is the phase of the restoration of the Christian Book, i.e. the New Testament, and of the Holy Prayer, i.e. the Lord’s Prayer, the essence of which is repentance and forgiveness. But these notions are not to be understood in a mystical or religious sense. Repentance will be present at once when the candidate unmask the vanity of his ignorance and accepts and agrees to follow the compass of the Spirit within him. Repentance is then a logical consequence of the active involvement of this Spirit.

For you are here, before the disciples of Jesus Christ, in a spiritual place where the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have their abode, in order to receive the holy prayer which the Lord Jesus Christ has given to his disciples. Therefore, understand that if you desire to receive this holy prayer you must feel repentant for all your sins and must forgive all men. 17

The understanding of fundamental unity makes all humans into brothers and sisters. Not in theory but as a very concrete and natural reality. As it is written in a manuscript of Dublin:

Quis que la grisa es dita ajuntament, et aqui es lo ver creastre, croq et le paine, el fil et le Sant esper. 14

The third and last phase, as described in the Consolamentum, refers to the actual baptism by fire, to the receiving of the Holy Spirit by means of the laying on of hands. In the first phase the candidate has become conscious of his fundamental spirit and in the second phase he has entered into an intense dialogue with his inner spiritual being. He is now ready for the mystical wedding, the spiritual wedding as it was professed by Catharism. Pére de Talavera, a disciple of Pére Authie, explains it to us: 18

Quar la gleisa es dita ajustament, ala que la recepiatz de Deu, e de nos e de la Church, per leit e benezisca a vos e leit la oracion que leit lo padre, e leit lo frate et leit lo Holy Spirit, e que leit lo esper, e que leit lo esper, e que leit lo esper, e que leit lo esper, e que leit lo esper. 16

This universal concept of brotherhood, as confessed in the Cathar community, was without doubt the same consciousness that permeated the great mystical movements of Sufism and Kabbalah in the Middle Ages. The clear declaration of ‘the three religions of the Book’ brought about a social and cultural blossoming in Western Europe and instigated a fruitful transfer of knowledge which guided and enlightened people in the following ages.

As in spiritual matters. For if you are not upright in all good virtues. As well, you will realise all that is necessary to be loyal and upright in worldly as well as in spiritual matters. For you are not upright in worldly matters if you do not believe that you can be so in spiritual affairs. 14

Notes and references:
3) Clédat, Le Nouveau Testament, p. XVII.
4) Ibid., p. 227.
7) Ibid., op.cit., p. XVIII.
8) Nelli, op.cit., p. 274.
9) Ibid., op.cit., p. 1660, p. 483-486.
10) Ibid., op.cit., p. 233.
11) Ibid., op.cit., p. XII.
12) Ibid.
13) Ibid.
15) Ibid.
18) Clédat, op.cit., p. XVIII.
19) Nelli, op.cit., p. 274.
20) Ibid., op.cit., p. IX.
21) Ibid.
23) Ibid.
24) Ibid.
25) Ibid.
26) Ibid.
27) Ibid.
28) Ibid.
29) Ibid.
30) Ibid.
31) Ibid.
32) Ibid.
33) Ibid.
34) Ibid.
35) Ibid.
36) Ibid.
37) Ibid.
38) Ibid.
39) Ibid.

The ideal of brotherhood, the essence of the gospel of the Cathars

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Notes and references:
3) Clédat, op.cit., p. 19.
4) Lason Clédat, Bible de Lyon, p. XVII.
8) Clédat, op.cit., p. XVIII.
9) Nelli, op.cit., p. 274.
10) Clédat, op.cit., p. IX.
12) Ibid., p. 227.
14) L. Clédat, Le Nouveau Testament, p. XV.
15) Ibid., p. XVI.
16) Ibid., p. XV.
17) Ibid.
19) L. Clédat, Le Nouveau Testament, p. XV.
20) Ibid.
22) Clédat, Le Nouveau Testament, p. XVII.

The ideal of brotherhood, the essence of the gospel of the Cathars
The Path of the Cathars: a hermetic Gnosis

Tension as well as great opportunity signify the actual state of the world today. On the one hand the poignant spuriousness of a large number of our world leaders, on the other hand a growing group which tries to realise the values of Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood (the motto of the congress) in their immediate surroundings. Which were exactly the essential elements of the initiation communities of the Bogomils and their kindred spiritual brothers and sisters, the Cathars.

More than 7 centuries ago, a phalanx of so-called ‘Perfects’, initiated in the Cathar Church, bore witness to this inner reality that leads to the rebirth of a pure soul inspired by the Spirit. They were also called Good Men and Good Women because the highest stage of initiation was accessible to both men and women, in accordance with the pure original Christiani ty to which the Cathars modelled themselves. This legacy preserved beyond the centuries constitutes a mystery for academic researchers and the speech of Mrs. Anne Baring gave us valuable elements to enlighten us on this subject. This direct reference to the purest Christianity was considered a threat to the Church authority of Rome. The latter, with the support of the King of France, instigated the Crusades and the Inquisition, which completely destroyed this spiritual movement.

But the poet Teulié in 1905 composed in a poem a prophecy that seven centuries after the pyre at Montségur the laurel would bloom again. Centuries have passed and we have now entered the prophesied period.

Our world has entered a phase of great tension. There are, on the one hand, numerous isolationist temptations, at the level of both nations and individuals. These are forces of exclusion and division that influence this part of humanity. On the other hand, there are communities of women and men who seek with ever more intensity a meaning in their lives, - who put into practice values such as sharing, solidarity, kindness, tolerance... Essential values for “living together”. These Communities feel an inward call to unity, to fraternity, to liberty. This Universal Community of the Rose awaits a Sign. It waits for the living testimony of those who have gone out to meet the Rose, that spark of Light that everyone carries in the depths of his heart. For it is from this spark of Light that comes the call to Unity, to Fraternity, to Love. This inner path, this encounter with the Rose, constituted the first steps of the path of the stars which the Cathars walked in the service of the Paraclete.

But to serve the Paraclete required an extraordinary transformation. This transformation was effected by a rigorous initiation in the sanctuaries of the Sacred Mountain of the high valley of Ariège. To date, no serious academic research has determined whether the caves of this mountain, located in the region of Tarascon-sur-Ariège, had an initiatory function in the process of sanctification on the path of the Perfection walked by the Cathars who aspired to higher priesthood. Only the historian Antonin Gadal developed this thesis in his book “On the Way of the Holy Grail” published in 1960. He was criticized by the historians of Catharism who described his works as “daydreaming”, without having themselves carried out any research work to confirm or reject it. The transformation which led to this stage of perfection was so demanding that it required a specific environment. It is therefore not illogical to assume that this initiation took place in sanctuaries protected from the influences of the world. We invite those who would like to go deeper into this subject to read the book of Rachel Ritman: The Christian-Gnostic initiation of the Cathars.

This initiation in the sanctuaries was based on a Gnostic vision of life and world. This vision was fed by ancient texts that the Cathars studied, like the Apocryphon of John or the Asclepius attributed to Hermes. This last text confirms the hermetic orientation of the Cathar gnosis.

Through this Gnostic orientation, the candidate sought the exit from this world and to once and again enter the Kingdom of Light to which he rightly belonged. This return to the Land of Light has always been symbolically presented as the ascent of the Sacred Mountain. This ascent also means tearing himself away from his own darkness, his personal pantheon of Archons. It is precisely in this movement of wrenching that the mystery of the mists of the Cathars has its place, this process of dying to all the attachments to this world, this death that gives life. In the final stage, this tearing away leads to the encounter with the Perfect Nature...
the one that incites Christian Rosycross enclosed in a dark subterranean pit, to grasp the rope of light which will hoist him out of the well of this world. This encounter with our Celestial Double is the culmination of initiation. The steps of this ascent are constituted by the permanent love of God, of the Light, which is the very signature of a Gnostic vision of life. This renunciation builds an inner emptiness in which is displayed the silence which allows the emergence of a knowledge, a wisdom, of a very particular nature. "From what matrix and what seed was fundamental Man born?", Tat asked in the silence which he radiated. I wept for a moment, then I told him about the Ogygian prison (literally: the area of passers-by) He said to me: "Courage! You are saved. However, it is absolutely necessary that you return to the Western prison, for there are hindrances you have not yet completely overcome." When I heard these words, my reason flew away. I groaned, cried out as someone who is about to perish, and I begged for mercy. He said to me: "You are to go back, it is inevitable for the moment. However, I will tell you good news, too. Firstly, once you return to the prison, you will be able to come back to us again and climb easily to our parole; whenever you want. Secondly, you will be totally delivered and liberated; you will come to join us, abandoning completely and forever the western country." As soon as the Mystic Gate was crossed, the Perfect was confronted with a new demand, a requirement which raised his perfection to an even higher level. For the retreat of this Sacred Mountain, the remoteness of these protective sanctuaries where the pure soul had grown, protected in this nourishing and benevolent matrix, demanded a surrender. In this supreme abandonment, the Perfect was confronted with a new challenge which transfigures consciousness. The encounter with the Celestial Double, the inner emptiness that the Perfect has instituted by the process of the endura, then Wisdom rises. This is the signature of the "rebirth", which is the keystone of the Christian epic. This revival of a living soul, through its mediating function, restores the harmony between the microcosm and the macrocosm. This rebirth of a pure soul inspired by the Spirit was the first step on the long "path of the stars". But contrary to a widespread image, this "path of the stars" did not keep the Perfect from the world. On the contrary, this path of the stars is that of an encounter with all the sparks of light, all the seeds radiating like so many shining stars in the firmament of the cosmic heavens. For the Perfect, this "path of the stars" was thus a priesthood in the service of "others" and it began during his or her descent from the Sacred Mountain, when the Mystical Gate which marked the boundary of the initiatory sanctuaries in the Sacred Mountain of the Valley of the Ariège was crossed.

This return to the world at the end of the ultimate encounter with Perfect Nature has been marvelously described by the great Iranian mystic Sohravardi. Henry Corbin, the specialist in Iranian gnosis, translated his splendid stories in the book The purple-red Archangel. In his Narrative of the Occidental imprisonment, Sohravardi very clearly indicates his aims: to invite "some noble brothers to share the supreme experience which is the Great Movement", this wonder of the encounter with Perfect Nature, the power of which transfigures consciousness. The narrative describes the ascent of the high mountain, on the top of which stands a large rock that is the Word, "the entry of his Father." Suddenly, during his elevation, the pilgrim is struck by a sublime vision: "And behold, I saw our father in the manner of a Great Sage, so great that the heavens and the earth were about to split under the epiphany of his light. I was amazed, stupefied." Here is an extraordinary description of the encounter with the Celestial Double, the Perfect Nature. But this sublime encounter also marks the beginning of a new mission.

The Narrative of the Occidental imprisonment continues: "I advanced towards him, and behold, to my amazement, he acknowledged me. I bowed before him to the ground, and was, as it were, annihilated in the light which he radiated. I wept for a moment, then I told him about the Ogygian prison (literally: the area of passers-by) He said to me: "Courage! You are saved. However, it is absolutely necessary that you return to the Western prison, for there are hindrances you have not yet completely overcome." When I heard these words, my reason flew away. I groaned, cried out as someone who is about to perish, and I begged for mercy. He said to me: "You are to go back, it is inevitable for the moment. However, I will tell you good news, too. Firstly, once you return to the prison, you will be able to come back to us again and climb easily to our parole; whenever you want. Secondly, you will be totally delivered and liberated; you will come to join us, abandoning completely and forever the western country."

Once and for all leave the western country behind you...
Ascent and descent, prayer and work, Ora et Labora, these are the movements of the Soul of Light on the path of the stars.

his priesthood in the world. For how can we go to meet the “others” without that luminous void which alone can encompass in great compassion all the imperfections, all the sufferings, all the wounds. And this radiant compassion acted like a balm which healed those painful wounds of the time and ignited the yearning for a return to the Origin.

This emptiness and this inner availability obtained by the rigorous process of the endura gave the ‘perfect one’ the quality of welcoming everyone in its totality. This integral welcome is a bond of a very special nature because its links are from the domain of the soul. But such a welcome is essential for the love bonding to take place which will constitute the healing balm, the consolation that reassures, nourishes and guides the gaze of the soul towards heaven and thus elevates it to the highest. Thus, the Cathar initiation, on the one hand, liberated the candidate from the bonds of this world and on the other hand connected him in an intimate way to the world. But these new ties were connected with the hill called the Mountain. It is therefore a hermetic appearance to the candidate to find what can be elevated towards the Light, to connect it with this powerful and pure radiation to transfigure it. This downward movement is an intimate connection with the world because the love for the world is stronger than all. In this sense, it is the fulfillment of pure Christianity, as the invitation of the Gospel reminds us: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Ascent and descent, prayer and work, Ora et Labora, these are the movements of the Soul of Light on the path of the stars. The Perfect demonstrated by his behavior these movements of the living Soul, it gave him the ability to pay special attention to all forms of life, while uniting them in a unified vision of the Whole, in accordance with the Greek axiom “En to pan”, which means “One All”. This paradoxical attitude is typical for the hermetic gnosis. In this sense, we may say that Catharism, through its exemplary and inspirational behavior of the Good Men and Good Women, was a genuine hermetic gnosis.

Thus we may state that Catharism, far from being a dualist gnosticism, was a hermetic gnosticism. The testimonies in the records of the Inquisition show how the ‘bonshommes and bonne femmes’, literally the Good Men and Good Women, were working in society, with each other, humbly and with perseverance. But what did they expect from their action in the heart of the world? It is to this question that Hermetism provides an unambiguous answer: “Oh! Of what a privileged mixture the nature of man is made! He is united to God by a divine part within him which makes him alike the gods. The part of his being which makes him terrestrial, he despises in himself. All the other living beings to whom he knows himself bound by virtue of the heavenly plan, he unites to them by the knot of love. He raises his eyes to heaven. Such is his position in this privileged role of intermediacy that he loves the beings who are inferior to him and that he is loved by those that rule him.”

It is thus in this triple movement: outwardly connecting with his fellow-humans, inwardly by connecting to them “by the knot of love” and upwardly by raising “his gaze to Heaven” that the work in the service of “others” was accomplished.

This triple movement is the signature of the “Friends of God” of all ages. This triple movement towards these three highly symbolic directions characterizes the work of the Triple Alliance of the Light. What does this work consist of? Let us go back again to the attention of initiation of the candidate to the highest priesthood of the Cathar Church.

At the final stage of initiation, the Perfect received, as in a dream, the invitation to pursue his inner Way of the stars, the way to the spiritual world, far from the horizontal world and its turbulences, to join the ‘bonshommes and bonne femmes’, filled with that light of the Guardians of the Light, the Brotherhood of the Grail Guardians. Their mission is to keep active the yer-
tical branch of the Cross that connects our world to the Kingdom of Light. The Guardians of the Grail, by their orientation and their permanent aspiration, constitute a Sacred Cup in which the forces of the Spirit are poured out. This Cup must always be full because it is a projection of the spiritual lines of the Universe. At the end of his final initiation into the protected sanctuaries of the Cathar Church, answered a fundamental demand: that of always keeping the way open to the Origin open. This three-fold requirement has therefore been - at all times - placed under the responsibility of the Triple Alliance of Light: Grail, Cathar and Cross with Roses. The mission of this Triple Alliance, which forms an indivisible whole, are timeless, they serve humanity in its long path to the stars.

It was under the wings of this Triple Alliance that the Community of Perfects placed itself in order to exert its priesthood in all its amplitude, the one so precisely described by these few words of Hermes in the Asclepius: “to admire and worship what is Celestial, to take care of earthly things and guide them”.

5. Luc, II 27
6. A.J. Festugière, id., II, XIII
8. Le Récit de l’Exil Occidental
9. Luc, II 27
10. A.J. Festugière, id., II, Asclépius, 6
11. We shall see later in this text that this triple movement, which describes the highest priesthood, is a projection of the spiritual lines of force that characterize the Triple Alliance of Light.
12. Écrits gnostiques (Gnostic Writings), Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard ed., 2007, The Wisdom of Jesus, Cress, NH III, 4, p. 643-5 have loosed this creation, I have broken the work of the tomb of the brigands, I have straightened this drop by Wisdom, that it might yield abundant fruit.
13. A.J. Festugière, id., II, Asclépius, 8

I do not believe that the goal of true and lasting peace can be reached without a world-wide spiritual revolution. By this I mean the overcoming of self-centredness, in both individuals and communities, by getting into communion with the spiritual presence behind the universe and by bringing our wills into harmony with it.'

Arnold Toynbee (1888-1975)

In 1222, during the first Crusade against the Albigensian, Count Raymond VII of Toulouse founded Cordés (Cordes-sur-Ciel) as a retreat for the Cathars in the region. In 1993 it was voted 'favorite French village'.
The word ‘Bougre’ was best known for the reign of terror of an inquisitor who would be remembered in history as Robert le Bougre. Between 1230 and 1239 he led the prosecution of the bougres (Cathars) in Northern France and in Flanders with extreme cruelty. After Catharism had been almost eradicated in the South, Rome commissioned him to tackle the North of France. This became the signal for a holocaust that is almost forgotten in history.

The heretic hunter Robert le Bougre was given wings in a macabre sense by means of the papal permit letter that he wore upon his person. With fierce mercenaries and archers he swarmed over the country and captured every citizen who seemed to deviate in the slightest respect from the prevailing collective convictions and belief system. Friday, May 13, 1239 was the undisputed lowest point in his sinister record.

In the week before Pentecost, 700 Cathars from the Champagne area were severely questioned. They were traced by raids on the always busy weekly market in the town of Provins. One of the chronologists mentions that “just being called a Bougre was enough to be captured and burned by brother Robert”. On Friday before Pentecost Le Bougre led 183 innocent “Cathars, Manicheans and Bougres” – according to the sources – to a pyre on the mountain of Mont-Aimé, which was twenty kilometres southwest of the town of Châlons-en-Champagne. All this happened in the illustrious presence of Thibaut IV, King of Navarre, and of the barons of Champagne and, moreover, of the sixteen bishops from the surrounding cities. Only Sens’s archbishop was not present. Perhaps this was, as the eyewitness reporter Aubri des Trois-Fontaines suggests, a silent protest… ‘against the pyre sacrifice that was very big and pleasing to God…’

The forgotten Cathars of Mont Aimé

‘Pravi Krstjani’ (True Christians) and ‘Bons Crestians’ (Good Christians), the Bogomils and the Cathars called themselves. Under these names, they also brought their gnostic message of a Christianity that renews man’s inner being, and makes him stand “upright” again before God — before the original Kingdom. However, in the Middle Ages, the French language had no specific word for the members of the “Cathar” brotherhood. The term Cathar was not introduced until 1849. The word bou(l)gre (Bulgarian), was often used in the middle ages in northern France as an indication of what would later on in history be called Cathar. With this word it was conveyed that these new, enlightening teachings were of Bulgarian origin.
came active within the famous Bogomilian-Cathar group in Milan. But after ten years, this confessional renegade suddenly returned to his native territory, now in the shape of a Dominican. He was instructed to commence and lead the hunt for the ‘bougres’. Given his past as renegade, his superiors considered him able as no other to recognize Cathars – per solam loquellam et solo – by mere speech and gesture. After the relentless Robert le Bougre had completed his holy quest in 1239, he was relieved of his task. As a reward for services rendered, he was shunned by the Dominicans and sentenced to eternal confinement in a monastery.

‘Forgotten Cathars’

The name Robert le Bougre will for ever remain connected to the horrors surrounding Mont Aimé. It took a long time before the historical research for this Cathar tragedy began. For this reason, one sometimes speaks of the “Forgotten Cathars of Mont Aimé”. A few decades ago, the municipality of Epernay requested by petition that the government would grant Mont Aimé the status of a protected historical monument. The request was not honoured, Epernay founded the Galaad association to promote the historical research for the Cathars in Champagne. One of its first activities was a renewed request to the French government to officially mark Mont Aimé as a historic monument. The request was in vain, which was remarkable considering that Mont Aimé is planning to build a new conference centre. Undoubtedly, from this new light beacon impulses will spread that will permanently reveal in brilliance the events of Mont Aimé.

Robert le Bougre no doubt also crossed the path of the famous medieval Flemish mystic, Hadewych. We find her e.g. in the texts belonging to her List of Perfecti, following the manuscript of her Visions. This list also recounts a vision wherein it was revealed to Hadewych which people had loved perfectly and so approached Christ the most. After a summary of the texts belonging to her Visions, Hadewych goes on to the mentioning of’Master Robbaert’ and Hadewych

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Robert le Bougre

Robert le Bougre for her just love. “In all this, it should be noted that perfecti from mystical circles are not identical to catherine parfaits or to gnostics. (For the difference see box).

Probably due to master Robbaert and his colleagues we know very little of Hadewych’s personal life. Her texts, written in her native language could have been widely spread because the average inquisitor had not mastered that language. But with regard to the person of the poet, discretion and distance were required. Even her very personal relationship with God – without the interference of any priest – could easily place her under heretical suspicion.

The end of Hadewych’s life is swathed in mist. Literature historians sometimes wonder if it was not sped up by the brutal intervention of ‘master Robbaert’.

Who was this Robert le Bougre? Robert ‘the Bulgarian’ was definitely not a Bulgarian! His second nickname was Robert Le Petit. Initially he worked as a clergyman in northern France. Later, he gave up his soutane and became active with the famous Bogomilian-Cathar group in Milan. But after ten years, this confessional renegade suddenly returned to his native territory, now in the shape of a Dominican. He was instructed to commence and lead the hunt for the ‘bougres’. Given his past as renegade, his superiors considered him able as no other to recognize Cathars – per solam loquellam et solo – by mere speech and gesture. After the relentless Robert le Bougre had completed his holy quest in 1239, he was relieved of his task. As a reward for services rendered, he was shunned by the Dominicans and sentenced to eternal confinement in a monastery.

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Octavian troubadours and had the same hidden messages in their love poetry. It is obvious that through them there was a strong connection between northern and southern France. Not far from Mont Aimé, the French working field of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum is planning to build a new conference centre. Undoubtedly, from this new light beacon impulses will spread that will permanently reveal in brilliance the events of Mont Aimé.

Extract by J. van Rijckenborgh, The Call of the Rosy Cross Brotherhood, Haarlem 1985

For literature references please refer to the editorial staff.
‘Hate begets hate, violence engenders violence, hypocrisy is answered by hypocrisy, war generates war, and love creates love. Unselfish love has enormous creative and therapeutic potentialities, far greater than most people think. Love is a creative and life-giving force, necessary for physical, mental and moral health – it should not just be preached but consistently practiced. Universal sublime love is the supreme value around which all moral values can be integrated into one ethical system valid for the whole of humanity.’

Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968)

‘Cosmic Consciousness is the goal of human development, whereby we as individuals become aware of our oneness with the Universal Mind and can manifest genius. These individuals know the Light of God in themselves. In the divine stillness, we can know the causes of things, while their effects can be comprehended in the visible world of the senses.’

Cosmic Consciousness. Walter Russell (1871-1963)
The Bogomils proclaimed their teachings in a large part of Europe and managed to survive for five centuries: approximately from 950 to 1480. Their teachings spread over the entire Balkans, to Russia and Byzantium and further on to Italy and France, as well as along the river Rhine up to Cologne. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, they had so many followers that their universal wisdom became the state religion for some time. The Bogomils survived the Cathars for more than one and a half centuries. They strongly influenced them; they are sometimes called the elder gnostic brothers and sisters of the Cathars and we may regard them as the bridge builders of European spirituality.

The Bogomils (their name means loved by God) taught that the world has a dual structure (a divine abode and a material one) and that, in line with this, the human being has a similar duality. His body belongs to the earth, but his soul is divine and reminds man permanently of his true origin. Every human being can bring this duality to a unity in a radiant life, in which the two aspects merge into a dynamic whole. For this purpose, he must turn his soul — the seed of light, the spark of fire that corresponds with the primordial beginning, relinquished by mankind — into the leading principle of his life. Hence an ongoing process of inner purification will unfold, in which he is able to neutralise all kinds of undesired bonds in his life. His divine origin stands before him, ever clearer and clearer, without any need of mediation by priests or church.

To return to his origin, man should learn to deal adequately with the evil forces in the world and in himself. The Bogomils did not fight evil and did not try to erad-
Around 1700 – there was only one available detailed source for the Bogomils: the book Panoplia Dogmatix (Armour of Belief) from 1111, written by the Byzantine monk Euphrosinos Zygabenos. Zygabenos was Court Theologian of Emperor Alexios I (1056-1118) and had been given the imperial order to map all heresies of the Byzantine Empire in a book. Zygabenos drew the information on the Bogomils from days-long interrogation of the Bogomil leader Basileos by the Byzantine emperor. Bogomilism had spread so widely by then, that – to the dismay of the emperor – it even permeated into the highest circles of Constantinople.

For a good understanding of what followed, the famous story is provided in The Philadelphian Brotherhood. This ‘Gesamthistoriewerk’ brought Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714) abuse rather than glory in his linguistic area. He did not mince his words and knew no sacred cows. That provoked resistance, particularly in academic circles. The title (‘The corrupt study of history’) and the opening phrases of the inaugural speech by Arnold however, finally brought two eyes into his consideration of the past, enabling him to observe church as well as history more closely. This ‘Gesamthistoriewerk’ brought Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714) abuse rather than glory in his linguistic area. He did not mince his words and knew no sacred cows. That provoked resistance, particularly in academic circles. The title (‘The corrupt study of history’) and the opening phrases of the inaugural speech by Arnold however, finally brought two eyes into his consideration of the past, enabling him to observe church as well as history more closely.

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How did Arnold deal with this episode from the Bogomil history? Before we go into this, it is useful to explain to further the intriguing word he used: ‘unparteiisch’ (impartial, neutral). Rightly has it been stated that there is no historiography more partial than this impartial one. Still we need to define the word ‘unparteiisch’ in a different way: Arnold writes his book from the view of an outsider who stands above the parties, a separatist who is not concerned with the existing judgements. That is the true significance of this title word ‘impartial’: to write history without prejudice, without the imprints and clichés that have been widespread for ages. Hence the saying that the record of church history before Arnold had only one eye, which was not in the right place, as it always flared with the party of the victor Arnold however, finally brought two eyes into his consideration of the past, enabling him to observe church as well as history more closely. Therefore, his historiography overturned everything in his time. For the orthodox were the real heretics and the former heretics the true Christians. He created the distorting image of historic Christianity and its endless disputes, Arnold

Gottfried Arnold

Arnold wrote his masterpiece Unparteische Kirchen und Ketzerhostorie deliberately in German and not in Latin and thus directly addressed the citizens of his country. He presented it as a book for everyone, in the language of everyone.

This ‘Gesamthistoriewerk’ brought Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714) abuse rather than glory in his linguistic area. He did not mince his words and knew no sacred cows. That provoked resistance, particularly in academic circles. The title (‘The corrupt study of history’) and the opening phrases of the inaugural speech by Arnold however, finally brought two eyes into his consideration of the past, enabling him to observe church as well as history more closely.

And the real heretics – the ones Arnold was after – were the real heretics and the former heretics the true Christians. He created the distorting image of historic Christianity and its endless disputes, Arnold

In the historiography up to 1700, this episode had only been documented from the side of the ruler, the emperor. Zygabenos admired Alexios’ vigour to up-
placed – and this is a second significance of his word impartial – a superhistorical, yes, even a superconfessional principle: the actual religious experience. He was convinced that only a historian who personally experienced the sense of inner enlightenment was able to make an appropriate historiography of Christianity. Otherwise, he would lack the most important criterion for recognizing the truth. Indeed he put himself above all religious

FROM STRANGER TO RESIDENT OF HEAVEN

The Other and the Stranger – over the ages these terms have become almost archetypical spiritual metaphors that have inspired many poets and thinkers and they are often recognizable for the aspiring pupil. A well-known line of verse from the Flemish poet Karel van de Woestijne (1878-1929) in the collection Het Vaderhuis (The Father’s House): ‘I am the stranger, who must go to autumn.’ One explanation could be that the first-person narrator has been alienated from the delights of the summer of his life, when he still felt surrounded by God, and now sees the end of his life coming near. The Bogomils also knew this ‘strangerness’. It was often only relieved when they – after years of intense preparation and inner purification – were granted the concept solamentum, or the teleiosis; from this moment on the former stranger could call himself, in the Bogomil terminology: ‘resident of heaven’, parfait.

BECOMING AWARE OF THE OTHER WITHIN YOU

The Other within you is not going to be manifested through some method. It concerns him who is referred to as Pymander, your alter ego, the Other, the Spirit. This guide, who cannot be found on the horizontal plane of dialectics, is the one you need to search for. He wants to take you by the hand. You can only experience and view this Other in an extraordinary way from the spirit soul, the unity of spirit consciousness and of the heart that is purified in the gross. If you open your heart for the light of lights, the rose-of-roses will open. The colour and the fragrance of the rose will then console you. And if you follow the light in its aim and essence and make it circulate in your system, right through all the barriers, you will be able to secure the core of the light in the heavenly heart, in the open space behind the frontal bone. You will then prepare this upper room in the appropriate way. And Pymander, risen from his sleep of death will take his throne in the upper room and celebrate the Holy Communion with you. (...) Pymander, the God within you, will then guide you to the gates of the Gnosis, to the gates of the Golden Head, where the clear light is radiating, where there is no darkness, no drunkenness, but everyone is perfectly sober. If you wish to enter these gates, if you wish to liberate this kingdom within you, you will first have to tear up the garment of ignorance, the garment of daily denial. That is the core task of pupilship of the spiritual school that you have to engage in every day. Extract from J. van Rijckenborgh, The Egyptian Arch Gnosis and its Call in the Eternal Present, sec- ond edition, Haarlem 1983, p. 44, 45 (Dutch edition).

Image of Pegasus on a tomb in the Bogomil cemetery at Mesici, Bosnia

parties and all groups that were trying to prove they were right and superior through dogmas and letter-worship. He had a deadly as well as damming judgment for these ‘Mauerkirchen’, churches that figuratively built a wall around themselves, compared to the real church of the open heart. He called them: Babylon. Protestantism had used this term for the Catholic church, the ‘papist’ church from which it had torn itself away. But Arnold meant all sorts and movements of Christianity that deployed worldly power to push their ideas through. Those churches and congregations were only based on a ‘false kind of fake Christian- ity’.

Return of the true teachings of Jesus

Back to the Bogomils of Constantinople now. Let us first provide the introductory text of the chapter that Arnold dedicated to the Bogomils: The bloody persecuted Bogomils and their leader, Basilios, were the classic example of the fact that the so-called heretics, a term, invented by the deeply deplored clergy, were merely witnesses of the truth. It is the clergyman who should be called heretics. The orthodox the- nomenes were the cause for heresy and the hypocrisy of the Orient. This unambiguously sets the tone. How does his extensive personal description proceed now? He had every sympathy for Basilios, the leader of the so-called here- tic pupils. Not the condemned men and women were guilty, but the persons who condemned them. Not the Bogomils, but the orthodox persecutors were heretics and had denounced true Christianity. For being ‘heretic’ – the word is derived from the Greek καθαρός, pure – actually means a return to the true teachings of Jesus. The witnesses of truth suffer because they are opposed by the religious and secular authorities, who distort the true teachings. That is the core of Arnold’s defence of the Bogomils. The reason for this persecution was only to be found in the selfishness, the power politics of the clergy who felt threatened by the lay priests, the perfecti of the so-called heretics. Arnold resumes: ‘The clergyman saw their positions threatened because the Bogomils strongly condemned superstition and untruthful church services. That is why they said: “Basilios was overwhelmed by the devil and they rushed to get rid of him by having him burnt at the stake.”

imitation of Christ in loss of self

Here Arnold takes us to the essence of the matter. The aggressive attitude of the established churches in East and West was not mainly directed against the divergent belief in God. The cause for offence was the claim of both Bogomils and Cathars that sacraments, espe- cially the celebration of mass, were not needed for self-lib- eration and salvation. The si- lent idea behind this was that the sacrament – a piece of bread becoming something divine through mass – was merely fictitious. That struck a nerve: the rejection of the symbol, the refusal to believe that the divine was trans- ferred by a ritual system of signs. The latter was not more than a theatrical act in the eyes of the alleged heretics. The Bogomils, on the other hand, argued that they had people in their midst with a unique enigmatic radiation. That is to say: persons who were genuine human beings, genu- inely purified people, who realised God’s inner reality, also in their everyday life. The atmosphere and the radia- tion of these perfecti brought

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about an enormous attraction. Thus, the ‘success’ of the Bogomils was not only rooted in their teachings or their social involvement, but rather in the practical assistance that they were offering, combined with the upright, impeccable attitude of their parfaits. They were persons with a high reputation and a high credibility; their teachings were fascinating because they were brought in simplicity and truthfulness and their consequent ascetic attitude towards life and high moral standard inspired people and provided them with a natural respect.

This is why Arnold could not possibly call the Bogomils heretics. They did not embody a deviation from the existing church, they did not make modifications. No, they introduced a totally ‘different’ universal religion, a religion of the deed—of practical neighbourly help—a religion of light and inner enlightenment, a religion of inaccessible charity, yes, of imitation of Christ in loss of self.

**The mild Stranger**

The Bogomils introduced a ‘different’, super-religious and super-confessional experience of God. ‘Being different’ for them meant first and for all ‘thinking differently’ from the collective. This primarily implied letting go of traditions, detaching oneself, also from the often forcefully imposed doctrines that were passed on from generation to generation. One of the consequences of this process was: taking one’s own responsibility, conscious of the fact that every individual is called to freedom. And Gottfried Arnold was the first who acknowledged these aspects of the Bulgarian friends of God in historiography. In the social sense, they generally did not belong to the ‘others’, the many exiles and outcasts of the medieval collective social order. They invented many ways to socially conceal themselves and made great concessions for this purpose. They even visited services of the prevailing church for this reason and held their own meetings at night most of the time. In their hearts they naturally felt themselves to be ‘the others’ and there are many testimonies to this fact. Most essential is that the Bogomils were living examples of the significance of ‘the Other within ourselves’ for their contemporaries, meaning that they actually exhibited the efficacy of the spark of divine energy that is present in every human being. They thus formed an important link in the chain of the Gnosis over the ages. In early Christianity, this energy was sometimes called ‘the friend of humanity, Jesus’. But already fifty years after Jesus, people were hardly able to recognise this power. That is one of the reasons why the church father and theologian Marcion (born in 85) called this power ‘the mild Stranger’, or ‘the strange God’. With this indication of ‘the Stranger’, this great theologian meant nothing else than ‘the perfect Other’, a term that is now generally used for the inner mystery in every man or woman.

It is the great achievement of the Bogomils and of Gottfried Arnold, that they reminded mankind in word and deed, in an engaging manner, of this image of the inner heaven that will always remain valid.
At the beginning of the third millennium, the former pope John-Paul admonished his church to ask God’s forgiveness in a search of consciousness and a cleansing of memory. On March 16, 2016, 772 years after the dies nefasti of the execution of 16 Cathars on a gigantic pyre at the foot of Montsegur, Jean-Marc Eychenne, bishop of Pamiers, Couserans and Mirepoix did the same with regard to that specific event which meant the end of organized Catharism in the Ariège region.

After giving some citations from the sermon of his superior, he said: “Our region of the Langue-doc, which recently took the name of Occitan, dealt between the XII and XIVth century with a religious stream, in the XIXth century called Catharism – a religious stream of Christian origin that mixed Christianity with Manichean and gnostic elements.

In the same way that supporters of other religious streams were considered heretics by the institution of the Catholic Church, the members of the Cathars were prosecuted and sentenced to severe punishments ranging from imprisonment to death by fire. This occurred in Montsegur, where more than 200 “clothed heretics”, as they expressed it, were burned to death with their leader, the Cathar Bishop of Toulouse, Bertran Marty, on March 16, 1244. The stone monument on the Prat de Cramats is to this day the painful witness of this open wound.

In the year 2016 we as religious Catholics from the Ariège can only condemn these regretful acts. We ask God for forgiveness that our members and our institution have acted contrary to the Gospel. The Gospel in which Jesus the Lord gives us the command to love our neighbor and not to counter violence with violence. Eychenne continued by painting the position of the church at that time where it had to defend its doctrines as well as her power and influence. He concluded: ‘Gradually, enlightened by the holy spirit, the church understood that no violence whatsoever is justified, however noble the cause may seem in defence of the truth. And he followed this up with: “We, faithful Catholics from the Ariège, ask for forgiveness. First of all from our Lord, but also from all those who were persecuted by the members of our Church. We realize today that the collision or confusion between temporary political power and spiritual power, between the state and the church, has become unacceptable for the life of the world and for her own way to the coming Kingdom of God. Precisely because of the mixing of these two areas, human dignity and integrity have been violated so often and so long in the history of our country and of the Church, in the name of civil law, in the name of the Gospel, in the name of religious defence (the negotium fidei) and in the name of higher state interest.”

[...] “Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace embrace.” (Psalm 85, 10).

We pray for God’s mercy, for His love that helps us in our weakness, so that we, Catholic Christians from the Ariège, but also all who live in our region, regardless of their faith, their religion or their philosophical beliefs, may undertake a serene search for peace and general well-being in mutual dialogue, with respect for differences and in mutual appreciation. All this in a spirit of goodness and trust in the human ability to become more human in every contact with our brothers and sisters.”
movement of Pope Bogomil managed to affirm itself in the Balkans for five centuries (950-1450). Thanks to the power of attraction of their initiated ones, the Bogomils managed to spread out over a large part of Europe – Bosnia, Northern Italy, Southern France, the Rhineland, Greece, parts of Asia Minor and Russia. They gradually became the ‘mentors’ or spiritual tutors of the Cathars, whom they outlived for many years.

It was not easy to become an initiated Bogomil. Simply expressing the wish to become part of their community was not sufficient. The applicant had to go through a long preparatory process of true Christian life in which he strictly adhered to the example of Jesus. At the end of this process he or she could be initiated as a believer. Whoever wanted to continue to become an Apostle or a Parfait (and was able to) had to take part in a trial period for another three years. During that period, he was gradually taught all the wisdom of the carefully protected knowledge of the community, in order to prepare him for his life as a Bogomil Apostle in worldly daily life. At the end of this trial period he received the second initiation, the consolamentum, which permanently united him with the divine life field and provided him with the possibility of bestowing this sacrament also upon others.

Double game of an emperor

Most facts on the Bogomilian initiation we find in the book ‘Panoplia Dogmatica’ (‘Armor of the Religious Creed’) by the Byzantine monk Euthymios Zigabenos. He was commissioned to write it by the Byzantine emperor Alexios I in the early 12th century. The content of the book by Zigabenos, who was a theologian at Alexios’ court, was drawn from a conversation held over many days between the Byzantine emperor and the Bogomilian leader Basileos. Alexios had invited Basileos under the pretext that he was interested in being converted. Basileos, in good faith, told the emperor about his beliefs in much detail. Only at the end of the session the emperor’s malevolent double game came out. From behind a black curtain a detailed record had been made of the conversations. The Byzantine emperor then attempted to force Basileos to renounce his statements and return to the Orthodox church. When Basileos refused this, he was condemned to the stake.
George Bernard Shaw: ‘Every truly religious person is a heretic and thus a revolutionary as well’

The initiated has become a birth giver of God

What did the teleiosis (the consolam- mentum) mean for the initiated and his immediate surroundings? First of all, he now had a superior immunity towards the allures of the world and of evil influence. He was now permanently bound to the divine life field and received his spiritual nourishment from it. He possessed a high degree of perfection (smpotshvam), and because of that we call him a heavenly being.

From then on, the initiated was not only an apostle but had also become a theotokos, a birth giver of God. Which means that he renews and produces divinity with every proclamation of the divine word and with every spreading of the divine light in the world. All this happens according to the well-known Hermet- ic principle ‘To receive everything, to give up everything; to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven’... ‘The perfect one renounced possessions and residence and thus followed approximate- ly the same life as the early apostles. He also promised to fast till the ninth hour of every second, fourth and sixth day of the week.

The way of life of the apostles

The Bogomil consolamentum had a dual function: an exorcism as well as a pu- rification. First, the natural forces (the ‘devil’) that reigned until now within the ‘old human being’ was expelled through a prayer. Next, the candidate was washed in consecrated water from top to toe in order to obliterate all traces of the orthodox church baptism and to exorcize the ‘old human being’. After this, the can- didate orientated himself in the Eastern direction. Again, they placed the Gospel on his head. All those who were present put their hands on the head of the can- didate while they sang a liturgical hymn. This hymn was meant to give the candi- date the strength to follow the precepts and beliefs of the Bogomilian commu- nity. Finally, he received the well-known black habit of the Bogomils. The initiated now had a superior immunity towards the outer world that every human being can conquer his inner duality. The fol- lowing Bogomilian poem aptly illustrates that:

The body that we carry is a creation of darkness, but our soul that inhabits it is the first human being and the germ of light. The first human being that prevailed in the land of darkness will now prevail in his mortal body as well.
Wherever they found themselves, they could connect through telepathic and intuitive contact.


gnostic communication
A Bogomilian perfectus knew how to use a ‘new gnostic clairvoyance’ with which he could predict the future. This gift made a deep impression on even his most fervent adversary. Moreover, he knew how to use ‘telepathic communication’.

In the book ‘The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis, Volume 3’, Jan van Rijsbergen states that it is a source of wonder how the Bogomils managed to influence such large parts of Russia and the Balkan, despite their limited range. He furthermore writes that “the old Brotherhoods used a certain strategy whereby the individual participants of the work had higher qualities or powers. According to a masterplan, some of them spread out over those areas where centres were to be established. All leading brothers and sisters possessed these high centres were to be established. All leading

According to the Bogomilian rendering, Jesus’ birthplace, Nazareth, stands for the orthodox church. As we know, Jesus left Nazareth to settle down in Capernaum, the city at the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, which literally means ‘the city of the consoled’, and as such represents, just like Bethlehem, the Bogomilian church.

Thus, one may describe the Bogomilian process of initiation via the following topographical steps. Jesus, (that is: the Bogomilian neophyte) moves away from Nazareth to Capernaum, where he receives the consolamentum (literally: the sacrament of the consoler).

‘Purify me inwardly and outwardly’
The Bogomils identified themselves with the instructions in the Sermon on the Mount. They are the true ‘friends of God’, true Christians (pani knjigom) that do not need priests or outer rituals to stand in relation to the divine. One of the beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount (‘Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God’) we recognize in a rare purification prayer that we also find with the Manicheans.

Purify me, my God. Purify me inwardly and outwardly. Purify my body, soul and spirit, so that the seed of Light can grow within me and make me unto a torch.

Let me become a flame that transforms everything within me and surrounds me into Light.

Just as in the Sermon on the Mount, the Bogomils did not worry about what they would eat or drink nor about the clothing they would wear. They identified with the ‘lily of the fields’. ‘See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin.’ So, do not worry, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.’

This passage was an incentive to them to put the proclaiming and the deepening of their knowledge of the ‘true’ Christian faith above all else in their lives. It also justified for them that their initiated apostles – the lilies of the fields – should abstain from common labour so they could dedicate themselves wholly to the word of God.

The central and actually only prayer the Bogomils used, the Lord’s Prayer, was reserved exclusively for initiated believers and apostles. They prayed the Lord’s Prayer seven times a day and five times at night at fixed times, even when they were away from home. Those at home prayed together. There were also secret nocturnal praying services in the homes of the Bogomils. During these rituals, they invoked the Spirit and prayed the Lord’s Prayer while they protrasted themselves on the floor several times.

The Bogomils hardly changed anything in the official, ecclesiastical version of the Lord’s Prayer, but they certainly put their own accentuations on it. Famous is their version of the so-called fourth petition: give us this day our daily bread. The Bogomils prayed here: Give us this day our spiritual (transcendental immortal) bread. In another article of this edition of Pentagram the deeper meaning of this sentence is described.

Optimistic perspective
In historical writings, there is much emphasis on the intense ascetic and worldly detachment of the Bogomils. Because of this, we tend to underemphasize the enormous added spiritual value that they brought. The ‘Cathars from the East’ brought to humanity an impressive process of initiation, with which they proved that the human being can transcend the powers of duality of this world. Whatever was written about the Cathars goes for the Bogomils as well. They brought the liberating message that the divine spark that lives in every human being enables him to break free from his material prison. For that it is a prerequisite to strictly follow the example of Christ. They showed us how, through perseverance in prayer and conscientious asceticism, one can build a purified soul again.

The Bogomils thus did not bring a pessimistic teaching, meant only for puritans. On the contrary, they brought humanity an optimistic perspective on self-liberation that is still relevant today.

For literature references please refer to the editorial staff.

The Bogomilian perfecti used the Bible in a very illustrative and selective way. They left out the instruction in the Sermon on the Mount (Math. 5, 6 and 7) and the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John they lovingly called ‘John Bogoslov’, which means ‘John’s divine words’, and they always carried it with them.

In a creative allegorical way that matched the actual situation of the listener and believer, they brought the New Testament to life for them. Their topographic biblical symbolism especially appeals to the imagination. Bethlehem, which literally means ‘bread house’, is to them their own Bogomilian church that provides mankind with the truly living bread. Hereof represents the ruling church and the world of evil, trying to kill the newly presented adversary. Moreover, he knew how to

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That spiritual testament includes over 7000 lectures. They can be divided roughly into four categories. In the (five o’clock) Sunday morning lectures Deunov (1864-1944), also known by the name of Beinsa Douno, speaks to his students and listeners about the ‘new heaven’. On Sunday afternoon, again at five o’clock, he talks about the ‘new earth’. On Wednesday at five o’clock in the evening he focusses on the ‘living forces of nature and the cosmos’ and on Friday at five o’clock the ‘new man’ is the central topic.

Love, wisdom and truth.

“Have love for the perfect path of truth and of life, use the Good as a foundation for your home, Justice as a measure, Love as a jewel, Wisdom as a wrap, and the Truth as a lamp and I will reveal myself unto you.

In the fulfilment of God’s will lies the power of the human soul.”

Peter Deunov
wisdommaster of love

His grave is like a timeless life program. Encircled with a white cast iron fence full of pentagrams, it shows the keys on the path of the new spiritual man: wisdom, truth, virtue, love and justice. Daily, dozens of Bulgarians come to the lush rose garden in the heart of the Bulgarian capital Sofia, where the wisdom teacher and heir of the Bogomils, Peter Deunov, lies buried. They reflect, make subdued music or read a text from his immense spiritual legacy.

Stone erected in memory of the visit of the ‘parfait’ Milutin to Foca, Southeast Bosnia. In his right hand a sword as a sign of his noble origin, in his left hand the beloved gospel of John.
Deunov on prayer

Praying is the most important work in the life of a human.
Through prayer, man receives energy from the Divine World.
Prayer is the inner necessity of the soul.
When the soul is cut off from prayer, she dwells in great darkness and she experiences a poignant lack.
Prayer is the conscious work of the human soul.
When you pray, the soul steps out of the ordinary consciousness of everyday life. We can describe this as “breaking out of the narrow restrictions in which we live.” Prayer is our permanent connection with God.
Prayer is like a form of science; it takes a very long time to master it.

This quote describes the foundation on which Deunov builds up his “new teachings.” It has three basic principles: First of all, the love that brings true life, furthermore the wisdom that generates light and the true knowledge, and finally the truth that brings unlimited and full freedom. Of these three, love remains the ever-returning Leitmotiv: “My teaching is about living nature, about the people and about the intellectual achievements of this world, but especially about God, because it is a teaching of love.” Not without reason the writing on the foundation stone has to reckon with his dividedness, “lowest step” of his life.

Gandhi

Peter Deunov is often seen as an heir of Gandhi. Peter Deunov and national hero Vasil Levski (1837-1873). Deunov is often respected him. The latter was proven during World War II when he was secretively consulted about the possible prosecution of the Jews in his country. Deunov’s natural authority proved so great that his message of love made the breakthrough: not one Jew was prosecuted in Bulgaria! After the revolution of 1989, Deunov gained an honorary place in the collective memory of the Bulgarians. This was reflected in the election of the greatest
A n evening in Mostar. But not an evening in our cen-
tury. In my imagination I set out for the Mostar of
the ninth century, even then an ancient city, dating back to Ro-
man times. Here we find one of the most
important centre stages of an equally old but always re-emerging pure Christian
faith.

I follow a small group of simply dressed
Bosnians through the narrow streets of
their town. On every street corner col-
ourfully dressed men and women pass
each other by — either on their way to
the Greek Orthodox Church, a church
with bright rituals and heavy music, or
heading for the theatre, adorned just as
flamboyantly. Distinguishing between
Church and theatre is hard, because both
groups are laughing merrily and they are
equally splendidly decked out.

The men and women which I follow are
quiet, unpretentious and not distract-
ed by it. With determination they cross
the magnificent bridge of Trajan, with a
single stone arch spanning the rapidly
flowing and rock-strewn stream of the
Narenta.

They stop at a barn-like building of
austere stone walls and a thatched roof,
not at all suggestive of a temple behind
its doors, a temple dedicated to the most

**An evening in Mostar**

**A visualisation**

... Supreme... They step inside and I follow
them.

The large, bright space with its white-
washed walls and rough-wooden benches
is soon filled with more of these quiet,
friendly people, men and women together.
There are neither columns or pillars, nor
decorations, pictures or icons. We will
not find a richly decorated altar here with
golden chandeliers and chalices. But at
the very back of the area a wide table is
set up, covered with a white linen cloth.
The only object on the altar here is a
hand-written New Testament and a rolled
out parchment, containing some of the
inspired hymns from the old apostolic
church — the only signs from which one
can deduce where the leader of the con-
gregation may be found.

An old man, whose white hair cascades in
curly locks onto his shoulders, sits beside
the table. He also wears the same simple
Bosnian farmers clothing of those days
and in no way differs from the other men
of his age. His finely featured wise face is
somewhat hidden by his hands. Posture
and gesture suggest that he is engaged in
prayer.

Then he stands up, kneels — followed
by all those present — and greets them
sincerely with a glowingly clear prayer,
full of strength and dedication, perfectly
showing he is worthy of his name Bo-
gomil — “the man who prays”. His name
may also be translated as ’Friend of God’.

At the end of his prayer, the congregation
joins him in the Our Father, which is
affirmed with a clearly audible ‘amen’.

Then a song in a beautiful rhythm of
tones is raised, returning to the same
melodies that were sung by the Apostles
and Mani. This is followed by a reading
from the stories of the New Testament.

After he has returned the invaluable
manuscript to its place, he continues to
explain to his finely tuned audience the
character and the symbolism of their
great example, Jesus-the-Lord.

He tells of his non-ownership, how he
was rejected by his own people, how he
always pointed to the coming Kingdom —
immanent, within man.

He talks about the inner meaning of the
cross and the crucifixion and his return in
the clouds of heaven, which every human
being must imagine and realise in their
innermost self.

He talks about how this spiritual being
walked on earth in a semi-glorified body
for six weeks, learning, teaching and radi-
ating power.

And as he describes how Christ realised
‘the end of all death’, it is as if the con-
gregation, like Stephen, sees the gates of
Heaven open.

And he quotes Hymn 24:
Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory” (KJV)

In serenity and strength this Bogomil describes to them the inner Kingdom and he outlines the richness of the spiritual life, compared to which the scorn, the interrogations and the persecution of those days sink into nothing. And in all of this there is no element of raising the emotions, no erotic sublimation or personal satisfaction, but an atmosphere so spiritual, so pure and truly sacred, that no one but the ‘pure of heart’ can enter. And after another ‘Our Father’, the brothers and sisters of the brotherhood of Bogomils depart. Again they cross the bridge that spans the Narente, still full of the pure experience, still full of the living Gnostic Word, still full of the certainty that they, too, from within, belong to the Kingdom. And as they disappear into the narrow streets of Mostar city, I travel back to my twenty-first century.

This is what they prayed at the end of such a glowing, simple pure Bogomil meeting, inwardly resonating with the Gnostic Our Father:

God Almighty
Whose foot rests on the highest firmament
Great mover of the universe
And all the powers therein
Hear the prayer of your servants who put all their trust in you

We pray that you
Will allow us day by day to receive your divine life essence, for comfort and strength, for your glory, and for the salvation of mankind

Forgive us when so often we deviate from your ways, as we forgive our brothers and sisters
Be near and in us
Strengthen and sustain us, as we are but instruments in your hands
Protect us in danger and evil and do not leave us in our temptation
May your mighty power for ever sustain and protect us

You are the great Source of Gnosis and wisdom
Teach your servants by your holy presence and lead us, now and always

Amen

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Amen
The spiritual mission of Nikètas of Constantinople

‘Give us today our supernatural bread’. The Bogomil and Cathar interpretation of the key phrase of the Lord’s Prayer
Dick van Niekerk

Awakening in the Holy Spirit
Anne Baring

The Ideal of Brotherhood, the Core of the Gospel of the Cathars
Eduard Berga

The Way of the Cathars: a Hermetic Gnosis
Pierre Gohar

Bogomils, Cathars and the Universal White Brotherhood
David Lorimer

The forgotten Cathars of Mont Aimé

A word of the Catholics of the Ariège with regard to the Cathar drama. Text spoken in the church of Montségur on Sunday, October 16, 2016 by Jean-Marc Eychenne

Advocate of the heretics rehabilitates the Bogomils.
Gottfried Arnold about the Witnesses of the Truth

Teachings and inheritance of the Friend of God from the Oberland
Jean Moncelon

Additional texts:
‘The true church of Christ resides in the heart of man’
Initiation with the Bogomils
An evening in Mostar. An Impression of a meeting with Pop Bogomil
Peter Deunov: Master of Wisdom and Love