

## A Commonly Accepted History of the Cathars: *“Bons Hommes et Bonnes Femmes”*

Few people today realize that not all of the crusades waged by the Roman Catholic Church were against Muslims in exotic foreign lands. One of the largest of the Holy Crusades was fought very close to home, against an obscure Christian heresy that had blossomed all across Europe, but, most prominently, throughout the south of France. The Cathars, sometimes referred to as “the Buddhists of the West,” professed many beliefs that made them unpopular with the early Catholic Church, not the least of which may have been their anti-sacerdotal stance that saw all church power and authority as a hypocritical corruption of the true Christian faith. Yet, as we will soon show, the inflammatory claims of this once popular heresy went much further than just this.

Nearly all of the Cathars’ religious ideas were quite radical, especially for the Middle Ages. Those who chose to be baptized, a rather heavy obligation that many believers opted for only on their death beds, were expected to abstain from meat or dairy, any potentially reproductive activities, violent behavior of all kinds, and the swearing of any and all manner of oaths, as the Cathars taught that such things would only further bind one's eternal spirit to the pervasive oppression of this world. Having given away all their worldly possessions, most of these so-called “Perfecti” took to wandering the country-side, preaching, praying and performing charitable deeds, attempting, as they believed Christ did, to guide others away from the savage realm of the material world and towards a better, more merciful, one.

Most interesting of all was the Cathars’ dualist belief in the existence of two equally matched cosmic forces, one being a God of tremendous demiurgic power, responsible for the creation of the world and, incidentally, all of the stories within the Old Testament, and the other being a limitlessly merciful, though incorporeal, God of love. The Cathars claimed that it was for this later “true” God that a phantom-like Jesus Christ manifested here on earth so as to liberate an enslaved and imprisoned mankind. It was no accident, the Cathars taught, that Christ’s actual message was quickly co-opted and corrupted by the Demiurge and the lesser archonic powers that aid Him in the rule of this planetary prison.

The bloody fate of the Cathar movement is something that every modern Christian should acquaint him or her self with, as it is ultimately a grim indictment of the “Christianity” that has survived this noble and pacifistic sect. Having failed to slow the growth of this potent heretical movement with a series of highly publicized philosophical debates, in 1208 Pope Innocent III declared that all of the lands held by Cathars, or even those harboring Cathars, could be lawfully confiscated. This drew down an endless host of armed nobles from the north, all too happy to invade the southern provinces of France so as to expand their own feudal holdings.

The Albigensian Crusade that followed stretched on for over twenty years, with one of its bloodiest days seeing 20,000 men, women and children savagely mutilated and killed: put to the sword, dragged behind horses, burned alive, or used for target practice by the Church's forces. The Cathars were henceforth scattered and quickly hunted into extinction, as, perhaps most damagingly, all of their religious literature was scrupulously rounded up and thrown directly into the pyres on which they burned.

This mercilessly brutal and complete annihilation of an utterly harmless movement leaves only history itself to subtly validate the truth of the Cathar's dualist beliefs. Although, as we all know, the story of history is ultimately penned by the victor, its subtext bears an undeniable witness to the strange warnings of viciously persecuted prophets such as these: holy sages who, one might hope, have moved on to a far better place.

Ultimately though, the slightly ambiguous message that they all leave behind is as follows: "Be careful what you serve."

It was thus that the heresy of the Cathars was suppressed and apparently extinguished by the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the last of their precious Perfecti officially burning at the stake in 1321.

## Enter the Shadows

The Cathars were not entirely unique in their deep sincerity, or even their uncommon saintliness, as there have been many other heavily persecuted movements that aspired towards similarly lofty ethical standards. However, what made the Cathars truly unique were the savvy and potent patrons whom they inspired to join their movement, as the south of France at that time just happened to be a very hip and sophisticated place. It has been conjectured by some historians that had the Albigensian Crusade not cut short this fertile atmosphere of free thought, wide spread literacy, and cultural exchange, the Renaissance just might have begun hundreds of years sooner, in France instead of Italy.

It's important to understand that the war against the Cathars was more than just a battle over simple religious interpretation. The end of the Albigensian Crusade marked the beginning of a truly unified French monarchy and the consolidation of an absolute and infallible papal authority over a new political realm, one which had become known as "Christendom," and which, like the Roman Empire before it, claimed authority over everything that it set its eyes on.

The nobility of southern France held liberal notions that ultimately stood in the way of the sort of vast, unquestionable dominion that was dreamed of by the power hungry supporters of an absolute church and state. The Cathars, and their vision of two worlds in conflict, simply provided the most obvious battleground at that time for such a political and philosophical struggle to take place.

Yet the apparent destruction of the Cathars was not so much the mass execution that it appeared to be as it was a mass exodus. Central to the beliefs of the Cathars was the doctrine of metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls. Not only did they believe in a likely, though undesirable, return to this fallen world after death, the Cathars were also very familiar with certain esoteric practices that allowed them to exist outside of and beyond the merely physical existence of their bodies. Though many were rounded up and grimly marched off into the pyres, the adepts of this sect simply marched onward to another place where few of their mortal enemies would have the power to touch them any longer.

Thus was born the new Cathar Order, and, perhaps more importantly, the infamous Good Walkers.

## The New Cathar Order

They appear in dreams most often, yet, when they think a person is prepared for it, they may also come as vivid hallucinations of luminous and winged beings, an appearance that has earned them their now all too common sobriquet “angels.”

It is not known whether the Cathars purposely engineered this misconception or have simply failed to correct it. Perhaps some the Cathars have even come to believe it themselves. Yet the Cathars, despite their profound saintliness and holy appearances, are not actually *angels* in the traditional sense of the word. For one thing, although many of them may ignore and neglect them terribly, all of the Cathars have mortal bodies out there somewhere.

This would come as quite a shock to anyone who has only had dealings with them in their ethereal guise, as the majority of Cathars are not exactly forthcoming about this fact, but for every luminous being that one might witness majestically floating high above the surface of the earth, there is also, hidden somewhere down here on the ground, an unconscious, extremely vulnerable, probably fairly out-of-shape human body. The most important Cathars, despite their vows of poverty, have been known to invest extensively in elaborate security measures to try and keep that body safe. A few have even been fortunate enough to get themselves placed on life support at some small, out of the way medical facility that hardly anyone’s ever heard of. Most of them, however, just live simple, unassuming lives, active in the normal world just long enough to tend to their physical needs, and then it’s back into the ether, where the real life, and work, of a Cathar Perfect takes place.

Their arcane powers range from a limited amount of dream and impulse manipulation at the lower levels all the way up to, in exceptionally rare cases, a frightening degree of control over reality itself, as if the waking world was little more than a potentially lucid dream. As a Cathar increases in the understanding and control of these powers, the walls between the realm of the spirit and the realm of the flesh

begin to crumble and warp, sometimes with terrifying results. For this reason, many choose to sharpen their powers of persuasion, the so-called “path of parley,” far more intensely than they pursue this far more dangerous “path of lucidity,” as it’s called by initiates.

## The Good Walkers

Though an almost complete rejection, and subsequent neglect, of the flesh is sadly quite typical of most Cathars, this is not the case amongst a small but powerful group within the Cathar Order, a group known as the Good Walkers. While the Cathars as a whole put their unique powers to use in the aid and service of those who suffer, it is the Good Walkers who are spoken of with fearful whispers in the ranks of other Shadow Societies. While some have chosen to dismiss their existence as a mere myth, this is not the case at all. Although rare, and often meeting tragic ends in their short yet heroic lives, a small number within the new Cathar Order have seen fit to harness the strengths of both their spirits *and their bodies*, and have begun a secret war against the most powerful and well guarded evils on the planet today.

Much like the bodhisattvas of the Buddhist tradition, the Good Walkers have chosen to ground themselves within this world, opting not for escape but instead to meet the many challenges of the flesh head on. They call their strange practices the “path of docetism,” in reference to the early Christian heresy that the apparently physical body of Christ was in fact an illusion. These Good Walkers have adapted the Cathar’s knowledge of astral projection to produce a sort of spiritualizing of the flesh, using their bodies as conduits for the same strange powers that their brothers and sisters have all made use of for centuries to try and leave their bodies behind. While some see this new path of docetism as an aberrant corruption of the order’s path of lucidity, the heroic spirit of the Good Walkers has begun to sway increasingly large numbers of more traditional Cathars, Cathars who once clung firmly to the canonical belief that no real good could ever come of such violent struggles in the flesh.

Though few of these pious brethren will ever rise to the challenge of joining them in this new war *physically*, make no mistake about it -- when any Good Walker breaches your high security facility, moving in the flesh, undetected, past barbed wire, guard dogs, armed guards, and countless security cameras and sensors, he or she is often surrounded by a small army of intangible, though potent, Cathar spirits. This is perhaps the reason that the Good Walkers have quickly earned the hatred, and fear, of many of the world’s most powerful and wicked men and women, villains who once believed that their nefarious interests were far beyond the reach of traditional kinds of justice, and yet have come to learn the hard way that seemingly nothing is beyond the reach of a Good Walker.

## The Secret Teachings of the Cathars on the Mystery of the Cross

The Cathars, like many Gnostic sects, believed that Christianity was a story told in two versions, one version meant for the common people, and the other one reserved for a select few who could be taught truths that most simply would not understand or accept. Unlike other Gnostic sects, however, the Cathars were not as careful about where, when, and with whom they shared these difficult truths, which might have explained the uncomfortably “warm” reception they received from early agents of the Inquisition.

First and foremost among their slew of verbal indiscretions was, without a doubt, their completely uncompromising critique of power and, perhaps unavoidably, the powerful as well. High ranking Catholic officials were unceremoniously informed that their beloved church was “full of hypocrites and ravenous wolves... worshipping the wrong God.” A favorite observation of Latin speaking Cathars was to point out that the exact opposite of the God of “Amor,” or love, was the God of “Roma,” meaning the Roman Catholic Church. This brings us back to the single boldest claim of the Cathars -- that the mighty God being worshipped by most of the so-called “Christians” at that time was, in fact, absolutely evil.

The Cathars illustrated this fundamental conflict between power and love with an esoteric explanation of the cross used in countless depictions of Christ’s crucifixion. They believed that this cross served as an important pictographic illustration of the fatal compromise between two inherently opposed forces. These forces are the ultimately diabolical God of power -- who was, and is, and probably always will be, worshiped unwittingly by nearly all the world -- and a benevolent God of absolute love that they claimed Christ came here to make known.

The cross he is said to have “died on” was symbolic of mankind’s rejection of a love properly understood as the complete opposite of worldly power. The vertical line represents the hierarchical world of power and the horizontal line is symbolic of a love that’s only half understood as a merely equalizing force. It was *this* cross, not a literal one, which they believed their savior to have been martyred on, having been rejected

and turned away by the world. For the Cathars, true love is not simply a balancing force to the demands of power, but its antithesis.

This cross was meant as a warning to those who are, like the Jews who demanded nothing less than a conquering messiah, incorrectly seeking some form of practical compromise between power and love. The Cathars believed that it is our desire for such a compromise that inevitably causes us to reject the rather uncompromising message of the true Christ, who proclaimed a love that could only be found in absolute submission and by moving in a completely opposite direction from power.

This conflict between power and love is the primary reason that more of the Cathar order doesn't participate in the sort of guerilla warfare that so largely defines the work of a Good Walker. Despite what many might think, most Cathar do not leave their bodies inactive and hidden away from the world because they are afraid of harming their flesh, but rather because they are afraid such physical struggle would harm their nearly wrathless souls.

The Cathars were, and largely still are, purists, in that they believe the two Gods who struggle over souls in this world represent ultimately incompatible forces, only one of them truly good and the other completely evil. Yet the Good Walkers seem to have broken away from this belief somewhat, or else they are simply attempting to take a more heroic approach to the enormous amount of compassion that they feel in their hearts. Only time will tell who's right or wrong.

In the upcoming chapter on the Templars, we'll examine the beliefs of another heretical sect who recognizes this same message hidden within the cross, yet who have chosen to embrace, rather than reject, the compromise. To the Templars, and for a growing number of the Good Walkers as well, the cross is not the cautionary tale of Christ's death that it is for true Cathars, but rather it is the heroic sign by which his forces must conquer.

## How Many Angels *Can* Dance on the Head of a Pin?

When the Cathars burned, only a small number of them were among what one might call "the inner circle," or to be more precise, those who had taken the religious vows of the "*perfecti*," or the perfect. The bulk of the Cathars were simply "*credentes*," or believers, and although some of these were powerful occultists with access to rituals that might have helped them elude the inquisition, it is a common Cathar belief that

none but the perfect alone returned; and returned; and returned; and returned. In fact, the numbers of returning Cathars seems to have skyrocketed in recent decades, a paradox which the current Cathar High Council attributes to an obvious splintering of their old and increasingly powerful souls. However, there is another possibility.

It's very possible that the phenomenon of reincarnation doesn't operate in the manner that the Cathars believe it to. Some occultists, outside of the Cathar order of course, have speculated that as knowledge of the Cathars waxes and wanes within the collective consciousness, so too will incidences of "reincarnation," which may be little more than someone's passionate acceptance of a generic "Cathar" identity as his or her own. Although most Cathars are paradigmatically unable to even consider such a *heretical* explanation as this, there is another good reason to believe that this might be true.

For one thing, Cathars are not the only ones out there who can project themselves out into the astral. Whether it's referred to as the soul body, the philosopher's stone, the diamond soul, or the golden wedding garment, there are many traditional practices for become as the Cathars, and as the heroic Good Walkers, are today, and these don't appear to require practitioners to have been a Cathar, or anyone else, in a past life. We'll examine techniques for developing these and other occult abilities in far greater detail in the second half of this book.