

# Otto Rahn and the Quest for the Holy Grail



We know that Otto Rahn fell into disgrace with some elements in the hierarchy in 1937 and for disciplinary reasons was assigned a tour of duty at the SS run Dachau concentration camp. In the winter of 1938/39 he wrote to the SS Reichsführer requesting immediate dismissal from the SS. A few months later he was dead.

Otto Rahn (1904-1938), described as a gifted young author and historian, was one of this century's truly fascinating figures. Prior to his mysterious death, at age 35, he wrote two books about the Cathars of southern France: *Kreuzzug gegen den Gral* ("Crusade Against the Grail") and *Luzifers Hofgesindel* ("Lucifer's Courtiers"). Legends continue to surround both his life and tragic death. In the 1982 best-selling book *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, Otto Rahn's name appears in a small but intriguing footnote.

Otto Rahn believed that he had found the location of the Holy Grail Mountain, the Montsalvat of legend, in the Cathar mountain fortress of Montségur in the French Pyrenees. He was, says Prof. Joscelyn Godwin, "largely responsible for the mythological complex that associated the Cathars and Montségur with the Holy Grail and its Castle."

## Montségur

Norma Lorre Goodrich in her own highly acclaimed work *The Holy Grail* pays tribute to Otto Rahn's *Crusade against the Grail* describing it as "a wonderful book, a monument to this German idealist author, who died mysteriously during a descent in the Alps."

According to his French translator, Otto Rahn believed with absolute conviction that (1) the Cathars were the last owners of the Holy Grail, and (2) the Holy Grail "perished" when they died at the hands of the "pope and the King of France" at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

The war of the Roman Catholic Church against the Cathars is variously described as a war where Roma and Amor stood opposite each other, in which the catholic ('common') idea triumphed with flame and sword over the catharic ('pure') idea.

The medieval Cathars believed in the existence of an eternal war between the principles of Light and Darkness on whose meetings and encounters everything in the universe was based. Darkness was for them dark matter, the unperfected, the transient. They identified all clerical and secular rulers, principally the Catholic Church as the personification of the Darkness. In their mythology the sun symbolised the primordial Light from which all life emerged.

For Otto Rahn, Montségur was the “Lighthouse of Catharism.”

## Rahn's Grail Quest

Otto Rahn was born on February 18th, 1904 in Michelstadt in southern Germany. In secondary school he developed a fascination with the history of the medieval Cathars, their Deist persuasion and revolt against the pope and the king. From 1922 to 1926 he studied jurisprudence, German philosophy and history. Rahn intended to write a dissertation on Guyot, the Provençal Troubadour on whose lost Grail poem Wolfram von Eschenbach claimed to have based his Parsifal.

The medieval Germanic tale of Parsifal, revived in the 1800s by Wagner's popular mystical operas, fired Otto Rahn's modern quest for the Holy Grail. He soon pieced together a series of clues gleaned from a study of the history of the Cathars and the poem of Wolfram von Eschenbach, a Knight Templar of the thirteenth century.

Driven by his deep interest in the Cathars and Grail legends, from 1928 to 1932, Rahn researched and travelled widely in France, Spain, Italy and Switzerland.

Early in the summer of 1929 Otto Rahn made his first appearance in the Languedoc region of southern France. He quickly settled in the village of Lavelanet, and over the next three months systematically explored the ruins of the Cathar temple-fortress on Montségur, as well as the surrounding mountain grottoes.

It was in Languedoc that the city of Carcassonne, the holy mountain of the Cathars (Montségur), and the church of Rennes-le-Chateau were located. All of these places were steeped in Cathar lore and it was here that all legends of the Holy Grail seemed to converge.

At Montségur, *writes Nigel Pennick*, in 1244 the heretical Cathars had made their last heroic stand against a Catholic crusade which finally succeeded in their physical destruction. Here, tradition affirms, that on the night before the final assault, three Cathars carrying sacred relics slipped unnoticed over the wall. They carried away the magical regalia of the Merovingian King Dagobert II and a cup reputed to be the Holy Grail.



Possession of the Grail has always been the dream of chivalric orders. The Knights of King Arthur's Round Table, the Templars, even the Teutonic Knights, have sought the mystic vessel. But Otto Rahn believed that he could triumph where centuries of questing had failed. He had studied the sacred geometry of Montségur, its sunrise orientations and its relationship with other sacred places, and had discovered secret underground passages, where he felt the treasure must be concealed (*Hitler's Secret Science*).

Otto Rahn's knowledge of 'sacred geography', *Nigel Pennick suggests*, can be traced back to the Druids and Templars. The Cathars were also said to be familiar with this tradition.

In many meetings with the local people (he is said to have spoken the local Provençal language fluently), Otto Rahn gathered information concerning the Cathars and the Grail.

These formed the basis of Rahn's thrilling accounts of his exploration of the caverns of Sabarthes south of Montségur and especially the Lombrives caverns, called “the Cathedral” by the local people. He described this magnificent cavern as follows:

In time out of mind, in an epoch the remoteness of which has been barely touched by modern historical science, it was used as a temple consecrated to the Iberian God Illhomber, God of the Sun. Between two monoliths one which had crumbled, the steep path leads into the giant vestibule of the cathedral of Lombrives. Between the stalagmites of white limestone, between walls of a deep brown colour and the brilliant rock crystal, the path leads down into the bowels of the mountain. A hall 260 feet in height served as a cathedral for the “heretics”.

Rahn tells how, “Deeply stirred I walked through the crystal halls and marble crypts. My hands put aside the bones of fallen pure ones and knights...”

An old Languedoc shepherd's tale recorded by Otto Rahn and incorporated into his first book displays mystical symbolism:

During the time when the walls of Montségur were still standing, the Cathars kept the Holy Grail there. Montségur was in danger. The armies of Lucifer had besieged it. They wanted the Grail, to restore it to their Prince's diadem from which it had fallen during the fall of his angels. Then, at the most critical moment, there came down from heaven a white dove, which, with its beak, split Tabor [Montségur] in two. Esclarmonde, who was the keeper of the Grail, threw the sacred jewel into the depths of the mountain. The mountain then closed up again, and in this manner was the Grail saved. When the devils entered the fortress, they were too late. Enraged, they put to death by fire all of the Pure Ones, not far from the rock on which the castle stands in the Field of the burnt. All of the Pure Ones perished on the pyre except Esclarmonde. When she knew the Grail to be safe, she climbed to the summit of Mount Tabor, changed into a white dove and flew off toward the mountains of Asia.

Both *Crusade Against the Grail* and *Lucifer's Courtiers* are full of remarkable insights and revelations of important historical links.

Deep within the grottoes of Sabarthez Rahn found chambers in which the walls were covered with symbols characteristic of the Knights Templar, side by side with emblems of the Cathars. This finding confirmed the notion, fostered by historians, that the Knights Templar and the Cathars were at one time closely associated. One intriguing image which had been carved into the stone wall of a grotto was clearly a drawing of a lance. This depiction immediately suggests the bleeding lance which appears over and over again in the Arthurian legends.

This cave on the right, was the last refuge of the Cathar Parfaits.

In earlier times, the Holy Grail was considered to have been of esoteric nature – meaning the acquisition of the truest of realisations through enlightenment that leads to eternal life. Only in the Middle Ages became the legend forcibly Christianised and the Grail took on a material form of a cup, the one from which Christ was said to have drunk at the Last Supper, or else the one in which Joseph of Arimathea received the blood of Christ as it spurted from his side as he hung on the cross. The Knights Templar had the task to disseminate the materialistic version. It is centred on the legend of the court of King Arthur (who is the Grail King).



The Cathars who guarded the Holy Grail in their castle at Montségur, Otto Rahn believed, could be traced back to Druids who converted to Manichaeism. The Druids in Britain were forerunners of the Celtic Christian Church. He saw in the culture of the mediaeval Cathar stronghold of Languedoc strong resemblances to the Druids. Their priests akin to the Cathar Parfaits. Both groups were seekers of the Light.

The Cathar secret wisdom was being preserved by the later Troubadours, the travelling poets and singers of the medieval courts of France.

Most Troubadours, according to Rahn, were secret Cathars. Their apparent yearning and longing songs were only seldom dedicated to a special woman, their feminine symbolism referred to the Cathar community, the Sophia, the Wisdom of the Gnostics. To make the doctrine inaccessible to the profane, it was hidden in an erotic symbolism.

When Otto Rahn first studied Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parsifal he noticed remarkable similarities with names and places in southern France, and he suspected that Parsifal's Grail castle Munsalväsche (Richard Wagner called it Montsalvat) was non-other than the Cathar solar-fortress of Montségur. In Eschenbach's work he discerned the influence of Cathar poetry. The probably incorrect assumption that the persecuted Cathars had retreated under the earth and celebrated their mysteries in subterranean churches was adopted by Otto Rahn from the researcher and Cathar enthusiast Antonin Gadal.

The tale that Otto Rahn actually found the Grail, and that it was kept until the end of World War II in the Wewelsburg, the SS castle near Paderborn, can easily be disproved. There was a Grail in Wewelsburg, but it was just a huge rock crystal. Rene Nelli, an important scholar of Catharism, maintains that the Grail is not mentioned in any of the still existing Cathar texts.

## Return to Germany

After 1933 Rahn lived in Berlin, devoting himself to further studies of the Grail. His quest for a secret primordial religious tradition — the Religion of Light — came to the attention of SS leader Heinrich Himmler who sought Rahn's collaboration in SS-sponsored research. After first joining the SS heritage bureau, the Ahnenerbe, as a civilian, his talents were soon recognised by his superiors. Persuaded to formally join the SS in 1936, within a matter of weeks, Otto Rahn was promoted to SS-Unterscharführer.

[It must have been clear from the start that a possible strict national socialist path will not work for someone who was a Cathar. Catharism builds on reincarnation. In a quest for self-improvement, a Soul will incarnate for appropriate experiences in all Continents, and that means having respect for everyone, for differences between people, including different forms of life.

The incompatible nature of his circumstances in 1930s Germany, from which there seemed no escape, against all he, as a sensitive and hence vulnerable intellectual stood for, almost inevitably resulted in the personal tragedy of Otto Rahn. Insert Corascendea.]



By September 1935 Rahn was writing to the chief of the Ahnenerbe about the places he visited in his hunt for Grail traditions in Germany, requesting complete confidence in the matter with the exception of Himmler.

Otto Rahn is even rumoured to have founded a neo-Catharist circle within the SS. In the summer of 1936 he undertook, by order of the SS, an expedition to Iceland. Highlights of this journey formed part of some chapters in his second and final book *Lucifer's Courtiers*, published in 1937. Rahn makes no mention of the SS and that the ship that sailed for Iceland flew a flag with a blue swastika on white background (in sharp contrast to the official standard of the Third Reich).

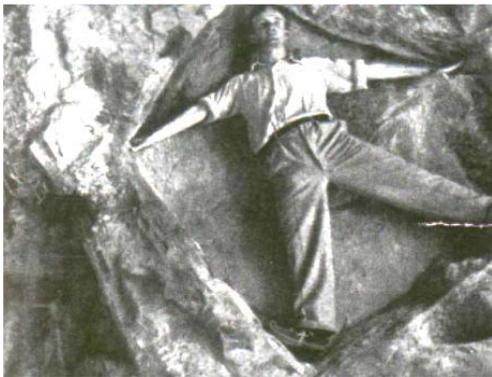
We know that Otto Rahn fell into disgrace with some elements in the hierarchy in 1937 and for disciplinary reasons was assigned a tour of duty at the SS run Dachau concentration camp. In the winter of 1938/39 he wrote to the SS Reichsführer requesting immediate dismissal from the SS. A few months later he was dead.

Rumours abound concerning Otto Rahn's departure from the SS. Some incorrectly claim that he was a homosexual, or of Jewish descent, but evidence of either is lacking. In a conversation Rahn claimed that he had been betrayed and that his life was in danger. In a letter to a friend he openly expressed his concern about the Third Reich:

I have much sorrow in my country. Fourteen days ago I was in Munich. Two days later I preferred to go into my mountains. Impossible for a tolerant, liberal man like me to live in the nation that my native country has become.

Col. Howard Büchner, the author of the *Emerald Cup*, says that Rahn let it be known that he opposed the war for which Germany was obviously preparing in 1938. In place of war, he believed that Germany and then Europe, should be transformed into a community of 'Pure Ones', or Cathars. In other words, Rahn's long association with the history of the Cathars and their unjust persecution by

the church and the throne of France, had led to his recognition that inside, he too, was a Cathar. He was proposing a 'New Order' in which the states of Europe, and perhaps all other nations, would adopt the Cathar beliefs in the interest of world peace.



On 13 March 1939—almost on the anniversary of the fall of Montségur— Otto Rahn died in the snow on the Tyrolean mountains. “In the manner of the Cathar heretics,” says *Nigel Pennick*, “Rahn voluntarily left a world he saw disintegrating.” A few years earlier Otto Rahn had written in *Crusade Against the Grail*:

Their doctrine allowed suicide, but demanded that one did not put an end to his life because of disgust, fear or pain, but in a perfect dissolution from matter. This kind of Endura was allowed when it took place in a moment of mystical sight of divine beauty and kindness... It is only one step from fasting to suicide. To fast requires courage, but the final act of definitive asceticism requires heroism. The consequence is not as cruel as it may look.

The story of the enigmatic life and work of Otto Rahn, symbolising as it does a Great Mystery, will always fascinate both students of the Holy Grail, and seekers of the Cathar tradition.

When we talk about the love sung by the troubadours, of the initiated knights of the Grail, of the true Rosicrucians, we need to understand what lies behind their language. To them and in those days, love did not mean the same thing as it does today to the majority. Amor (Love) was a whole concept that built on the noblest form of humanity. Amor spelt backwards is Roma. Mystic writers suggest that the way in which the word was written, indicated the opposite to Roma, to all that Rome represented. Also Amor broken down into 'a' and 'mor', means Without-Death. That is, to become immortal, eternal, thanks to adopting A-Mor.

*Otto Rahn died for the values that gave meaning to his life.*



Article based on information extracted from

<http://www.wermodandwermod.com/newsitems/news290220121355.html> 29.02.2012

Announcement:

While reproducing the data, Dhaxem.com is in disagreement with some conclusions in the above source, most notably with any possible suggestions that the Cathar doctrine, or Otto Rahn, would have at any stage supported a notion about a Nordic absolute racial or spiritual superiority.

Catharism is a Teaching incorporating the Evolution of the Soul while different continents and different geographical locations lend a suitable environment during each stage of the growth.

[www.dhaxem.com](http://www.dhaxem.com)

©2013 - 2014