

THE CATHARS



In the 11th and 12th century, a simple Christian faith, known to others as Catharism, emerged in Eastern Europe and spread to eventually become very popular with all classes: nobles, the middle class and craftsmen, in the South of France. The Cathars, holders of this faith, were severely persecuted by the Roman Catholics to the point of extinction for what was called “heresy”.

To find some answers to this for myself, I have tuned into their energies. My guess is that people are able to sense these energies also in some ways and are drawn, as I am.

When I tune in energetically, I have felt two main energies here. The first is the energy of the early Christian Church in which the energies of the early Jesus emanates. The energies are very high, very fine, golden, and an interwoven blue. There is a general feeling of baptism, upliftment, simplicity and a sense of those early times with the Apostles. The second frequency I have focussed on comes in with the Consolamentum which is the energy of their spiritual baptism of spirit and fire. I experience this as a deep blue. It holds a resonance of the essence of Christ and it lifts the consciousness of those who receive this. People in the presence of those who received this transmission could also feel this and may have even asked to be present for this reason. This is a heightened exquisite Divine frequency which would bond the Cathars, and one to which their group would have had an ongoing connection over the years. Having been aware of these frequencies too, I can understand why they would not want to be separated from this.

At **Montsegur**, on a journey in 2011, I was permitted to have a connection to Christ energies they had held. As I held this connection, soon all division fell away: Catholic, Cathar energies and my own, became one in a higher Divine unity in Source. There was no separation in anything: all was one. As Source strengthened, there was nothing I would not have surrendered to hold this connection.



The earliest reference we have to this faith goes back to 950 AD when a priest, known as Bogomil, preached this faith in Bulgaria. The faith spread around the trade routes, through weavers and their corporations, through the cities where public discussion was more open and through all of Western Europe. This represented a real danger to the Catholic Church but our interest is in the area of Languedoc, South of France, the area of the greatest Cathar population.

Before the Catholic crusade swept down over upon the midi-Languedoc leaving a trail of ruin and desolation, Languedoc was a prosperous region trading with all the large Mediterranean cities and its big city Toulouse was considered one of the most important cities in Europe after Rome and Venice.

This expanding Cathar presence, even though only about 10% of the population, was seen to be a powerful challenge to the hold of the Catholic religion. Cathars probably just wanted to quietly follow their own faith but found themselves in the middle of a political and spiritual conflict. The growth of the faith was more easily able to happen at the time, as there was no centralized power in the area. The Pope was in Rome, Italy, and the King of France was far away to the North with other concerns with his rivalry with England. In the Languedoc, in contrast to the North, there was a flourishing of liberal thinking, and anticlerical attitudes as the Catholic priests had declined in their spiritual life, losing respect and weakening a connection to the people. This civilisation was at a height of creativity and its culture was able to be spread through the Occitan language used by the troubadours in their songs. There were new ideas of liberty, tolerance and equality abroad. For example, romantic love and the uplifting love of a woman became highly valued. Life was rich in culture and tolerance in the south of France.

However, this was about to change. With the election of Pope Innocent III in 1198, the pressure began to come on for the eradication of these 'heretics' from the Languedoc. The first method used was a spiritual teaching crusade which failed. Then in 1209 an armed 'Albigensian' crusade was raised against them which killed large numbers of Cathars (and others), ruined cities, set the nobility of the north against the south, and continued for 20 years. Despite all this political and religious chaos, it did not stop the desire for this faith. Clearly this was holding some very special spiritual light.

The final act against the Cathars was the setting up of the Inquisition, run by the Dominican brothers and answerable only to the Pope. This repression was merciless and the Inquisition prisons were soon full. The actions against the gentle, peace-loving Cathars were undeserved. However, the Inquisition was successful and eventually, after widespread mass burnings,

torture, harassments and taking of their properties, their numbers were very reduced and the Cathars who survived this generally moved to other countries.

To protect themselves in this period of persecution, the Cathars often took refuge in Cathar castles usually set in remote places on high rocky outcrops such as Queribus, Peyrepertuse and Puilaurens. These particular castles were near the Spanish border as the Cathars were being driven south as the Midi was conquered but there were many others. Many of these castles have survived to some extent and can be visited. Perhaps the most famous Cathar Castle was Montsegur, the 'capital' of the Cathar church, seen to be a symbol of resistance to the Catholic



Church. Pilgrims came in their hundreds to this place.

However, because of its importance, in 1244, the Castle came under attack and finally after ten months of siege, 225 men and women perished in flames rather than give up their faith. The Castle site is still accessible at the top of a 3000' hill but the original castle has been completely demolished and rebuilt. At the bottom of the hill, where the burnings occurred, is a memorial to the Cathars.

When I visited this site in 2011, I watched people pass and place their living roses and flowers on this memorial (stele) with great tenderness. On the stele are the words: "Als catars, Als martirs del pur amor crestians 16th March 1244". They are not forgotten and their lives still speak to people.

Who were the Cathars?

They described themselves as Christians who lived as the apostles lived and practiced at the time of Christ. When I have tuned in to their spiritual energies, this is exactly what it feels like. They did not use the term Cathar for themselves for they only called themselves 'believers', "Christians" 'or good Christians". Others called them Cathars. Perhaps the Greek *katharos* (*pure*) may be an origin. Another option is the medieval German word *ketter* which means 'heretic'.

Their guiding text was the Gospel of St. John of the New Testament. They rejected the God of the Old Testament. They rejected the wealth and luxury of the 12th century Catholic church. They chose to live a very simple, working life in comparison to the Catholic priests of those times. They believed in honest work, they were often weavers, and earned their own living. They lived very upright lives, refusing to swear oaths or to lie. The Parfaits, the Ascetic Cathars, were vegetarian, but ate fish. They honoured life and could not kill anything that had breath. They were chaste. The people around them respected these upright lives in comparison to

morally weak lives of many priests. The ordinary believer could eat meat, marry, have children, go to war etc. Cathars believed in the ultimate salvation of all human beings. They did accept they could be persecuted as was Christ and the early Apostles. Tuning in to them, I feel their practicing of higher qualities between each other. Higher trust, higher love, as the higher energies flow in their lives.

What did they believe?

They stood for a new freedom in religion by going back to the beginning of Christianity. Cathars did not want a priestly structure or a church. There were no church buildings or properties. They did not demand tithes as the Priests did. They did develop some geographic organization later e.g. a bishop's (supervisor) area. Nor did they like the Catholic hierarchy, property or sacraments. Unlike the Catholics, they gave their followers the right to read the Bible and treated women as equals. They educated both their female and male children. Women could have higher rank and become Parfaits. They often opened their homes and hospitality to travelling Parfaits to teach as they moved through the countryside, or for the training of Parfaits. Roles were divided up into followers: Credentes – believers, and The Elect or Parfaits (Perfects - which was a derisive term given to them by Catholics) who lived very strict Ascetic lives. Parfaits wanted purity.

They believed in reincarnation.

They believed in heaven and hell (hell was life on earth).

They believed that the Catholics had left the beliefs and practices of the early Christian Church.

They divided the world into good and evil principles (dualist) matter was intrinsically evil/ mind or spirit was intrinsically good. There were two Gods- one bad and one good. The bad God was in charge of all things visible and material things and was found in the Old Testament. The good God of the New Testament was responsible for the teachings of Jesus and this is the God whom the Cathars worshipped.

They believed everyone should be able to read the Bible and even translated this into the local language. (In 1229 at the Synod of Toulouse, the Catholics condemned such freedoms and even forbade lay people to own a Bible). Cathars believed Divine knowledge was only granted to an inner elite (Parfaits) and that a long period of training was required to become a Parfait.

Psychologically, what it must have been like living in these heightened Divine energies and simultaneously trying to survive the decades of persecution. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a modern term for a condition they must surely have endured. How do you cope with mass deaths and persecutions of friends, relatives and communities? How do you manage illness,

ageing, birth, midnight escapes to safer castles on dangerous routes? How do you keep your spiritual and personal sensitivity alive when you need to desensitize to survive? What happens when all your property and resources are taken because of your faith? How do you cope with lifelong trauma? The personal costs of their faith were very high.

They did have some **RITUALS** to structure their spiritual practices e.g.



The **Consolomentum**: This central rite was a baptism with spirit and fire and believed to be the same that Christ gave the Apostles. The spirit received was believed to be the Holy Spirit sent by Christ and that part of the Holy Spirit would remain in the body of the Parfait. The consolomentum removed all sin, reversed the effects of the Fall, and restored the 'lost tunic of immortality'. It marked the transition from Credente to parfait. Only a Parfait could administer the Consolomentum. The ritual was very simple and historians believe that it seems to have preserved a ceremony from the earliest Christian Church.

The **Melhoramentum**: (Praying for improvement) was the acknowledgement by a believer of the Holy Spirit dwelling within the Parfait. The Credente would ask the Parfait to pray for them which they did. This was seen as a blessing.

The **Endura**: If a credente was close to death, or may have been near to being handed to the Inquisition, they could receive the Consolomentum and then fast to death.

The **Apareilementum**: Public Confession: once a month identical to the earliest form of confession known in the Christian Church. There could be punishments ranging from prayers to fasting. Absolution was given "en masse".

Now in the 20th century, several hundreds of years after their time, the Cathars are drawing our attention again and I wondered why. *There seems to be some compelling to return and realign to those old fields of high spiritual purification that the Parfaits once held.*

Perhaps those following the old trails of the Cathars have old spiritual issues related to this faith in past lives that they are continuing to resolve.

Perhaps they are old pilgrims, or even old opponents, returning to these energies.

Perhaps they are wanting to understand themselves better.

Perhaps they want to connect to this energy again. Are they thinking of what we might have had, or become, if we could have maintained those early energies in our Christian heritage?

Perhaps they hold these energies or their friends do. Now that I am aware of these beautiful old frequencies that the Cathars were privileged to hold, I am more aware when people around me are holding these and of people who have passed on who were carrying this light.

What have the gentle Cathars shown us? Huge spiritual courage in the face of those who wanted to shut down their light. The need for tolerance of different spiritual approaches to the Source. That there are more personal, individual ways of the soul to Source as well as through the control of major Institutions and that the personal beauty and validity of these should be recognized.

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