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THE GRAIL HERESY

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Arthurian history and archaeology and the mystery and mythology of the Matter of Britain. Opinions stated are those of the writers concerned. © 1981 Pendragon Society/authors.

EDITORIAL



MANY OF US probably first understood the Grail to be the Cup of the Last Supper, somehow associated with Arthur and Glastonbury. It sometimes comes as a shock to realise other countries claim the Grail as their own, either as a physical object or as a secret doctrine.

This aspect is discussed in some of the contributions to this issue, a special Heresy edition. Catherine Christian uses the evocative phrase "the heresy of the Holy Graal", and this theme runs through the letters, news and reviews. Michael Baigent is to talk to us on Cathars, Templars and the Priory of Sion (January 31st 2pm at Bristol University Students' Union; with Richard Leigh he is co-author of the imminent Holy Blood, Holy Grail (pub Jonathan Cape).

The next theme is Galahad; suggested future topics include Archaeology; The Fisher King; the Battle of Badon; The Sleeping Hero; the Continental Arthur(!)... Any preferences?

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MEMORIES OF TIMES FORGOTTEN

IS BEOWULF A CELTIC TALE?

Beowulf is usually regarded as a fine example of an English saga, but a new book (reviewed in Folklore 1980 ii) by its very title throws the cat among the pigeons. Martin Puhvel's Beowulf and Celtic Traditions (Ontario 1979) suggests that an anonymous English poet in Northumbria chose, about 700 AD, a Celtic monster-slaying story, laced with some English folk-belief, and transformed it into a prestige myth with a Danish-Geatish setting. Elements such as "The Hand and the Child" tale, underwater Otherworlds, she-monsters, water-monsters, luminous swords, deadly blood etc are typically Celtic features, Puhvel points out.

A "NEW" DARK AGE SITE

Sherborne in Dorset was founded as a W Saxon bishopric by St Aldhelm, former Abbot of Malmesbury, about 705 AD. New research by Katherine Barke (reported in Antiquity LIV Nov 1980) has uncovered what appears to be an Irish-type ecclesiastical settlement enclosed by a hedge and known before 672 as Lanprobus. The focus of Lanprobus is The Green (site of a medieval chapel of Thomas Becket, north of the cross) and the later Saxon cathedral abbey is found outside this plan. This points at least to an early 7th century foundation for this llan or Celtic religious site, possibly by an Irish missionary such as Maeldub (who had founded Malmesbury about a century after Arthur's death).



MONarchs OF THE (PALAEOLITHIC)
GLEN...

The first definite examples of representational Old Stone Age cave-art have been discovered near Symonds Yat East in the Wye Valley. They are of the head of a deer-like horned animal and a bison (10"). Previous engravings have been abstract (Bacon Hole, Gower) or inconclusive (Cresswell Crags, Derbs). The discoveries were made by archaeologists led by Dr Tom Rogers and reported by the January Illustrated London News. Who painted them - whether Cro-Magnon types or supposedly brutish Neanderthal Men - is an open question as on this site the two hominids were near if not actual contemporaries. The answer may have exciting implications for traditionalists.
(Monitors SP, GS & KP)

DANTE & THE TEMPLARS

A new book on Dante promotes the thesis of "the suppression of the Templars as a major experience behind The Divine Comedy", sensational events which deeply affected Dante (who might have been affiliated to the Order as a lay member). At £18 William Anderson's Dante the Maker (Routledge) is rather pricey but Frances Yates' review in The Guardian was sympathetic. Would someone like to review it?

NOTICE BOARD

Members in the SW Midlands may be interested in the following WEA evening classes given by Tim Porter (each of ten weekly classes):

STROUD Anglo-Saxon England (Tuesdays from Jan 13th 7.30)

CHELTENHAM Anglo-Saxon England (Thursdays from Jan 15th 7.30 at Shaftesbury Hall)

GLOUCESTER Mythology of Britain II (Wednesdays from Jan 14th 7.30 at Mansbridge Centre, Wellington St)

The Stroud lectures may be at the Library, but check first; and the Gloucester classes are a continuation of the Autumn term's course, but newcomers could still join without apparently being nonplussed!

Green Branch Opera Group plan an ambitious programme for next year; 1981 is to include the first production of The Parliament of Fowls by Julian Broughton, and a new work by Tim Porter. Keep an eye open for posters...

Black Madonnas

A query: Richard Leigh and Michael Baigent have discussed Black Madonnas in The Unexplained encyclopaedia magazine. Curiously, no Black Madonnas appear to have been found in Britain. Have any readers any information or theories about the seeming lack of English, Welsh, Scottish or Irish examples? A good starting point could be H M Gillett's Shrines of Our Lady in England and Wales (London 1957).

..and Arthur..

AN ARTICLE in Now! (5.12.80) "The New Age of Sword and Sorcery" notes how old themes and lost ages are being "pillaged" by film-makers for such efforts as Flash Gordon, Hawk the Slayer, The Sword, Dragon-slayer, Night-Riders, Conan the Barbarian and others. Look out for "Knights", directed by John Boorman with Nigel Terry as King Arthur and Nicol Williamson as Merlin.
(Peter Ratazzi)

More improbably TV soap-operas such as "Dallas" are compared with medieval romances such as the Arthurian tales in the house journal of Cambridge Consultants Ltd, Interface. Lindy Beveridge draws parallels between the plots and character relationships, some of them striking if not very profound. Is Southfork Camelot? Is Miss Ellie Guinevere? Is JR Mordred? Tune in next week!
(Tim Holland)

Outlook: Rennes

Sid "Mr Hummadruz" Birchby, who co-ordinates the admirable Newsletter on parapsychical matters, is in contact with several interested parties and is prepared to act as postbox for a Rennes/Templar Contact Group. Write to him at 40 Parrs Wood Ave, Didsbury, Manchester M20 0ND enclosing a stamp.

Who's got JRR?

From Prof JOHN LAWLOR, Keele:

Thank you for the Pendragon magazine. It's altogether lively and informative -- which most scholarly endeavours alas! are not... Your own venture reminds me of the Tolkien Society of America -- workgames, elvish dress and first light rituals were their form of reaction to LOTR -- and a very pleasing one, too!



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Pendragon member Bjarne Dalgrén has sent us info on FORODRIM, the Tolkien Society of Stockholm, which hopes it will "present a rallying-point to people interested in myths and fairy-tales, with the works of J R R Tolkien as a common platform." Its guilds have regular meetings, ceremonies, feasts, newsletters and Palantiren magazine. (Forodrim, Hartwickska Huset, S:t Paulsgatan 39, Stockholm, Sweden.)



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LETTERS:

Red hair, Dane, Celt

From MARY BONINGTON, Avon:

MY EYE is caught by Rick Plewes' "Taffy and the Morgan Index" (last issue). I have been reading W H P Greswell on the Battle of Ethandune and he tells me of an old man living in 1910 under Danesborough on the Quantocks who spoke of the Danes (which he pronounced Denes, as in Forest of) as

"red headed men who beat ours in the war," and added oracularly,
"but the women-volk paid them out."

How?!

Anyway, Greswell tells us a lot about the Waelas who lived around Williton in Alfred's day, and seem to have been Devonians or Dumnonians. He says the Dumnonian territory probably went as far as Weston, and it seems the Waelas were Celts. "King Alfred engaged in his service many Welshmen acquainted with the art of ship building." It seems the Severn was a link rather than a barrier...

Greswell points out that people from the Brendon Hills and Exmoor "all betray peculiarities of dialect and race, differing from the lowlands and marsh country, linking W Somerset with Wales and Devon."

Mother Nature

From PADDY STONE, Gwent:

WHILST finding the articles "Le Roi Perdu" and "Venus and the Devil" (XIII,2) most interesting, no mention was made of the rather bizarre statues, font and decor of the church in Rennes-le-Château, instigated by the priest Bérenger Saunière. Those who saw the programmes by Henry Lincoln on BBC television will probably remember that the demi-god who ruled earth was depicted as the Devil and the crucified figure on the Cross was the Mother Mary...

Unfortunately Western man, due to his divisive and quarrelsome religions, has spent most of his time in the past 3500 years "conquering" Nature, with the present potential dire consequences... St Bernard of Clairvaux had great love and communion with Nature. "Believe me," he said to a pupil, "you will find something far greater in the woods than you will in books; stones and trees will teach you that which you will never learn from masters..." St Bernard was the nephew of André de Montbard who was one of the original nine knights who in 1118 presented themselves to the King of Jerusalem, Baldwin II. The Templars made their act of obedience to St Bernard -- it is worth noting here that the Cistercians tend to dedicate to Mary, Mother and Mary Magdalene (even if Mary Magdalene was given a dubious reputation! See the Gnostic Gospels by Elaine Pagels, published in Britain by Weidenfeld).



The Heresy of the Holy Grail

From CATHERINE CHRISTIAN,
S Devon:

I found the Cathars, at first, oddly disappointing! One had been led to believe this "heresy" was the secret teaching enshrined in the Trouvère's writings... Their actual beliefs were very much in tune with the Arthurian, Celtic, Druidic patterns, and, indeed, with all the great mystery teachings, but somehow it only felt like a corner of a much bigger jigsaw that fell into place with them...

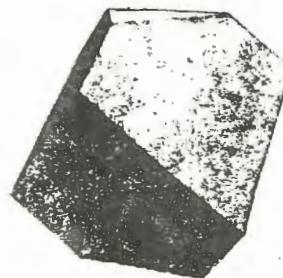
I have come to the conclusion that

1 The Cathar heresy, as such, was, in the main, embraced by the emerging "middle class" townsfolk who, because of economic expansion, had time to think and question in a way the peasant population had neither leisure nor education enough to develop for themselves... A proportion of the aristocracy were "converted", rather as our Victorian intellectuals took up socialism. But I couldn't get the hang of a lot of mysterious clues that were left hanging when all that's said!

2 My final explanation evolved slowly, and is that the Cathar heresy is separate from the "heresy" enshrined in the Trouvère writings, but was extensively used as cover by those involved in a far more intricate underground movement.

I put my thesis on this into a lecture last year ("The Secret that's never been told", given before the Folk Lore Society of Devonshire Association, 23.7.79): "I believe that Europe of the Middle Ages was, in fact, penetrated throughout by a Resistance Movement,

highly organised and most carefully concealed... a movement towards a freedom of belief and freedom of enquiry which ran contrary to the Orthodox disciplines... a conscious quest for forbidden intellectual enlightenment and wider spiritual horizons... The heresy of the Holy Graal."



Albrecht Dürer's mysterious Polyhedron

From Melencolia, an engraving of 1514.

What is the significance of this solid that is contemplated by the dark-faced angel of Dürer's engraving?

Like a cube, it consists of eight faces (two equilateral triangles and six Superman-type pentagons) but has eighteen edges (a cube has only twelve).

Does it show a German tradition of the graal as an emerald stone? Remember the tradition of the graal as the emerald fallen to earth from the crown or perhaps forehead of Lucifer, and compare the mention of the Visigothic Emerald Table in the article that follows.

This "article" is a résumé of some of the ground Pendragon has covered in the past which, at first sight, doesn't seem to have anything Arthurian about it, and is partly intended as an introduction to new readers. The "article" is cobbled together from material written by the late Jess Foster, sometime editor and Honourary Secretary until her death in January 1979, taken from Vol 5 No 3 May 1971 / Vol 6 No 2 May 1972, No 3 October 1972 / Vol 9 No 4 August 1976.



BRIEFLY, The Cathars and Reincarnation concerns a woman who lives in the West Country here who suffered intolerable nightmares until she was convinced she was going out of her mind and decided to visit a psychiatrist, Dr Gurdham. Slowly, over the years, the patient recovered her confidence as she dredged up names of people and descriptions of terrible events which she appeared to "remember" from a previous life when she was a peasant living in the Pyrenees. She described her friends and neighbours, all of whom were Cathars, when the Inquisition finally decided to liquidate this "heretical" community. Many details she gave, though apparently incorrect when checked with the records of the Inquisition, proved on further investigation to be more correct than the records.

Catharism was another name given to the Albigenses who were, according to the Church of Rome, heretics. (In classical Greek the word heretic meant only a free-thinker.) They were a puritanical sect, strict in morals and, as far as possible, sharing their goods communally, they ate no meat, cheese or eggs. They said in general that the doctrines of Christ and His Apostles were sufficient for salvation without the statutes of the Church. Their major heresy appears to have been their attitude towards the Mother of Jesus. "They denied that the Blessed Virgin Mary was the true mother of Jesus; they denied also that she was a woman of flesh. But they said their sect and Order is the Virgin Mary and that true penance is a chaste virgin who bears sons of God when they are received into their sect and Order."²

While they lived in the quiet countryside of the Pyrenees they were kept in touch with other similar groups and other free-thinking communities by the Troubadours. Many of their romantic songs were not love ballads, as others believed, but were religious beliefs and ideals expressed in song and secret language. It seems that the Cathars, by and large, did not set much store by the Bible as a whole, but they carried copies of St John's Gospel wherever they went and taught from that. St John was the Apostle who, at the time of the Crucifixion, was commanded to care for the Mother. In King Arthur's Avalon Geoffrey Ashe quotes extracts from the Acts of Pilate and from an apocryphal Gospel written by "Bartholomew". The Apostles, he says, insisted on questioning Mary until finally she gave in to their entreaties and gave a remarkable reply which had startling results. From this Geoffrey deduces that the answer to the

query, "Whom does the Grail serve?" would seem to be Mary. If we accept the Cathar interpretation of this word we can think up our own explanations.

GUARDIANS OF THE GRAIL

A love of secrecy developed from the telling of sacred legends (such as the story of Jason and the Search for The Golden Fleece) into the cultivation of secret cyphers, anagrams, plays on words, even rhyming slang and double meanings. Throughout the ages the hidden meanings were preserved by various Societies which carried on outward and visible activities but contained inner groups which preserved the esoteric knowledge. (The Gnostics were, of course, amongst these.)

The three most powerful Societies were the Kabbalists, the Templars and the Assassins. Like everything else connected with such Societies their names and symbols concealed rather than revealed their true natures. The original seal of the Templars depicted two men on one horse. Ostensibly this was intended to convey the meaning that they were so poor they could only afford to share one horse between two men. Members themselves knew differently: it meant that they were both monks and knights. No king could claim allegiance from them because they were monks; no Pope could lay claim to their belongings because they were knights.

Certain aspects of the esoteric Societies and the Templars in particular become very clear indeed. The men with the mostest were the men with the gnosis. They were extremely active and developed high-powered brains. Not for them the life of contemplation (or at least until extreme old age overtook them): nor do they seem to have concerned themselves with any social problems.

Around Rennes-les-Bains in the Pyrenees (once Aereda, wealthy capital of the Visigoths) the Templars, the Cathars and the Voisins were closely allied by marriage and by tempestuous events, not to mention legends concerning various White Queens. Flavia Anderson⁴ refers to the "veiled language" of the Grail. The sites and strongholds of the Order of Templars are wrapped in legends concerning a White Queen, her various lovers and a search for a closely-guarded treasure: Isis was the White Queen of Egypt because she was said to have taught the Egyptians how to weave flax into the white linen for sails of their ships. The language of religion was used to veil the secrets of the treasures: at least some of the treasures were actually exercises in astronomy.⁵

CRUSADE AGAINST THE GRAIL

When there were Cathars in plenty in Germany, Italy and elsewhere why did the Church pursue such a determined and vindictive drive against the little group at Montsegur in the heart of the Languedoc country, asks de Sede and replies that it was, in fact, a crusade against the Grail...⁶

The castle was not primarily for protection (there were many others) but it was the home of the Grail, the place of initiation, the repository of all the secrets. After years of persecution, torture, tremendous heroisms and self-sacrifices, they were finally betrayed. It was the Queen Regent of France, Blanche de Castile, who gave the order to "Chop off the head of

the Hydra"... But three, possibly four, men were hidden in the lower dungeon and were able to escape down the mountainside, taking with them the precious Grail. Their passage through the mountains has been traced from one cave to another where they left graffiti on the walls to indicate that the Grail rested there.

Otto Rahn's The Crusade Against the Grail (1933) draws attention to the similarities between Wolfram's Parzival and the Montsegur scene. First, writes de Sède, the name and personage of Parsival warrants a pause for thought. We have said that the Adepts of the religion of Zoroaster, ancestors of the Manicheans (who are also ancestors of the Cathars) called themselves Parsees - a word which means Pure.* The word Cathar is also a translation of the word Pure and is therefore identified with the word Parsee, so that the word Parsival is the best one could choose for an undercover name for a Cathar nobleman...

Wolfram gives the first King of the Grail the name of Parilla and one knows that the Lords of Montsegur were called Perella. Much later, when Wagner was composing his opera, it was to Montsegur that he went to meditate and he wrote in the script that the Chateau of Monsalvat should be shown as being in mountainous country similar to that of the ancient Visigoth country.

The Visigoth Kings possessed a relic which they called the Emerald Table. They considered it immensely sacred and hid it jealously. When they were forced to leave Occitania they took it to Spain with them. Obviously this was not an emerald, but it was a green stone of some kind... it might be a meteorite. It is from the vernacular of the Languedoc countryside that the word Grail originates. Gresal or greal means a stone vase. The same dialect provides the origin of the Christian development, Lo San Greal, but this, de Sede reminds his readers, is the Grail of the hermeticist. During the war the Nazis sealed off Montsegur and refused to allow the local people to go near it. That did not prevent them from carrying out extensive investigations themselves.

REFERENCES

- 1 Arthur Guirdham The Cathars and Reincarnation (Neville Spearman 1970) and "Reincarnation in Clinical Practice" in The Golden Blade Rudolf Steiner Press 1969 pl12. 2 R J Warner The Albigensian Heresy SPCK 1922. R D Webster "Catharism and the Celts" in Pendragon Glastonbury Fair edition 1971.
- 3 Geoffrey Ashe King Arthur's Avalon (Collins 1957) Appendix 1.
- 4 Flavia Anderson The Ancient Secret (Gollancz 1953). Anderson's Grail is made of crystal or glass. 5 Louis Charpentier The Mysteries of Chartres Cathedral RILKO 1972. Gérard de Sède Les Templiers sont parmi Nous and Le Trésor Maudit de Rennes-le-Château (J'ai Lu edition). 6 Gérard de Sède Le Secret des Cathares (J'ai Lu).

NOTE* Persian Zoroastrians who took refuge in India from Moslem persecution called themselves Parsi = Persian.

The Flemish Holy Grail



REVIEW

Paul de Saint-Hilaire
Bruges, Cité du Graal
(Rossel Edition, 1978)

PETER RATAZZI has kindly brought to our attention this 48 page booklet by the author of books on Mysterious Flanders and Mysterious Belgium. In case you felt convinced of the reality of the Cathar grail of Montségur, try the claims of the Belgian city of Bruges for size...

KNIGHT OF THE SWAN

There are several themes running through this work. The first is that of the medieval tale of the Knight of the Swan (familiar to us perhaps from Wagner's Lohengrin where, following Wolfram von Eschenbach's lead, the Knight of the Swan is made the son of Parzival). In the original the 10th century Knight is called Helias, a septuplet born, like his siblings, with a chain around his neck. Removal of the chain transforms them into swans. By the mischief of their father Oriant's mother, one sibling never retrieves his human form but ends up pulling the barge of Helias along the inland waterways of Belgium in quest of adventure.

By the canals of Bruges where swans still dot the water, a convent dedicated to St Eliz-

abeth of Thuringia (13th century) one of whose emblems are red roses; the convent's legendary founder was a queen Beatrice. Now the princes of Thuringia claimed descent from Helias, the Knight of the Swan, handing down his ring through the generations and Saint-Hilaire notes that Helias' fairy-mother was called Beatrix, and his only sister... Rose. (Perhaps this only indicates family name traditions; I note however that in English heraldry the seventh issue of a family is represented by a rose.)

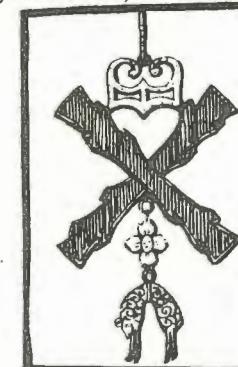
In the church of Notre-Dame we find the tombs of the family of Lanchals (in French, Long-Cou ie Long-Neck) whose arms are those of a white swan breasting the waves. Around the neck of the recumbent figure of Pierre Lanchals (beheaded 1488) is carved a golden chain. At this stage Saint-Hilaire's next theme appears.

ORDER OF THE GOLDEN FLEECE

In 1430 Duke Philip of Burgundy founded in Bruges an order with 24 (later 29 or 30) companions with the emblem of the Golden Fleece. Each member was obliged always to wear his golden chain (with golden-fleece emblem) like the swan-children of Beatrice, until death caused them to depart for the country of the stars. On their scarlet robes was embroidered the device AULTRE N'ARAY, the words of the King Oriant to Beatrice in verse 131 of The Knight of the Swan.

The patronal feast-day of the Order (and of Burgundy) was the 30th November, St Andrew's Day. St Andrew, the first disciple, was apostle to Scythia, the ancestral home of the Burgundians, and it was from Scythia on the shores of the Black Sea that the Golden Fleece was to be procured. (Saint-Hilaire notes that Andrew's brother Simon Peter has his feast-day on the 30th June, and that the initials of the inter-

vening months spell out J.A.S.O.N., the leader of the Argonauts in the Quest for the Golden Fleece. Make of that what you will!)



QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

Another theme is now met with. In the 12th century a count of Flanders, Thierry d'Alsace, went to Jerusalem to bring back (with an escort of Templars) a phial containing some of the Precious Blood received by Joseph of Arimathea, together with the water used to wash the body of Christ. These he brought back to place in a crypt he had begun to build, dedicated to an important Eastern saint, Basil the Great. The tympanum shows St Basil being rebaptised prior to a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On the walls of the crypt are sculptured two vessels either side of a Tau cross. These presumably show the vessels containing the blood and water.



This crypt was built on the site of the Bourg, the castle and treasury of the Counts of Flanders. The 13th count, Charles the Good, had been assassinated in 1127 for his treasure. But when the murderers had themselves been killed, the massive treasure was nowhere to be seen, even when the Bourg was systematically dismantled.



The assassination of Charles the Good was bizarre. He was beheaded as he gave a coin to a pauper, and the conspirators ritually ate bread and drank beer placed on the corpse. This was apparently a Saxon custom, Adsisa, designed to sap the strength of enemies. In this case it didn't work...

In due course the Arthurian poet Chrétien de Troyes received an anonymous Flemish MS with the instructions to translate this into verse. This he did, and Chrétien's Li Contes del Gral, the Tale of the Grail, is generally dated ca 1180. Saint-Hilaire suggests Chrétien's Grail story is an allegory of events at Bruges. The castle by the water's edge where Perceval meets the ailing Fisher-King is the Bourg where Count Charles the Good is mortally wounded. The room where the Grail is carried in procession is the sanctuary of St Basil's crypt (basilicos is Greek for kingly) where the Holy Blood is kept, placed there by Thierry and promenaded annually in Bruges.

The long quest for the Graal which Perceval has to undertake is the pilgrimage to Jerusalem with the chapel of St Basil as the starting point.

Scarcely had Chretien's account been completed (by others) than the theme of the Graal was taken up at the court of the Landgrave Herman of Thuringia by Wolfram von Eschenbach. Herman was the descendant of the Knight of the Swan, holder of his ring and father-in-law of Elizabeth (patron saint of the Convent of the Vine mentioned earlier). In Wolfram's Parzival Perceval became the father of the Knight of the Swan, rechristened Lohengrin (ie Laherengrin, or Garin of Lorraine). Further, the Guardians of the Grail were called templars, the same Templars who accompanied the Holy Blood from Palestine to Bruges.

THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM

Not far from St Basil's is a curious little 15th century church on a north-south axis, its crypt containing a replica of the Holy Sepulchre. The phrase para tutum, prepare a shelter (évident throughout the building's fabric) is supposedly related to Isiah LX 2 and Dante's Inferno XV 4-6 which mentions Bruges and its dykes. Significantly, the alignment from the eyes of the recumbant figure of the founder Anselme Adornes, through the door to the rising sun on the shortest day of the year (an angle of 127°) when extended ends exactly at Jerusalem.

Other oddities about this Church of Jerusalem are that the weathervane is a St Catherine's wheel, the emblem too of St Donatian in whose basilica Charles the Good was assassinated; the turrets of the tower display (as at Chartres

Cathedral) a moon and a sun; the adjacent Rue de Jerusalem marks the line of the winter solstice leading ultimately to the Holy City itself; the clocktower is a near replica of the tower of the Temple as depicted on the seal of the Grand Master of the Templars, with arcading, onion dome and Templar cross. Saint-Hilaire's conclusion is that Bruges was to be regarded as the New Jerusalem in the West.



THE GREAT BEAR

About 852 a certain Count Baldwin left the French court of Charles the Bald to found Bruges in a deserted spot not far from the sea. The legend goes that he found himself face to face with a giant bear which he then transfixed with his spear. Saint-Hilaire believes this is symbolic of the constellation of the Great Bear discovered by Baldwin as a megalithic arrangement in situ. Originally constructed ca 4000 BC, each of the seven stars marked by stones were perhaps replaced by bas-reliefs or statues of bears. At least three of these representations remain, and one is at the Lodge of the Knights of... the White Bear. The seven stars of the Great Bear (in Greek, Helix) are thus, he argues, the seven swan children (one of whom is Helias) reproduced cryptically in a 16th century painting of key buildings in Bruges entitled THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE CITY OF BRUGES.

Because this booklet is not readily available, I have summarised its main points while omitting much that is relevant. It reads like an impossible story, almost too good to be true, but the numerous photographs and illustrations which total over half the book are very tantalising. I have a few quibbles, eg the golden chain of the Golden Fleece Order is not the same as the silver chain of the swan-children; Helias (Elias in some versions) is less likely to be derived from helix than from some Celtic word for swan according to S Baring-Gould (cf modern Welsh alarch); the medieval legends tend to centre on Antwerp or Nijmegen, not Bruges etc. But the Holy Blood-Chretien link is probably worth following up, especially for its relationship with Wolfram's version of the Grail story. Your comments would be appreciated. Meanwhile, there is the same author's Mysterious Brussels...

THE LAST CATHARS....



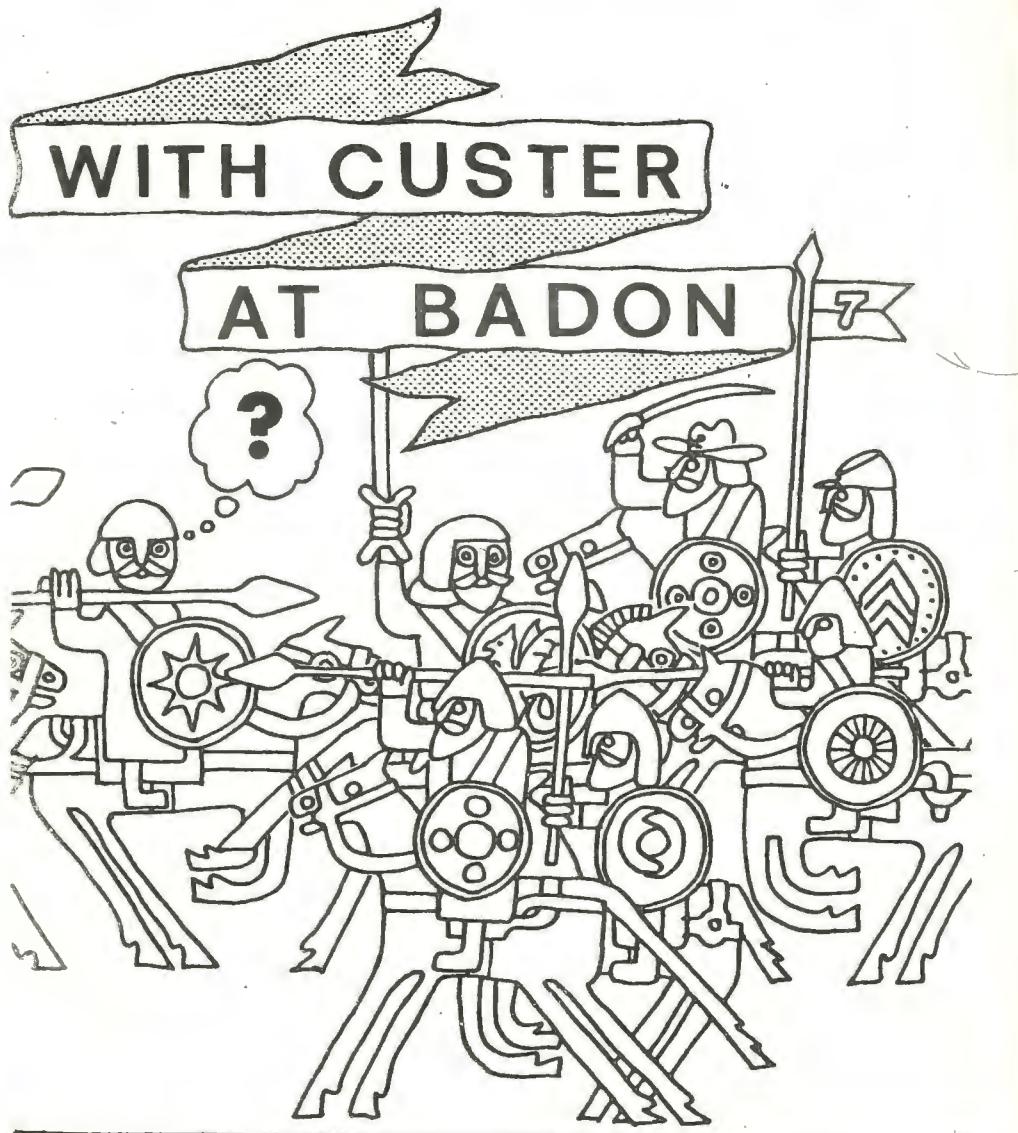
Bishop Jacques Fournier,
Pope Benedict XII

REVIEW
Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie
Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French village 1294-1324 (Penguin 1980 £2.95)

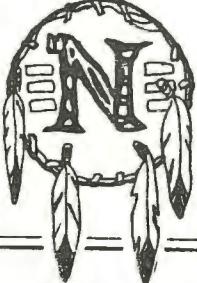
Reluctantly I'm not going to attempt a lengthy discussion of this famous and worthwhile book (first published 1978) but just mention a couple of points which relate to themes found elsewhere in this magazine. This study is based on the Register of an Inquisition conducted by the Cistercian Bishop of Pamiers, Jacques Fournier, in the early 14th c. "A sort of compulsive Maigret," he rooted out Catharism in his diocese (covering the medieval Comté de Foix, now Ariège) 80 years after Catharism had in 1244 been officially destroyed at Montségur.

Due to the efforts of Cathar missionaries the dualist heresy enjoyed a revival in the N Pyrenees where it was kept alive by certain households and by migrant mountain shepherds. Because this is a study of real human beings, not heretical dogmas and practices per se, we learn more of the medieval peasant mind than of secret traditions (or of a Gnostic grail, real or imagined) but as such it makes extremely compelling reading.

"The prisoners of Montaillou were the last of the last Cathars," writes Le Roy Ladurie and essentially Catharism, as practised by these Languedoc peasants, was Christian, not pagan or Gnostic. Any non-Christian elements which crept into their beliefs seems to have infiltrated Catholicism in equal measure (bar the obvious differences like reincarnation and dualism). But any notion of a grail as expounded by troubadours and the like passed these occitan villagers by.

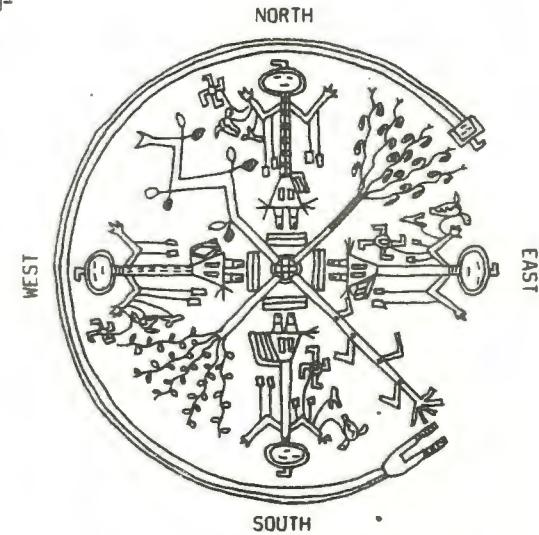


OT EVEN I, O NOKOMIS, would suggest that King Arthur roamed the great mid-western plains of America, although if Saint Brendan could do it.....

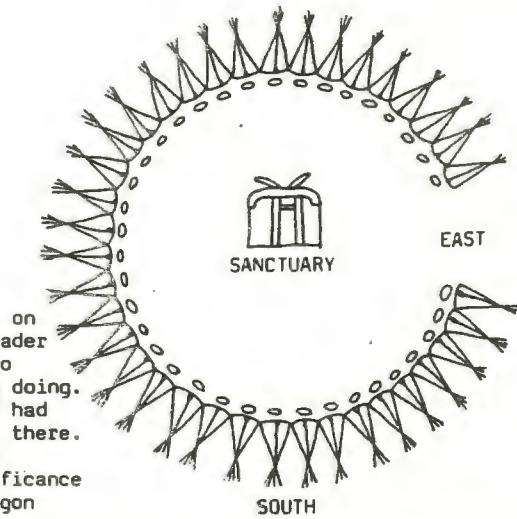


At some time or another, most of us have seen, even at the remove of film or television, cultural dances from most parts of the world. There seldom seems to be any common ground between wildly contrasting styles of national or racial expression, but once in a while, when the juxtaposition is just right, the parallels between totally isolated cultures are brought stunningly into focus. Such a situation arose on the second day of Think 80 at Cheltenham

Many years of association with the Pendragon Society have taught me that the Society's quest after the significance of the Matter of Britain follows many devious paths, none of which have ever proved entirely barren. Accordingly, I scrounged such books as I could on North American Indians and set myself to see what I could find.



Navaho healing-rite sand picture.

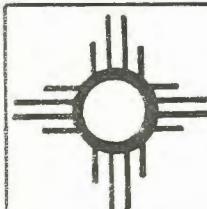


Shortly afterwards, we received a visit on the Pendragon Society stand from the leader of the Indian Dancers, Kim Oakshott, who expressed much interest in what we were doing. He told us how he loved Glastonbury and had ceremonially danced and smoked his pipe there. And at Stonehenge. And at the Rollright Stones; the circle being of great significance to the Indians. I heard my little Pendragon voice whisper in my ear: "You're off on another Quest!"

One of the first things that becomes noticeable even in a preliminary study of North American Indian culture is the obsession with the symbolism of the circle and its derivatives. Philosophically, the circle is considered the tangible expression of oneness, eternity, harmony, balance, completeness and, by extension, sanctity. This viewpoint, in terms of practical expression, is combined with a veneration of the four cardinal points, particularly the East, to produce many aspects of life and behaviour that echo and re-echo from our own cultural background.

A large proportion of social and religious ceremonial takes place within a circle or within a circular format which is oriented towards the rising sun. Several nomadic tribes would, when coming together for a general council or pow-wow, erect their tipis in a circle with an entrance-gap on the east. Certain shamanic healing-rites involve placing the patient within a sand painting, east-oriented, and often enclosed by a broken circle representing Rainbow. Smaller councils and group discussions are, by nature of the tipis in which they are held, very much a round-table affair.

Curiously enough, the tipi itself does not have a circular floor-plan. The structure is not a true cone, having only one axis of symmetry instead of two, and is slightly tilted towards the front which, of course, almost always faces east. The resulting plan appears to be a perfect sunrise-oriented Professor Thom Type I egg-shaped ring. (Incidentally, it is interesting to look up the word 'oriented' in a good dictionary)



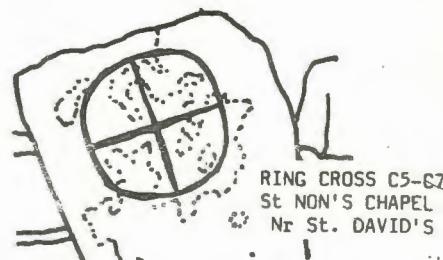
ZIA SUN SYMBOL



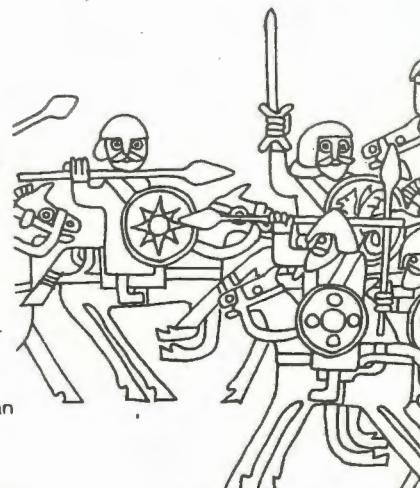
PLAINS INDIANS
EARTH-WHEEL

A symbol which regularly appears in Indian graphic and applied arts is the cross-and-circle. This they regard as representing the Earth and the Four Directions and as such has exactly the same meaning as is still current in Euro/Asian astronomy-astrology. On a more esoteric plane, it symbolises the mystery of the universe and Man's interrelation with it and so becomes cognate with many of the metaphysical implications of the Dark Age wheel-cross and earlier proto-swastika Aryan symbols.

Probably one of the best examples of transatlantic parallel philosophy is a Seventeenth Century record of a long-since disappeared east coast tribe that performed its dances and ceremonies in an enclosure, presumably laid out North-South-East-West, marked by a circle of



RING CROSS C5-67
St NON'S CHAPEL
Nr St. DAVID'S



large wooden posts, each with its top carved in the likeness of a human head. This echoes not only our own megalithic structures, particularly Woodhenge, but the Greek representations of Hermes to whom the number four was sacred.

To the student of the historical rather than the esoteric, the study of Iron Age and Dark Age Celts can be thrown into sharp relief by comparison with the American Indian. The endemic social and emotional flaws that led to the collapse of the Celts before superior technology in the First Century and unified assault in the Sixth are also painfully evident in the history of the major confrontation between the United States and the Indians between 1840 and 1890.

Even though the eventual defeat of both races was a foregone conclusion, it came about more quickly than could be reasonably expected given that the Celt was considered to be one of the most daunting of European warriors and the Indian was described by the U.S. Army as being "probably the finest light cavalryman in the world". In both cases, the opportunity to settle old scores with rival tribes by alliance with the invader proved a greater lure than to present a united front against foreign occupation. Even when the aggressor was soundly checked by a bold stroke, such as the counterattacks mounted by the Brigantes, Silures and Sioux, inter-tribal rivalry effectively prevented any unified rising which, at the least, could have obtained more favourable terms for eventual surrender.

mentor Merlin/Sitting Bull performs his sacred rites in the mountains and foretells not only the outcome of the battle, but the eventual fate of his people.

The real value of such research depends on the validity of superimposing one culture on another and establishing an acceptable interface between them. If, as I believe, this can be done with a reasonable degree of success with the Celts and the AmerIndians, then the justification of the effort involved lies in the large amount of documented evidence available from the New World which may be applied, at least as a guide, to the misty and largely unrecorded world of the Old. Much of the relevant issues are, even now, only just out of living memory and a great deal was recorded dispassionately and objectively giving great insight into both sides of the struggle, providing us with what could prove to be a valuable tool for research into our own beginnings.



DEER MASK FROM
A MOUND (SIC)
IN OKLAHOMA
400 BC-400 AD

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J. Michael THE MABYN OF THE MABYNOGION




Round the turn of the century in the Rhondda Valleys of South Wales, a man called Owen Morien Morgan wrote a series of books purporting to explain the essence of the old Druidic beliefs.

His sources, he claimed, were the local traditions of his native valleys, which he painstakingly collected and reinterpreted in Kimmerian Revelations (c. 1918) and The Light of Britannia (c. 1910). At the time he was accused of perpetuating the so-called forgeries of Iolo Morganwg, and although he was indebted to Iolo for some of his information, his unique interpretation of these traditions caused just as much controversy, in its own right, as had the Iolo MSS. almost a century earlier.

He refers throughout his books to the Druids, though it appears that he has recognised that Druid was a much later name given to the class of Astronomer-Priests at the onset of the decline of their power. They are first heard of in Welsh literature as the "Gwyddonaidd", 'the Men of Science',

and called by Morien "The Mabynogion". Mabyn is the old Welsh for "young or new-born son", the whole word Mabynogion, in Morien's interpretation, meaning 'the adherents to' or 'the worshippers of' the 'new-born son' (sun). The Mid-winter Solsticial celebrations were at one point the saddest, and at another the happiest of the festivals of the ancient Britons. At sunset on the longest night, the old Sun of the old year, was regarded as having been slain by his brother, Darkness, amid great mourning by the Druids at the death of their Deity. But the essence of the sun's Divinity was meant to have escaped in a mastless ship called Llong Foel, which carried it to the celtic underworld, Annwn, and from which place it was symbolically 'reborn' on the following sunrise. It was this 'new-born sun' that the Astronomer-Priests called the Mabyn, since he was regarded as the 'new-born son' of the old sun, and his rebirth was greeted with joyous celebration.

In Morien's interpretation, the essence of the Druidic beliefs consisted

of scientific records of the sun's annual journey through the signs of the Zodiac, and the resultant seasonal changes on Earth. These rhythmically changing appearances they poetically allegorised, personifying both Sun and Earth under divers, but seasonally descriptive names, at each stage of the natural year.

Even though the 'new-born' Sun was the centre of the rebirth celebrations, the Earth Goddess was also regarded as having been reborn, at the same time. Under the name Morwyn Ddu, The Black Virgin, she was depicted as the sister of the Mabyn. As brother and sister, the personified Sun and Earth were worshipped up until the Spring (Vernal) Equinox, when she was regarded as having reached puberty, and was wedded to the Sun. The result of their union was the fertilizing of the seeds in the Earth-Mothers womb. As proof of their joint creative powers, the flowers bloomed from the Spring Equinox onwards, and from which time she was called Blodwen, Holy Flora. The Mabyn, now a handsome youth, was called Tegid (All Beautiful) a title retained until the Summer Solstice, when the ancient Britons celebrated the victory of light over darkness. But from this time onwards, the hours of light were seen to diminish, and Tegid became Tegid-Foel, meaning Bald and All Beautiful. In Morien's interpretation of the Druidic traditions, the disc of the personified Sun was likened to the head of a man, its rays likened to the hair on a man's head: as men often tended to go bald towards the close of their lives, so the Sun's rays diminish in time and strength towards the close of the natural year.



At the Autumn Equinox, about the time of the heliac rising of the stars of Virgo, as the Harvest Goddess, Blodwen bore her fruits, after which she became known as Tyngedwyn Dyrriath. Tyngedwyn means 'Holy Fortune', in respect of the fruits of the Earth, the first of which she bore as early as Lammas. Dyrriath has the double meaning 'Barrenness' and 'Furiousness'. The 'Barrenness' refers to the infertility of the 'Old Hag', as she began to be regarded from the Autumn Equinox to her death at the Winter Solstice: the 'Furiousness' was meant to typify the attitude of a 'mother' in defence of her 'children', in this case the 'fruits of the Earth'.

The last quarter of the natural year was symbolised by death, the Earth losing her green mantle as the flora decays, and the leaves fall from the trees, and the Sun's rays and light diminishing to the point where, at Sunset on that fateful longest night, they were symbolically slain by the Sun's brother, Darkness. According to Morien, the Druids wept and mourned the death of their Deities, and kept vigil until the next sunrise, and the rebirth of Mother Earth and Father Sun. He says that although the 'Old Hag' was now the 'new-born' Virgin, the Druids still believed it was she who gave birth to the Mabyn, the 'new-born' Sun. He suggests that it was this belief that encouraged the Druids to embrace Christianity, as they believed the 'Virgin-Birth' of Jesus, at almost the same time of year, to be just a modern, middle-eastern version of

their own solar allegories.

It is well recorded that, apart from a few scattered outposts, the Romans never gained full control of many parts of South Wales (Siluria). After the massacre of the Druids, at their stronghold on Anglesea (Mona), the remnants of the Druids in these Islands would obviously have hastened to the safety of these Silurian havens. Doubtless they would have made great efforts to retain their culture and beliefs, and it is quite possible that the essence of the Druidic religion remained intact and flourishing, protected by impenetrable Silurian forests and the fiercest warriers the might of Rome had ever encountered.

It is from these valleys that Morien collected the old Traditions, and if his interpretation of them and Christianity is correct, it is easy to see how the similarities of the 'Virgin Births' gave rise to the independent Celtic Christian Church.

Although the focal point for both Druid and Christian was around the Winter Solstice, in earlier times the Astronomer-Priests also attached great importance to the Spring (Vernal) Equinox. This was the time when the fertility of both Sun and Earth were tested; the time when the 'seminal word' of the Sun fertilised the seeds in the Earth Mother's womb, ensuring flowers and fruits for another year. The background of stars at sunrise on the Vernal Equinox, from about 4,000 B.C. to 2,000 B.C., were those from the constellation of Taurus. During this time the overall symbol for the Sun was the Bull. But due to the procession of the Equinoxes, the Vernal point retrograded through each of the constellations in turn, taking 25,920 years to complete the full

cycle. Each Astrological Age was determined by this background constellation to the Vernal sunrise, with great cultural upheavals at the change-over to each 'New Age'.

Just as the Bull Cults of the Taurean Age gave way to the Arian Ram's Horn symbolism, so the Age of Aries, in turn gave way to the Piscean Christian era, with its early Fish symbols.

Even so, traditions died hard, says Morien, and like those whose mistakes carried the Bull cults into Aries, many of the early Christians who had missed the point of the changing age, being used to the age of the Ram, symbolised Christ as the 'new-born' 'Lamb of God'. But there were still some who adhered to the rhythmic natural philosophies, as is evident by the fish symbols of the true Christians in the Roman catacombs. Possibly the story of Moses's frustration at having returned with the 'New Laws' of the new Arian Age, to find Aaron's golden 'Calf', was due to his expecting a golden 'Lamb'.

Perhaps the fall from the purity of the Garden of Eden symbolised Mankind's waning adherence to the cyclic star-science that appears to have been the Holy Canon of the 'natural religions'. But even the 'Fall' is part of a cyclic process, and it is no coincidence that, as we leave the rapidly decaying 'Age of Pisces', the waxing appreciation of the Rhythmic Canon of Harmony and Natural proportion is focusing on the dawning 'Age of Aquarius', and the expected Mabyn, the 'new-born son (Sun) of the 'New Age'.

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