

JOURNEY TO THE ONE

PRACTICAL WICCAN HISTORY #1

GODDESS RELIGIONS IN THE OLD WORLD

Gravettian-Aurignacian Cultures (25000 BCEE-15000 BCEE)

The Upper-Paleolithic period, though most of its sites have been found in Europe, is the conjectural foundation of the religion of the Goddess as it emerged in the later Neolithic Age of the Near East. There have been numerous studies of Paleolithic cultures, explorations of sites occupied by these people, and the apparent rites connected with the disposal of their dead.

In these Upper-Paleolithic societies, the concept of the creator of all human life may have been formulated by the clan's image of the women. It is believed that the mother was regarded as the sole parent of children in this culture. Ancestor worship appears to have been the basis of sacred rituals and ancestry is believed to have been reckoned through the matriline.

The beginnings of Roman religion were based on survivals of the Etruscan culture and ancestor worship was the earliest form of religion in Rome. Even today, the Jewish people determine who is and is not a Jew through the matriline.

The most tangible evidence supporting the theory that these cultures worshipped a Goddess is the numerous sculptures of women found throughout most of Europe and the Near East. Some of these sculptures date as far back as 25,000-30,000 BCEE. These small female figurines, made of stone, bone, and clay, most of which are seemingly pregnant, have been found throughout the widespread Gravettian-Aurignacian sites in areas as far apart as Spain, France, Germany, Austria, and Russia. These sites and figurines appear to span a period of at least 10,000 years.

Johannes Maringer, in his book *The Gods of Prehistoric Man* says — "It appears highly probable then that the female figurines were idols of a Great Mother cult, practiced by the non-nomadic Aurignacian mammoth hunters who inhabited the immense Eurasian territories that extended from Southern France to Lake Baikal in Siberia." It was from this Lake Baikal area in Siberia that tribes are believed to have migrated across a great land bridge to North America about this time period, and formed the nucleus of what was to become the race of American Indians. This tends to support the observation that European Witchcraft and American Indian shamanism have similar roots.

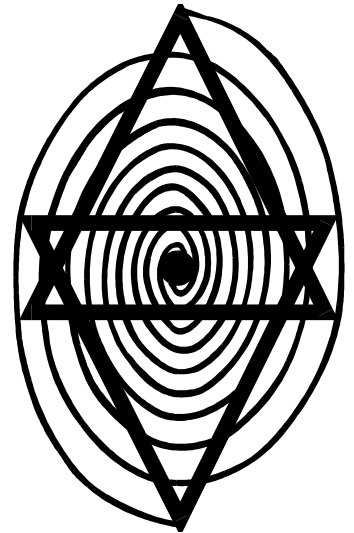
The Roots Of Western Civilization

Western Civilization began in Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley, where it traveled into Palestine and Greece. From Greece, civilization traveled to Rome, and as the Roman Empire grew, it spread to Spain, France, Germany and England.

Mesopotamia (3500 BCEE - 539 BCEE)

Mesopotamia ("the land between the rivers") is the name used to describe the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the southern area of which is mostly lowlying swampland and marshes. The fertile lands of Mesopotamia lie between the desert and the mountains. The northern part has regular rainfall while the southern part, stretching down to the Arabian Gulf, suffers dry scorching summers from May to October. In what is now the southern part of Iraq, Sumer existed as one of the world's first civilizations. Between 2800 and 2400 BCEE the city-states of Sumer were at their strongest and wealthiest.

The Goddess was worshipped under various names which were epithets, or characterizing phrases, such as *Queen of Heaven* and *Lady of the High Places*. The name of the city or town that She was the patroness for, was often attached to Her title making Her name even more specific.



An example of this is the temple erected about 3000 BCEE in the city-state of Uruk which was dedicated to the Queen of Heaven of Erech. This city was made a major power and rival to its sister city Ur by Gilgamesh's son.

About 2350 BCEE an ambitious king, named Sargon, attacked Sumer, and made it part of his huge Empire. His capitol of Agade gave us the name by which Sargons empire is known — the Akkadian Empire. The Akkadian Empire was the first successful attempt to unite a huge area under the rule of one man. It eventually gained supremacy in about 1900 BCEE and gradually superseded the Summerians as the cultural and political leaders of the region.

The Akkadian language of the Babylonians became the international language of the Near East, just as French would become the language of diplomacy thousands of years later. The new Babylonian culture incorporated the Sumerian religion, and the Sumerian language was adopted as the language of the liturgy much as Latin is used as the language of liturgy for Roman Catholics. The Sumerian Goddess, under the names Inanna, Eriskegal and Irmini, evolved into the great Babylonian Goddess Ishtar.

Approximately 1600 BCEE Babylon was sacked by an Indo-European people known as the Hittites who came from Anatolia, off to the northwest. During the confusion that ensued, the Kassites seized the throne of Babylon and ruled peacefully for 400 years.

Ishtar's power waned as the Babylonians were influenced by the warlike Hittites and Her temples were taken over by a male-dominated priesthood, which called the Goddess Tiamat and wrote stories of how their God Marduk had killed Her in the struggle for control of the region.

In the centuries following 1103 BCEE the Assyrians rose to power and expanded into most of Mesopotamia from their homeland which lay between the cities of Asher and Nineveh on the Tigrus River. In the eighth century, the Assyrians conquered most of Syria, Palestine, Phoenicia and had invaded Egypt as far as Thebes (Luxor) before the Egyptians drove them back.

Looking to legitimize their new empire, they 'married' their God Asher to Ishtar, whose followers had secretly kept Her worship alive. The joining of Ashur with Ishtar produced a son named Ninurta, and this is the first formally recorded triad of Goddess, Consort, and Divine Child in the Near East.

From 631 to 539 BCEE much inter-city warfare occurred as the Assyrian empire fell apart. In 539 BCEE Nabonius, the last king of Babylon, surrendered to Cyrus II of Persia who was busy building the greatest empire ever attempted.

Anatolia

Anatolia, which is also called Asia Minor, is a broad peninsula jutting westward from the Asian continent itself. To the north lies the Black Sea, to the south the easternmost part of the Mediterranean. At the entrance to the Black Sea are the Dardanelles and it is here that Asia comes closest to the continent of Europe. Not surprisingly, Anatolia has always been the main link between the Orient and the Occident.

In Neolithic Anatolia (present day Turkey) the Great Goddess was worshipped in the shrines of Catal Huyuk around 6500 BCE. Anatolia was invaded sometime before 2000 BCE by the Indo-Europeans and a group of them settled in a part of Anatolia known as Hatti. The invaders and local people came to be known collectively as the Hittites. These are the same Hittites who sacked Babylon in 1600 BCE and suppressed the worship of Ishtar in favor of their God Marduk.

Most of the references to the Goddess in the literature and texts of Anatolia alluded to the older Hattian deities despite the fact that the only records allowed to survive were written after the conquest of Anatolia by the Indo-Europeans. One of the most important female deities to survive was the Sun Goddess Arinn After the conquest she was assigned a husband who was symbolized as a storm God.

At the time of the Hittite invasions of other lands, many of the people who were Goddess-worshippers may have fled to the west. The renowned temple of the Goddess in the city of Ephesus was the target of the apostle Paul's zealous missionary efforts (Acts 19:27). This temple remained active until 380 CE.

Crete

The Aegean Sea is an area of the Mediterranean, lying between the mainland of Greece and the western coast of Anatoli. The Aegean Sea is dotted with a great number of mountainous islands and the largest of these is Crete, which is just about 60 miles southeast of Greece. Crete was the society that is most repeatedly thought to have been matrilineal and possibly matriarchal from Neolithic times to the Dorian invasion.

Reverence of the double headed ax as a symbol of the Mother Goddess and a reverence for the sexual vitality of bulls were two notable aspects of Crete's early culture. Bull leaping is thought to have been the origin of Spain's bullfighting, although in Crete the bull was never harmed.

After viewing the artifacts and murals at Knossos, the Archaeological Museum at Iraklion and other museums in Crete, there is little doubt that the principal sacred being on Crete for several millennia was the Goddess and that women acted as Her clergy.

Egypt (3100 to 30 BCE)

Egypt is a hot, desert land divided by the fertile valley of the Nile river. Hardly any rain falls there and the summers are scorching hot. Even today, most of Egypt is arid desert.

The Cultivation, a strip of land on each side of the Nile river, is one of the most fertile stretches of land in the world. Although the Cultivation is only 12 1/2 miles wide, it runs for about 620 miles from Aswan in the south to the broad farmlands of the delta where the Nile empties into the Mediterranean.

In prehistoric Egypt, the Goddess held sway in Upper Egypt (the south) as Nekhebt and She was depicted in the form of a vulture. The people of Lower Egypt, including the northern delta region, worshipped the Goddess as Ua Zit (Great Serpent) and depictions show Her as a cobra.

From about 3000 BCE onward the Goddess was said to have existed when nothing else had been created. She was known as Nut, Net, or Nit which was probably derived from Nekhebt. According to Egyptian mythology, it was the Goddess who first put Ra, the Sun God, in the sky.

Other texts of Egypt tell of the Goddess as Hathor in this role as creatrix of existence, explaining that She took form as a serpent at the time. In Egypt the concept of the Goddess always remained vital. Eventually She evolved into a more composite Goddess known as Isis.

Isis (Au Set) incorporated the aspects of both Ua Zit and Hathor. Isis was also closely associated with the Goddess as Nut, who was mythologically recorded as Her Mother; in paintings Isis wears the wings of Nekhebt. Isis was also associated with another triad which included Her husband, Osiris, and their son Horus. Isis' cult was introduced into Rome and the last temple of Isis was closed in 394 CE by Theodosios.

Canaan (8000 - 63 BCE)

The biblical land of Canaan, the *land of milk and honey* was an area about 90 miles wide running north and south along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. In modern times the region includes the states of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and part of Syri. The area made up of Jordan and Israel used to be known as Palestine.

Images of the Goddess, some dating back as far as 7000 BCE, offer silent testimony to the most ancient worship of the Queen of Heaven in the land that is most often remembered today as the homeland of Judaism and Christianity.

In exploring the influence and importance of the worship of the Goddess in Canaan in biblical times, we find that as Ashtoreth, Asherah, Astarte, Attoret, Anath, or simply as Elat or Baalat, she was the principal deity of such great Canaanite cities as Tyre, Sidon, Ascalon, Beth Anath, Aphaca, Byblos, and Ashtoreth Karnaim. In Egypt, the Hebrews had known the worship of the Goddess as Isis or Hathor. For four generations they had been living in a land where women held a very high status and the matrilineal descent system continued to function at most periods.

Judging from the number of Hebrews reputed to have emerged from Egypt in the Exodus, as compared with the family of the twelve sons who supposedly entered it four generations earlier, it seems likely that a great

number of those Hebrews known as Israelites may actually have been Egyptians, Canaanites, Semitic nomads and other Goddess-worshipping peoples who had joined together in Egypt.

Archaeological records and artifacts reveal that the religion of the Goddess still flourished in many of the cities of Canaan even after the Hebrews invaded it and claimed it as their own on the authority that their God had given it to them. And just to the east, all most at their doorstep was Babylon, where the temples of Ishtar were still going strong.

Persia (3000 - 331 BCE)

Throughout its early history Iran was often invaded by nomadic peoples. Some came through the Elbruz mountains east of the Caspian Sea. Others, like the Medes and Persians, entered Iran through the Caucasus mountains in the Northwest.

By the 9th century BCE the most powerful group in Iran was the Medes, who kept the Persians as their servants. In 612 BCE the Medes, together with the Babylonians, captured Nineveh, Ashur, and Kalhu, which were in the heart of the Assyrian empire. The Assyrian empire collapsed and its vast territories were divided between the Medes and the Babylonians.

About 550 BCE the King of the Persians led a revolt against the Medes and from that point on the Persians, led by their King Cyrus the Great, ruled over Iran. Cyrus captured Babylon and gained control of the whole former Babylonian empire. Virtually all of western Asia was now under Persian rule.

The next two kings extended Persian rule to Egypt in the south and to the borders of India in the east. Egypt revolted later and won its independence for a short time, but was forced back into the empire just in time to be part of the prize won by Alexander the Great of Macedonia when he conquered the Persian empire in 331 BCE.

PEOMAGOGIC HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSAL GODDESS RELIGION

Definition of Poemagogic

This is a term coined by Anton Ehrenzweig and means the special function of inducing and symbolizing the ego's creativity. It has a dreamlike *slippery* quality. One aspect slips into another just like a dream. The Mythos-Legend of the Universal Goddess (note that this is not represented as archaeologically proven, but as mythos) is poemagogic.

The Craft is a Goddess worshipping religion which has an unbroken tradition that dates back to Paleolithic times (approximately 35,000 years). As the last ice age retreated the tribe of nomadic hunters worshipped the Goddess of the Wild Things and Fertility and the God of the Hunt. Semi-permanent homes were set up in caves carved out by the glaciers. Shamans and Shamanka conducted rites within hard to reach portions of the caves, which were painted with scenes of the hunt, magical symbols and the tribes totem animals.

The transition from Hunter-Gatherers to agriculturists was reflected in the change of the *Lady of the Wild Things and Fertility* to the *Barley Mother* and the *God of the Hunt* to the *Lord of the Grain*. The importance of the phases of the moon and the sun was reflected in the rituals that evolved around sowing, reaping, and letting out to pasture. Villages grew into towns and cities, society changed from tribal to communal to urban.

Paintings on the plastered walls of shrines depicted the Goddess giving birth to the Divine Child — Her son, consort and seed. The Divine Child was expected to take a special interest in the city dwellers, just as His Mother and Father had taken an interest in the people who lived away from the cities.

Mathematics, astronomy, poetry, music, medicine, and the understanding of the workings of the human mind, developed side by side with the lore of the deeper mysteries. Far to the east, nomadic tribes devoted themselves to the arts of war and conquest. Wave after wave of invasion swept over Europe from the Bronze Age onward. Warrior Gods drove the Goddess' people out from the fertile lowlands and the fine temples, into the hills and high mountains, where they became known as the Sidhe, the Picts or Pixies, and the Fair Folk or Fairies.

The mythological cycle of Goddess and Consort, Mother and Child, which had held sway for 30,000 years was changed to conform to the values of the conquering patriarchies. In Canaan, Yahweh fought a bloody battle to

ensure that his followers had “no other Gods before them.” The Goddess was given a masculine name and assigned the role of a false God. Along with the suppression of the Goddess, women lost most of the rights they had previously enjoyed.

In Greece, the Goddess in Her many aspects, was “married” to the new Gods resulting in the Olympic Pantheon. The Titans, who the Olympians displaced were more in touch with the primal aspects of the Goddess. The victorious Celts in Gaul and the British Isles, adopted many features of the Old Religion and incorporated them into the Druidic Mysteries.

The Faerie, breeding cattle in the stony hills and living in turf-covered round huts preserved the Craft. They celebrated the eight feasts of the Wheel of the Year with wild processions on horseback, singing and chanting along the way and lighting ritual bonfires on the mountaintops. It was said that the invaders often joined in the revels and many rural families, along with some royalty, could claim to have Faerie blood. The College of the Druids and the Poetic Colleges of Ireland and Wales were said to have preserved many of the old mysteries.

In the late 1400’s the Catholic Church attempted to obliterate its competitors, and the followers of the Old Religion were forced to go underground. They broke up into small groups called Covens and, isolated from each other, formed what would later be known as the Family Traditions. Inevitably, parts of the Craft were forgotten or lost and what survives today is fragmentary.

After nearly five centuries of persecution and terror, came the Age of Disbelief. Memory of the True Craft had faded as non-members who could remember how they once had met openly died and those who came after never knew of them. All that was left were the hideous stereotypes which were ludicrous, laughable or just plain tragic. With the repeal of the last Witchcraft Act in England in 1954, the Craft started to re-emerge as an alternative to a world that viewed the planet as a resource to be exploited.

THE ARCHETYPE OF THE GODDESS

The Craft has always been a religion of poetry, not theology. The myths, legends, and teachings are recognized as metaphors for *That which cannot be told*; the absolute reality our minds can never completely express because of the limitations placed on it through biology. The mysteries of the absolute can never be explained — only felt or intuited.

Symbols and ritual acts are used to trigger unusual states of awareness in which insights that go beyond words are revealed. When the phrase *secrets that cannot be told* is used, it is not a matter of oaths taken or the threat of penalties that might be imposed. The true meaning is that the inner knowledge literally cannot be expressed in words. It can only be conveyed by experience and no one can legislate what insight another person may draw from any given experience. This is why the Craft is not a spectator religion, where you can refuse to put any effort in and gain anything meaningful for your own development.

This is also why entrenched priesthoods foster the belief that non-priests must go through a hierarchy of priests, heads of churches, and eventually through chosen prophets and sons of the deity in order to receive special attention by the deity.

The primary symbol for *that which cannot be told* in the Craft is the Mother Goddess. She has an infinite number of aspects and thousands of names because She is the reality behind many metaphors for the creation of the universe.

Unlike patriarchal systems, the Craft sees the Goddess as giving birth to the world rather than creating it out of nothing. The fertile Lands were made from Her Flesh, the Waters from Her own bodily Fluids, the Mountains from Her Bones, and the Winds from Her own Breath. The Goddess does not rule the world, She IS the world and since She gave birth to us all, we have the potential to reconnect with the spirit of Her in all Her magnificent diversity. Religion for us, then is a matter of re-linking with the divine within and with Her outer manifestations in all the human and natural world.

One of the basic beliefs that the Craft is founded upon is what Stewart Farrar calls the *Theory of Levels*, which recognizes that reality exists and operates on many planes. A simplified but generally accepted list would be — physical, etherical, astral, mental and spiritual. It is recognized that each of these levels has its own laws and that these laws, while special to their own levels, are compatible with each other and their mutual resonance governs the interaction between the levels.

The point of this excursion into the esoterica of how the universe works, is to point out that we do not separate our physical existence from our spiritual existence In the Craft. Spirit and flesh are joined together and physical aspects of being human such as sex are not considered *dirty* or *sinful*.

The importance of the Craft for women, is a direct outgrowth in the decline of Goddess religions and the rise of God dominated religions. Male images of divinity are characterized in both western and eastern religions today, and women are thus deprived of religious models and spiritual systems that can speak to female needs and experience.

In the extremes of male dominated religions, women are not encouraged to explore their own strengths and realizations. They are taught to submit to male authority, to identify masculine perceptions as their spiritual ideals, to deny their bodies and sexuality, and to fit their insights into a male mold, no matter how ludicrous that may seem.

The image of the Goddess inspires women to see themselves in a very different light. As Daughters of the Goddess, they are divine, their bodies are sacred, and the changing phases of their lives are holy. Their aggression is healthy, and their anger can be purifying. Their power to create and nurture as well as their ability to limit and to destroy, when necessary, is seen as the very force that sustains all life

Through the Goddess, women can discover their strengths, enlighten their minds, own their bodies and celebrate their emotions. They can move beyond narrow constricting roles and become whole people. For women, the Goddess is the symbol of the inmost self and the beneficent, nurturing, liberating power within all women.

The cosmos is modeled on the female body, which is sacred. All phases of life are sacred and age is a blessing, not a curse. The Goddess does not limit women to their bodies. She awakens their minds and spirits and emotions. Through Her, they can know the power of anger and aggression, as well as the power of love. The Image of the Goddess has a great deal to offer men as well as women.

Men are also oppressed in a God ruled, patriarchal society. Men are encouraged to identify with a model that no human being can possibly live up to. Men are expected to be mini-rulers of their own very narrow universes. Men are internally split between a spiritual self, that is supposed to conquer their baser animal instincts, and their emotional selves. They are at war with themselves. In the west, they are expected to overcome the tendency to sin, while in the east they must suppress the desires of the ego.

Needless to say, no man comes away from this type of struggle undamaged. Every male who is raised by a mother, will from birth carry within him a strong feminine imprint. This is so, because women give birth to males, nurture them at their breast, and in our culture, are primarily responsible for their care until they reach adolescence.

The symbol of the Goddess allows men to experience and integrate the feminine side of their nature without danger of losing those feelings which are the touchstone of their masculinity. The Goddess becomes: the mother who will never abandon her child, refuse to nurture him when he is feeling his most vulnerable, tempers her justice with compassion and understanding, all these in ways not always possible in human women and men.

For a man, the Goddess is his own hidden Female self, as well as being the Universal Life force. She embodies all the qualities society teaches him not to recognize in himself. His first experience with Her may therefore be somewhat stereotypical, in that She appears as the cosmic lover, the gentle nurturer, the eternally desired Other, or the Muse. All that he is not.

As he becomes more whole and becomes aware of his own *female* qualities, She seems to change, to show him a new face always holding up a mirror, She shows what may seem ungraspable to him. He may chase Her forever and She will elude him, but through the attempt, he will grow until he too learns to find Her within.

THE ARCHETYPE OF THE HORNED GOD

The Horned God is born of a Virgin Mother. He is a model of male power that is free from father-son rivalry or *Oedipal* conflicts. He has no father, because He is his own father. As He grows and passes through the changes on the Wheel, He remains in relationship with the prime nurturing force of the Goddess. His power is drawn directly from the Goddess and He participates in life through Her.

The Horned God represents powerful, positive male qualities that derive from deeper sources than the stereotypical violence and emotional crippling of men present in our society.

When a man strives to emulate the God, he is free to be wild without being cruel, angry without being violent, sexual without being coercive, spiritual without being unsexed, and able to truly love. For men the God is the image of inner power, and of a potency that is more than merely sexual. He is the undivided Self, in which mind is not split from the body, nor spirit from flesh. United, both can function at the peak of creative and emotional power.

Men are not subservient or relegated to second class spiritual citizenship on the Craft. But neither are they automatically elevated to a higher status than women, as they are in other religions. Men in the Craft must interact with strong, empowered women who do not pretend to be anything less than what they are. Many men find this prospect disconcerting at first.

For women raised in our present culture, the God begins as a symbol of all those qualities that have been identified as male, and that they, as women, have not been allowed or encouraged to own. The symbol of the God, like that of the Goddess, is both internal and external. Through meditation and ritual a woman invokes the God and creates his image within herself. In this way she connects with those qualities that she may lack.

As her understanding moves beyond culturally imposed limitations her image of the God changes and deepens. He becomes the Creation, which is not simply a replica of oneself, but something different and of a different order. True Creation implies separation as the very act of birth is a relinquishment or letting go. Through the God, women know this power within themselves, and so, like the Goddess, the God can empower women.

In the Craft, the cosmos is no longer modeled on external male control. The hierarchy is dissolved and the heavenly chain of command is broken. The *divinely revealed* texts are seen as poetry, not the *Word of God*. Instead, a man must connect with the Goddess who is immanent in the world, in nature, in women, and in his own feelings. She is immanent in everything that childhood religions taught needed to be overcome, transcended, and conquered, in order to be loved by *God*. The very aspects of the Craft that seem threatening also hold out to men a new and vibrant spiritual possibility: that of wholeness, connection, and freedom.

Men of courage find relationships with strong powerful women exhilarating and they welcome the chance to know the Female within the self. They enjoy the chance to grow beyond their culturally imposed limitations and become whole. Within Covens, women and men can experience group support and the affection of other women and men. They can interact in situations that are not competitive or antagonistic. Men in Covens can become true friends with other men, without giving up any part of themselves, or subjecting themselves to derision or ridicules.

ETHICS AND VALUES SHARED BY MOST MEMBERS OF THE CRAFT

The ethics of the Craft are more positive than negative. Rather than being exhorted with a plethora of "thou shall nots" the Craft is guided by principles more along the lines of "blessed be they who...." The Craft is a joyous creed; it is also a socially and ecologically responsibility for all.

Witches delight in the world and their involvement in it on all levels. They enjoy their minds, their psyches, their bodies, their senses and sensitivities; and they delight in relating, on all these planes, with their fellow creatures and the Earth Herself. Wiccans believe in a joyful balance of all human functions. This outlook is perfectly expressed in the Charge of the Goddess, which is an integral part of most of the rituals of all Witches.

"Let My worship be within the heart that rejoices; for behold, all acts of love and pleasure are My rituals, and therefore let there be beauty and strength, power and compassion, honor and humility, mirth and reverence within you."

This provides a model of a balanced ethic which presents eight qualities that are positive and not restrictive. Compassion means empathy, not condescension; humility means a realistic appraisal of your own stage of development; reverence means a sense of wonder.

The Eight Qualities Of A Witch

- The Wiccan is always conscious that compassion must be partnered with power, humility with honor, and reverence with mirth. Love of life in all its forms, is the basic ethic of the Craft.
- We are bound to honor and respect all living things and to serve the Life Force. It has been said that we all serve the Goddess, even if only as compost.
- Witchcraft recognizes that life feeds on life. We must kill in order to survive, but life is never taken needlessly, never squandered or wasted. To ensure the survival of the species, females are not hunted as game, for they share the sacred bond of motherhood with the Goddess.
- Serving the Life Force also means working to preserve the diversity of natural life, preventing the poisoning of the environment and the destruction of species.
- The World is seen as the manifestation of the Goddess. What happens in the World is important because the Goddess is directly affected. While the seasons of the year renew the Goddess, She needs the participation of Her creations to keep the cycle going. This is the real function of the Sabbats. They reinforce the ties between humankind and the Planet that gives us life.
- Unlike other Gods, that allow humanity to exist at their sufferance, the Goddess needs us just as much as we need Her, and we are partners in the pageant of Life.
- Justice is seen as an inner sense that each act brings about consequences that must be faced responsibly. This is based on the belief that all things are interdependent and interrelate. Therefore, we are all mutually responsible because an act that harms anyone harms us all.
- This is summed up in the form of a law known as Karma, which dictates that all actions bring about changes and effects, on all parties involve. There is a saying in the Craft that illustrates the effects of Karma known as the *Threefold Law of Return*. Whatever is sent out is returned three times over. It is a sort of amplified 'Golden Rule'.

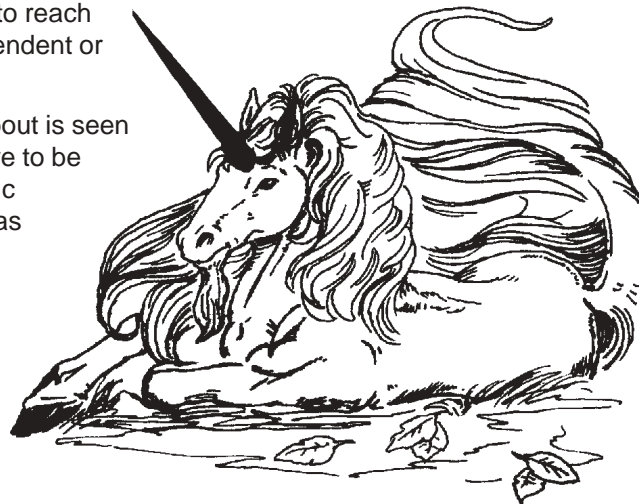
Honor is a guiding principle of the Craft. It is an inner sense of pride and self respect. Refusing to do anything which would make you ashamed of yourself strengthens your magickal will and leads to the self respect that comes from setting your own course, guided by your own inner sense of right or wrong. This makes you rightfully proud of past accomplishments and encourages you to stay the course.

The Goddess is honored in oneself and in others. Women are respected and valued for all their human qualities. The Self, one's individuality and unique way of being, is highly valued.

Like Nature, the Goddess loves diversity. Oneness is attained not through losing the Self, but through realizing the Self's potential. Self development and the full realization of one's unique yet many aspected potential is a moral and ethical duty for a Witch.

Life is seen as a gift from the Goddess and it is up to us to push the evolution to mankind's fullest capacity. If suffering exists, it is not our task to reconcile ourselves to it. We must work for change in all ways at hand. We must alleviate suffering, and work for ways to end it. Thus, we must also help others to reach their full potentials in life, without making them dependent or seeking "power over" them.

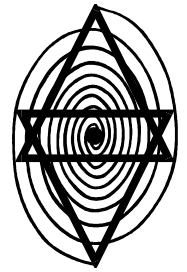
That which helps this evolution to come about is seen as good and desirable while actions that thwart it are to be avoided because each of us is a factor in the cosmic evolutionary process, and it is in our best interests as humans and Children of the Goddess to better our condition.



PRACTICAL WICCAN HISTORY #2

THE WICCAN VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE AND SCIENCE

Foundation



Nearly three thousands years ago, the Greeks started to emigrate eastwards towards Ionia. They settled on the islands in the Aegean Sea and on the coastline of Asia Minor. The conditions found in Ionia were difficult. Backed by inhospitable mountain ranges, they settled in small walled towns and supported themselves with dry farming, capable of producing only some olives and a little wine.

With farming ruled out as an option for survival, the Greeks turned towards the sea and soon found that they were the neighbors of two very large empires, the Babylonians and the Egyptians. Trade with these two empires seemed to be the natural solution to their problem, but they needed to resolve some basic questions concerning the founding of their society.

Both Babylonian and Egyptian cultures had developed urban civilizations based on an abundance of arable land and plenty of water. Their societies were theocratic, ruled by kings with magickal powers. There had been little technological or scientific novelty, due to the extreme regularity of their physical environment and the rigidity of their social structures, which were based on the need to build and maintain vast irrigation systems.

Babylonian mathematics and astronomy were restricted subjects whose study was permitted only to the priesthood. Egyptian geometry served exclusively to build pyramids and measure the area of inundated land or the volume of water reservoirs. Both cultures developed mythical explanations for Creation. With gods being responsible for all aspects of the world, and with minimal science and technology developed for practical necessities, their simple cosmology was complete.

Unlike the Greeks, the environment made no demands on them which they were not able to meet. So other than figuring out how to kill their enemies more efficiently, there was no inducement to learn to think or to develop their science and technology further. The colonial Greeks were forced by their environment to adopt a more dynamic outlook. With no theocratic traditions to hold them back, they rejected monarchies at an early stage. They opted, instead, for republican city-states in which a small number of slave-owners governed by mutual consent.

Babylonian astronomy, which had aided priests to make magick predictions, was pressed into service as an aid to maritime navigation. Contact with the Egyptians had planted the seeds of wonder in the intellectuals who accompanied the Greek traders on their trips around the Aegean. Rejecting the cosmologies of the Egyptians they formed the rudiments of what was to become philosophy. Seeking explanations to the world around them, they found ways of exploring nature in order to explain and control it.

The Ionians took the geometry developed by the Egyptians and made it into a tool with many applications; such as measuring the distance from the coast to a ship at sea. Geometry became the basic instrument for measuring all things. All natural phenomena including light and sound, as well as those of astronomy, existed and could be measured in exclusively geometrical space.

Simple analyses of natural phenomena such as water, beaches, clay deposits, phosphorescence, magnetism, evaporation and condensation as well as the behavior of the winds and the changes of temperature throughout the year led to the discovery that nature is made up of opposites. These simple analyses of phenomena and the observation of the presence of opposites combined with the political and economic structure of Ionian society produced the dominant intellectual structure which is the basis of modern western science.

Geometry rendered the cosmos accessible to examination according to a common standard, quantitative scale. Together with the concept of pairs of opposites, geometry was to become the foundation for a rational system of philosophy that would underpin Western culture for thousands of years.

Rational thought followed a new logical technique developed by Aristotle called the syllogism, which provided an intellectual structure for the reconciliation of opposing views. In this way, the Ionians before him, and Aristotle, produced a system of thought that would guide men from the limited observations of personal experience to more general truths about nature.

The Middle Ages

During the latter part of the Roman empire, interest in science as founded by the Greeks waned and practically all Greek manuscripts went to Arabi. In a way, Greek science was preserved for posterity by the Arabs, who themselves added very little to it. They did introduce to science the so called Arabic system of numbers, which used the zero as a place holder. To be sure, Alhazen produced a work on optics, but generally speaking Greek science was not improved upon to any appreciable extent by its translation into Arabi. Science was still based upon the authority of Aristotle.

Between 700 and 1100 CE, a beginning was made toward a revival of learning in Europe. Large universities developed under the shelter of the Church. Trade spread, and both Greek and Arabian manuscripts gradually found their way back into Europe. The Crusades assisted in this process.

Since the Church had survived the Roman state and had become all powerful, it was natural that the revival of learning should take place under its influence. Many of the scientific manuscripts were translated from the original Greek into Latin by monks, in monasteries where merchants and knights bringing treasures from the east would often seek shelter for the night. These scholars were satisfied just to make exact translations, and so the science which they passed on to the world through the Church was the original Aristotelian version.

Although the church had re-established science in the various large universities, it is important to remember that Church domination flavored it to suit itself. The doctrines of Aristotle came to have the power of law behind them. Truth was not discoverable, as at that time truth was dictated by the Church. It became a crime of the first order even to question the Church sponsored views of Aristotle, to say nothing of suggesting that experimentation might be a better way to establish the truth.

The New Awakening

During the Renaissance, universities were able to free themselves from Church rule and science was able to see the light of day without being shrouded in theology. All of the following produced revolutionary ideas which led to their authors spending some part of their lives in prison because, while the Church did not have a stranglehold on the human mind, it still ruled with an iron fist and was always on the lookout for heresy.

Copernicus developed the heliocentric theory of the universe.

Galileo, Tycho Brahe, and Kepler established the fundamental ideas of modern celestial mechanics, based upon observation first, and theorizing afterward, thus revolutionizing scientific thought.

Galileo in particular stressed the idea of controlled experimentation to such a degree that today he is recognized as the father of the modern scientific method based upon inductive rather than deductive reasoning. Galileo carried observation to the quantitative stage by making accurate measurements. He truly emphasized the 'how', as contrasted with the 'why' of Aristotle. By quantitative observations on falling bodies and other mechanical motions, assisted by instruments of his own invention to improve the accuracy of his measurements, Galileo laid the foundation for the discoveries of Newton.

Sir Isaac Newton is considered by many to be the greatest scientific genius the world has produced thus far. He crystallized the scientific thought of his time into a few fundamental statements now accepted as laws of nature. These include three famous laws of motion and the law of gravitation in the field of mechanics alone. In addition, he invented calculus and contributed greatly to the field of optics. His role was primarily that of a coordinator of information or a systematizer of knowledge. He formulated the over all pattern by which scientific knowledge was to be organized in the great classical period that was to follow his time.

All the above section refers to the infamous split between religion and science in the 17th century. While we don't believe these two should be as far apart in attitudes as they still are, this bears out the reasons for why it did happen. The restrictive attitudes of the church made it necessary for science to make any progress at all in

those days. Now we know why so many advances happened at that period in time. There's a bit more about this in the Journey to the One lesson on *Morphogenesis*.

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Classical Period

Science was really gathering momentum by this time and becoming very complicated. The various branches of physics received recognition as fields that, while related, were becoming too complex to be included under the general heading of physics.

Chemistry was coming into its own after a balky start as the secret science of Alchemy. Electricity was an infant science, with a great deal of promise.

The Modern Period (1890 to Present)

With the discovery of radioactivity and x-rays, along with the isolation of the electron, and the formulation of the concept of the electrical structure of matter, science moved into today. In the early days, science was concerned with the observation of natural phenomena and the search for explanations of WHY they existed. As the emphasis shifted to HOW the phenomena worked the body of knowledge grew dramatically. Many varied disciplines developed to encompass general fields of specialized knowledge and sciences such as geology, oceanography, and meteorology came into their own.

In the light of this tendency to form subgroups, the mother of all sciences, which was and is dedicated to the study of the physical world, came to be known as Physics. The field of physics deals with three 'realities' of the physical world and has developed three interconnected world views to explain them.

- **Classical Newtonian Model of the Universe**

This model of the universe works well when you deal with objects consisting of large numbers of atoms, and velocities which are small compared to the speed of light. In other words, our mundane world.

- **Einstein's Relativistic Model of the Universe**

This model works well when considering objects on a planetary and larger scale that may be many light years away from each other. In this model the shortest distance between two points is not always a straight line, because gravity curves space.

- **Quantum Theory of the Universe**

Quantum theory was developed to explain the behavior of subatomic particles. It is similar to Relativistic physics in that it deals with speeds approaching, and sometimes exceeding, the speed of light, but it considers small groups and singular particles at a time. **THE CRAFT VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE!**

Craft cosmology is rooted in the paleolithic Shaman's insight of the universe being made up of swirls of energy. Everything is seen as vortexes of moving forces which are either swirling into existence or out again. These vortexes of force set up currents in a sea of ever changing possibilities. The appearance of separateness exists where fixed objects exist within a linear stream of time. Reality, as we know it, is actually a temporary solidification of a field of energies into a physical form.

Rationale of the Two Principles

Stewart Farrar has proposed the following explanation of how Crafters integrate every phenomenon from chemistry to clairvoyance into a philosophical framework that allows them to constantly explain, examine, develop and improve their philosophy.

- The Theory of Levels maintains that a reality exists and operates on many planes. That each of these levels has its own laws. That these sets of laws, while special to their own levels, are compatible with each other. That mutual resonance governs the interaction between the different levels.
- The Theory of Polarity maintains that all activity, all manifestation, arises from the interaction of pairs and complementary opposites. Pairs of opposites such as positive and negative, light and dark, content and form, male and female are not conflicts between 'good and evil', but a creative tension like that between the earth and the sky in a lightning storm.

MODES OF PERCEPTION

Ordinary Waking Consciousness sees the world as made up of separate parts of matter. While some of the arrangements of matter are recognized as living, few are recognized as intelligent.

Evolution is a means of survival. It allows a differentiation between things that are potentially threatening and those that are not. It works by narrowing the field of conscious perception to one thing at a time, isolating it from its surroundings. Starhawk describes it as viewing a dark forest with a narrow beam flashlight that illuminates a lone leaf or a solitary stone. It casts a net across reality which allows us to break the whole down into pieces which can be examined one at a time or fitted together to get the 'whole picture'. It is based on a culturally transmitted system of classification which acknowledges the existence of phenomena that is perceived as valid by the majority and ignores anything that is not.

Extraordinary Waking Consciousness views the world as broad, holistic and undifferentiated. It allows us to see patterns and relationships between all the vortexes of energy that make up the universe. It frees us from the constraints of our culture, but prevents us from sharing it with others who have not experienced it. The psychic and magickal aspects of the Craft are concerned with shifting into and out of this mode of perception at will.

The Hemispheres of the Brain

The brain is actually composed of two specialized organs, which provide us with our perception of reality. It's made up of several different structures, which are believed to have evolved as we became more adaptive to our environment.

The Spinal Cord

This is the oldest part of the brain, stretching from the neck down to the base of the spine. The two principle functions associated with the spinal cord are simple reflexes and to provide an electrical connection between the brain and the nerves which cause the muscles to move the body and provide feedback to the brain.

The Brain Stem

This is situated on top of the spinal cord. It still possesses the tubular form of the spinal cord and in some respects can be thought of as an extension of it. There is a very intricate network of nerves in the brain stem known as the reticular formation. The reticular formation is the central point from which and to which all nerves run between the body and the brain.

Visualizing the reticular formation as a telephone operators switchboard helps to understand its function. It sends all stimuli that has not proven to be benign to the brain for immediate attention and suppresses all other stimuli. The brain is still aware of all of the other stimuli, but it need not focus on all of it at once.

The Cerebellum

Connected to the brain stem is the cerebellum, which somewhat resembles the cortex in terms of its neuronal structure though it is much older than the cortex. The cerebellum is primarily concerned with the co-ordination of movements. It seems to integrate the information coming from all the senses with all the muscles so as to produce smooth, finely tuned movements rather than jerky uncoordinated movements.

The Midbrain

The midbrain consists of the Thalamus, the Limbic System, and the Hypothalamus.

The Thalamus sits on top of the brain and relays information from the sensory organs to the cortex and between different portions of the cortex and the reticular formation and the limbic system.

The Limbic System is a group of structures in the middle of the brain that play an important role in emotion and motivation. Included in the limbic system is the pineal gland, which is thought by some to be the 'third eye.'

Just below the thalamus is the Hypothalamus, which regulates the internal balance of the body. The pituitary gland is located here and it is the gland which tells all the other glands when to produce hormones.

The Neocortex

The Neocortex, or Cortex, as it is commonly called, makes up only one quarter of the brain's total volume, but it contains 75% of all the neurons that make up the brain. The cortex is also known by its greyish color which is a result of a greater density of blood cells in this region. For this reason, the cortex is sometimes called 'gray matter' and the rest of the brain is called 'white matter.'

Some areas of the cortex play particular roles in sensory activity. The rear of the cortex is associated with the processing of visual information, a small area on the side with auditory information, and a strip extending from the top center of the cortex down each side is concerned with the sense of touch and also with muscular control. Large parts of the cortex do not appear to be very specific in their function. Rather, they seem to be concerned with the integration of information from several different senses. In other words, the cortex builds up a total world view based on all the information that is relayed by the body's senses. In reality, the cortex is not just one structure, but two, which appear to have developed separate, but complementary, specializations.

The left side of the cortex seems to have specialized in analysis. It is here that math ability is found, along with understanding language and a sense of linear time.

The right side of the cortex seems to have specialized in synthesis. Creativity, all forms of art, the sense of rhythm and music and a distinct lack of time sense characterize the states of consciousness which are attributed to the right side of the cortex.

To make things really interesting, these two sides of the cortex are connected by a mass of nerves, which form what is called the corpus callosum. It just so happens that the corpus callosum wires the brain up so that the right side of the body is controlled by the left side of the brain and vice versa.

THE CONCEPTS OF THE SELF

Classical Psychoanalysis, Freudian and Jungian Psychology, the Id and the Personal and Collective Unconscious all contain sensations, emotions, basic drives, image memory, intuition and diffuse perception.

The Ego organizes the impressions of the unconscious, gives those impressions names, and classifies them into systems.

The Super-Ego is a set of verbally understood precepts, that encourages us to make judgments about right and wrong according to the society in which we reside.

Transactional Analysis (T/A)

- The Child corresponds to the Id and the Personal and Collective Unconscious.
- The Adult corresponds to the Ego.
- The Parent corresponds to the Super-Ego.

The Craft Concept of the Three Selves

The Younger Self or Child corresponds to the Child mode of T/A and indirectly experiences the world, through the holistic awareness of the right hemisphere of the brain. Due to its limited verbal ability, the Younger Self communicates through images, emotions, sensations, dreams, visions, and physical symptoms.

The Talking Self corresponds to Adult and Parent modes of T/A and speaks through words, abstract concepts, and mathematics.

The High Self does not easily correspond to any 'scientific' concept, because science refuses to accept the existence of a non-physical soul. The High Self, or God Self, is the Divine within the Self. It is the ultimate and original essence, the Spirit that exists beyond time, space and matter. It is our deepest level of wisdom and compassion and is conceived of as being both male and female, two forms of consciousness united as on

Interactions Between the Three Selves

The High Self is connected directly to Younger Self, and does not know how to communicate with Talking Self in a direct manner. In order to communicate between High Self and Talking Self, we must learn to speak in Younger Self's language. We utilize symbols, art, poetry, music, myth, and the actions of ritual. These translate abstract concepts into the language of the unconscious and thus we can communicate to the High Self through the Child Self.

THE FOUR PRICES OF FREEDOM

As in everything else in the world, nothing is free. There are four prices that a Wiccan must pay in return for the wisdom and power that they can gain through the Craft. Paying these prices awakens our true potentials and allows us to be 'as gods', and thus help us to create a better universe.

It requires Discipline And Responsibility to awaken the extra-ordinary mode of consciousness as a natural step in any Wiccan development but it requires a great deal of practice to develop and train it properly. Powers and abilities gained through this heightened awareness must also be used responsibly, for otherwise they will destroy their possessors.

We must have a Willingness To Play. We unleash a great power when we are willing to let go of our adult dignity and laugh for no particular reason, without worrying about looking foolish. For example, we can make believe that a wand has magick power, and it becomes a channel for energy. Humor and play awaken the sense of wonder that characterizes Wiccans, and is the basic attitude that the Craft takes into the World.

We need to maintain a Balance Between The Different States Of Consciousness. The difference between magick and psychosis lies in maintaining the ability to step back, by an act of will, into the ordinary mode of perception.

We must develop a Willingness To Face The Most Frightening Of All Beings, One's Own Self. The depth of our inner selves are not all sunlit. To see clearly, we must be willing to dive into the dark, inner abyss and acknowledge the creatures that we may find there as being a part of what makes us what we are.

ANALYSIS OF THE CREATION MYTH

The Creation Myth which is located at the beginning of the Chapter Two of "The Spiral Dance" by Starhawk, expresses the attitude of wonder, to the world which is Divine and to the Divine which is the World.

In the beginning, the Goddess is the All, virgin, complete within Herself. The female nature of the ground is stressed because the process of creation is a birth process. The world is born, not made, and definitely not commanded into existence. The Goddess sees Her reflection in the curved mirror of space.

Water is the original mirror on earth. The image conveyed is similar to that of the Moon floating over the dark sea, watching Her reflection in the waves. There is yet another aspect of the mirror. A mirror is a reversed image. It is the same but opposite, of reverse polarity. The image in the mirror is the embodiment of the universal paradox. All things are one yet each is separate, individual and unique.

The Goddess falls in love with Herself, drawing forth Her own emanations which take on a life of its own. Love of self for self is the creative force of the universe. Desire is the primal energy that motivates and that energy is erotic. It has been expressed as the attraction of lover to the beloved, moon to plant, and electron to proton. Blind Eros becomes Amore. The love that is personal, directed towards an individual rather than the universal sexless charity of the Christian Agape or indiscriminate sexual desire.

The Goddess' reflection takes on its own Being and is given a Name. Love is not only an energizing force but an individualizing force as well. It dissolves separation and yet creates individuality. Again, it is the universal paradox. Divine ecstasy becomes the fountain of creation and creation is seen as an orgasmic process. Ecstasy is at the heart of the Craft. During ritual we turn the paradox inside out, and become the Goddess, sharing in the primal throbbing joy of union.

The sense of wonder, of joy and delight in the natural world is the essence of the Craft. The world is not seen as a flawed creation from which we must escape, nor is it in need of salvation or redemption. However it may appear from day to day by the nature of its deepest being, the world fills us with wonder.

The Craft is a shamanistic religion, and the spiritual value placed on ecstasy is a high on love. It is seen as the source of union, healing, creative inspiration, and communion with the Divine Ecstasy brings about harmony.

By its very nature matter sings. The song is carried forth on waves that become spheres. The waves are the waves of orgasm, light waves, ocean waves, pulsating electrons, waves of sound. The waves form spheres as swirling gases in space coalesce and form stars. It is a basic insight of the Craft that any energy, whether physical, psychic or emotional, moves in waves, in cycles that are themselves spirals.

The Goddess swells with love and gives birth to a rain of bright spirits. It is a rain that awakens consciousness in the world as moisture awakens green growth on earth. The rain is the fructifying menstrual blood, the Moon's blood that nourishes life. It is also the bursting waters that herald birth. And birth is the ecstatic giving forth of life. The motion or vibration becomes so great that all fear is swept away.

As She moves further and further from the point of union She becomes more polarized and more differentiated, until She become mostly male. The Goddess has projected Herself. Her projected Self becomes the Other, Her Opposite, who eternally yearns for reunion. The energy field of the cosmos becomes polarized. It becomes a conductor of forces exerted in opposite directions.

ANALYSIS OF THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

The rituals of the eight Solar Holy days, the Sabbats of the year, are derived from the Myth of the Wheel of the Year. The cycle of the Goddess which occurs on a monthly basis is contrasted to the slower cycle of the God, which takes a full solar year to complete.

The Goddess reveals Her threefold aspects as — Maiden — She is the rain, Patroness of birth and initiation. The Mother — She is the Loving Mother of All. The Crone — She is the dark force of life, which demands death and personal sacrifice.

The God changes — from Child-Son to Youth-Lover to Sacred King, and eventually becomes His own Father. He is the eternal sacrifice who is eternally reborn into a new life.

All things are divine as manifestations of the Goddess. The death of the grain in the harvest, or the death of a deer in the hunt, was considered to be a divine sacrifice freely made out of love so that life might go on.

EXAMINATION OF THE ALL AS TWO GREAT FORCES

The view of the All as an energy field polarized by two great forces is common to almost all traditions of the Craft. These forces have been named Female and Male, Goddess and God, which in their ultimate being are aspects of each other.

It is important to separate the concept of polarity from our culturally conditioned images of female and male. The Female and Male forces represent a difference, yet they are not different in essence. They are the same force, flowing in opposite, but not opposed, directions.

The Female force is seen as the Life-ing force. It is the power of manifestation, of energy flowing into the world to become force.

The Male force is seen as the Death-ing force. This is death in a positive rather than a negative way. Death is seen as the Force of Limitation that is necessary to produce a balance to unbridled creation. It is the force of dissolution, of return to formlessness.

Each principle contains the other. Life breeds death and feeds on death. Death sustains life and makes evolution and new creation possible. They are opposing halves of a complete cycle. They are each dependent upon the other. Existence is sustained by the on/off pulse, the alternating current, if you will, of the two forces in perfect balance.

Unchecked the life force is a cancer whereas the death force becomes unbridled war and genocide when allowed to go unbalanced. When held in balance they are in harmony and work to renew and sustain life. We see the effects of this balance in the changing cycle of the seasons, and in the ecological balance of the natural world.

OLD AGE IN THE CRAFT

The Craft does not maintain, like the first Truth of Buddhism, that "All life is suffering." On the contrary, we maintain that life is a thing of wonder. Old age is a natural and highly valued part of the cycle of life, the time of greatest wisdom and understanding.

We look forward to the time when we are freed from the cycle of reproduction so that we may devote more time to our preparation and contemplation of the journey into death at the end of our years. This does not mean that the joys of sex become lost to us but that the urgency that wells up in the Spring of life and rides us through until the Autumn subsides and we get to go at our own pace. While the quantity sometimes decreases, the quality invariably increases.

The Crone serves as a role model for both women and men in their later years. A tendency to withdraw from society to a certain degree is coupled with a diminishing of compassion in favor of a little more emphasis on justice and balance. People soon find that appealing to the Goddess as the Mother brings help tempered by a mother's willingness to overlook the fact that most children bring problems upon themselves. Appealing to the Goddess as Crone however, gets a full measure of justice for all parties involved. The Crone does not play favorites, She has the severity of a strong will to see justice done, that prevents Her from doting on any of Her grandchildren.

Old age sometimes brings suffering. Where suffering is a natural part of the cycle of birth and decay, it is relieved by understanding and acceptance. By a willingness to give over to both the dark and the light in turn. Disease can cause misery and suffering but it is not seen as something to be inevitably suffered. Nor is death fearful in old age. It is seen simply as the dissolution of the physical form. It allows the spirit to prepare to be reborn into a new life.

The practice of the Craft has always been connected with the healing arts, herbalism, and midwifery. When suffering is the result of the social order or human injustice, the Craft encourages active work to relieve it. Witches are naturals for getting involved in the ecology movement and other movements that try to address the issues that they feel make society as a whole ill, both physically and spiritually.

DEATH AS SEEN BY A MEMBER OF THE CRAFT

The experience of death is a lesson for the living. The people most affected by death are the people left behind who must learn to deal with their sense of loss. In the Craft, death in this world is seen as a birth into the "other" world that has been given many names. The Summerland, Tirn-nan-og, and Avalon are all names given to a pleasant land, usually in the West, where people go to examine their past lives, grow young again, and prepare to be born into this world again.

There are two theories about why the world beyond is thought to be in the west. One is that the last rays of the setting sun 'die' in the west and lead the way into the dark While the other is that since the invaders always came from the east, the people who were being invaded came to think of the west as being safe because it was the direction they were running toward in order to get away from the invaders.

Rebirth is not considered to be condemnation to an endless, dreary round of suffering as in Eastern religions. Instead, it is seen as the great gift of the Goddess who is manifest in the physical world. Life and the world are not separate from the God or Goddess. They are immanent in the divinity.

Since death is seen as a part of the natural order of things and the Witch is taught that the departed spirits go on to the next life to be watched over by the Goddess and the God until they are reborn, a Witch should not grieve over the loss of a loved one. The realization of how much the departed person meant to the ones who are left behind is gauged by the memories that live on in the people still living.

It is said that the departed do not die as long as their memory lives on in the hearts of the ones left behind them. Keeping the memory alive and participating in the seasonal celebrations prepares the people left behind for

being visited by the departed when the two worlds come close to one another at Samhain.

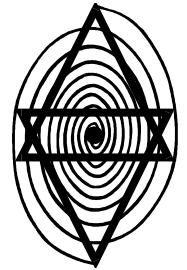
It is always important to remember that a death in this world is a birth in the other world, and just as you did not have a lot of time for anything other than learning to function in this world when you were young, newly departed people have to learn to function in their new world and may not be able to sit as often as you would like. The belief that Karma ties a certain number of souls together over and over again in many lives reassures people of the Craft that they will meet the departed in a new life.

Part of the training of the Craft is learning to see your own past lives in relation to the people around you and their past lives as well as discerning patterns of Karma in your everyday dealings.

PRACTICAL WICCAN HISTORY #3

EARLY NEED FOR OF THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS

Introduction



The development of agriculture had a profound and far reaching effect upon the spiritual development of humanity. No longer content to worship the Goddess of the Wild Things and the Lord of the Hunt, early mankind sought to interpret their deities in the physical surroundings of the places where they settled to grow their crops.

Volcanic mountains, such as those surrounding ancient Persia, gave rise to Fire Gods whose priests evolved a cosmology which postulated a universe based upon a struggle between good and evil. A Fire Priest named Zoroaster would eventually lay the foundation for Zoroasterianism, which would lead to Mithraicism, which would greatly influence religious thinking of the early Christian church.

Even today, the spiritual center of the Japanese people is the volcanic mountain Fujiyama and the major deity of the Hawaiian people is the volcano Goddess Pele. Natural openings into the earth were seen as gateways into the domain of the deities and shrines were built around them.

The most famous of these openings was the shrine at Delphi where, through a succession of Goddesses and Gods who served as patrons, the priestesses received visions of the future for a fee paid to the temple. There is some conjecture that the visions were brought about by inhaling the gases rising from the chasm, over which the priestesses were suspended on a tripod seat.

In the British Isles, prominent hills or Tors, such as Glastonbury Tor in Somerset, and the Welsh mountains in Snowdonia, became the focus for local rites. In Ireland, each river was believed to have its own Goddess, as well as the Goddesses which hold sway on dry land.

The one common thread running through all of this was that while the people were becoming urbanized, they still felt a need to identify with the countryside around them and religious rites evolved around some natural power spot so that anyone wishing to partake of the religious experience of these rites had to make a pilgrimage to that religious shrine and be initiated into those rites by the local priestesses or priests.

As the cities grew up it became necessary to spread out into the countryside and the shrines were sometimes enclosed in temple building and sometimes opened 'branch offices' on the other side of the city, or in neighboring cities, for the people who could not or would not make the pilgrimages. This led to the establishment of temples, for public worship and offering, in all the cities of the ancient world. Usually, these temples were dedicated to the local Goddess or God, that the people of the city worshipped as their personal deity.

An example would be Athens, which was named for its patroness Pallas Athena, who is the Greek Goddess of Wisdom and Beauty. Not surprisingly, these deities were sometimes tribal deities, which were urbanized as the city grew in size. And the rites that grew up around the temple were seasonal rites performed to insure the common well-being of the city as a whole. Religious rites for personal spiritual development was a foreign concept

to all but a very few members of the priest/esshood who were responsible for seeing after the well being of their followers.

Once the concept of ownership of land for growing food gained a foothold, the need to defend the land from 'outsiders' became a primary concern. This led to the development of standing armies and navies whose purpose, while initially defensive, soon became offensive. Time and again, the justification for attacking their neighbors was wrapped in religious robes and it became a matter of one city's Goddess/God supplanting the other in the conquered city.

Usually this did not create too much of an upheaval for the common citizen because the attacker was usually a nearby neighbor and through long years of trade with each other, they were familiar with one another's rites and beliefs. Most people saw it as a problem only for the priesthoods, who lost control of the temple monies to the conquering priesthood. Sometimes it was seen as an improvement for the city could only benefit from having a more powerful God/dess ruling over it and as long as the priesthood kept up the seasonal rituals to insure prosperity the common citizen was not too worried about who was ruling the city.

The founding of the Mystery Religions can be tentatively dated back to 331 BCE, when Alexander of Macedonia completed his conquest of the world around the Mediterranean and the Near East. To give some perspective on how this brought about such a drastic change in the world order we need to look at astronomy and see if we can discern a pattern that repeats itself.

Ancient humanity used astronomy and astrology to guide their lives. The zodiac was seen as a measurement system which allowed humankind to divide the solar year up into 12 equal parts, although some believe that the original zodiac had only 10 signs. The sign of Virgo-Scorpio was broken into two parts by inserting Libra (the Balance) in between them. This created eleven signs plus Libra, establishing the 'balance' at the point of equilibrium between the ascending northern and descending southern signs.

Each year the sun passes entirely around the zodiac and return to the point from which it started, the vernal equinox, and each year it falls just a little short of making the complete circle of the heavens in the allotted space of time. As a result, it crosses the equator just a little behind the spot in the zodiacal sign where it crosses the previous year.

Each sign of the zodiac consists of 30 degrees, and as the sun loses about one degree every 72 years, it regresses through one entire constellation or sign in approximately 2,160 years, and through the entire zodiac in about 25,920 years. Among the ancients, the sun was always symbolized by the figure and nature of the constellation through which it passed at the vernal equinox. For nearly the past 2,000 years the sun has crossed the equator at the vernal equinox in the constellation of Pisces (the two fishes).

Christianity developed about the beginning of the Piscean Age and the fish was an early symbol for them. Christianity was only one of two new religions that were based, in part, on the teachings of Judaism. About 630 years after the founding of Christianity, Mohammed founded the religion of Islam, and his followers are known as Muslims or Moslems.

For the 2,160 years prior to then, the sun had crossed through the constellation of Aries (the ram). Just as the Age of Aries began, a new religion developed which would prove to be one of the most enduring Monotheistic religions on Earth. Judaism was founded by Abraham of Chaldea, who made an agreement with Jehovah that he and his offspring would spread the doctrine that there was only one God. In return Jehovah promised Abraham the land of Canaan (Israel) for his descendants. The only problem is that the Jews and the Arabs both trace their beginnings back to sons of Abraham, and now both claim Israel as offspring of Abraham.

About 600 years later Hinduism developed in India. From 600-300 years before the Age of Aries gave way to the Age of Pisces, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism and Mithraicism developed.

Prior to the Age of Aries, the vernal equinox was the sign of Taurus (the bull). In ancient Egypt, it was during this period that the Bull, Apis, was sacred to the Sun God and the Winged Bull was the spiritual symbol of the Assyrians back when they had city-states dedicated to Goddesses. How interesting — that just as humanity was discovering agriculture during the Age of Taurus, the bull was domesticated so that it could pull a plow.

We are about to enter a new age, the Age of Aquarius, which promises to turn the world upside down.

Getting back to gaining a perspective on how Alexander the Great changed the world order, we need to understand that there is a pattern where the world order changes about every 2,000 years — militarily, economically and religiously. At any given time through history one or two of these conditions may change, but it is rare that all three change around the same time. When they do people live in what the Chinese philosophers called 'interesting times'.

The 400 years preceding the Age of Pisces can be compared with the same period of our time, which is bringing in the Age of Aquarius. About 331 BCE an upstart military leader named Alexander of Macedonia led an army into the very depth of what was then known as the Persian Empire after defeating the troops of Persia who were trying to maintain control of Greek cities in Asia Minor. Once he had effectively wrested control of the empire from the Persians, he proceeded to take the best of what the empire and his native land had to offer and he created a new world order by which he and his generals divided up the known world and planned to rule. After Alexander's death the generals ruled as best they could, but they slowly lost control of the great empire until a new military power, Rome, came along and took over.

It is important to keep in mind that the Roman empire did not spring up over night. Under the inspiration and protection of the Macedonian Empire from foreign intervention the Romans were able to defeat the Etruscans who had ruled most of Italy until that time. It was the peace brought about by the Grecian empire that allowed the Roman republic to last for 200 years and embrace many of the loftier ideals of Greek culture.

In the mid 1700's, a colonel in a rag tag band of irregulars attached to regular troops of the British Empire, started to make a name for himself among the colonists of a British possession. The British, who were the ruling elite just under 300 years ago, thought of the colonial colonel as an uneducated barbarian and did not take him seriously when the colonials declared their independence and named as their supreme military leader the barbarian from Virginia, George Washington.

History has recorded how George Washington had his day in the sun when, after defeating the mercenary troops of Britain at Valley Forge, General Cornwallis surrendered to him at Yorktown. Again, the world was turned up side down, and the empire of old was supplanted by a new order, only on a smaller scale. While it is true that the British Empire did not collapse with the loss of the American Revolutionary War, it marked the beginning of the breaking up of the Empire. Despite recurring clashes, like the War of 1812, the new country was allowed to grow and develop as a Republic for 200 years until now it is very common to refer to America as the new Rome.

Like Alexander before him, Washington and his supporters took the best of what they liked in Britain and combined it with the best thoughts and ideas of the Colonies. Washington refused to be made the king of America, and they hammered out a new form of government, new laws of commerce, and assurances that the old religious order would not hold sway in the new country.

Not long after the American Revolution, the French Revolution, based on American ideals, rocked Europe with its deliberate shaking off of aristocratic rule. Even the Russian Revolution was originally a revolt of the people against their aristocracy. It was only after the revolution left a vacuum of leadership that the Communists stepped in and assumed power.

If you look around at our capitol, you will see that the architecture is reminiscent of Grecian and Roman Temples, and the principles that our country was founded upon. Principles like freedom and democracy are Grecian Ideals. This is not a coincidence. The Founding Fathers were scholars of Greece and Rome, for knowledge of the history of these two countries was considered an integral part of a classical education.

It will be interesting to see if America, like Rome, falls into the trap of being forced into becoming an Imperial power in order to support the welfare state at home. One of my favorite sayings is "A people who refuse to learn from history, are doomed to repeat it."

The Social Significance Of The Mystery Religions

In order to understand the needs and desires which found satisfaction in mystery religions, it is necessary to take a broad view of the general social situation in the Greco-Roman world and to define, if possible, the outstanding religious interests of the Mediterranean people in the 1st century of the Piscean Age.

Greco-Roman society with all of its complexity was, even so, a closely knit social fabric unified in large and significant ways. Politically, the Mediterranean world of the Augustan Age was a unit for the 1st time in history, welded together by 300 years of military conquests preceding the beginning of our era. To hold this Mediterranean world together in an imperial unity, Rome had thrown over it a great network of military highways reaching to the farthest provinces and centering on Rome herself. Cultural and commercial processes operated even more effectively than military conquests and political organization to unify the peoples of the Mediterranean area.

Society under the early Empire continued to be as highly Hellenized as it had been during the 300 years previous. Greek continued to be the language of culture and commerce, with Latin as the lingua Franca of diplomacy. The sea, cleared of pirates, was a great channel of commerce that led to all the Roman world, and the military highways provided the necessary land routes. Because of the easy means of communication, there was a free mingling of races and classes in the centers of population. Free competition on a world scale gave individuals their opportunities.

Before the days of Alexander, the interests of the individual were quite submerged in comparison with those of the tribe or state. The larger social group was the end-all of existence and personal concerns were properly subordinated thereto. But in the changed conditions of the imperial period, all was different. Individual interests came to the fore and those of the state receded to the background.

The Roman Empire meant far less to the citizen than the Greek polis had meant. Rome was too large and too far away to be very dependent on each citizen's support or to contribute to their happiness. In the ruthlessness of conquest and the stress of competition, local customs were ignored, traditions were swept aside, and the unsupported individuals were thrown back upon their own resources.

Happiness and well-being, if won at all, must be won by the individual, and for the individual alone. Religion, like the other phases of Greco-Roman life, felt the effect of these changed social conditions. For the masses, the former religious sanctions and guaranties no longer functioned.

In the old, pre-imperial days, the individual was well satisfied with group guaranties that were offered by local and nationalistic religions. Granted, the relationship to the state deity was only an indirect one — through the group to which they belonged. Also granted, the goods sought were chiefly social benefits, which were shared with their fellow citizens. But so long as the God/desses protected the state and the state protected the citizen, they were well content.

Successive conquests by foreign powers, however, rudely destroyed this complacency, and the victory of Macedonian and Roman arms wrecked the prestige of merely local and national deities. As racial barriers were broken down and the individuals felt free to travel and trade, they became conscious of needs and desires they had never known before.

As a practical matter, the time honored customs of an individual's parent and grandparent could not be maintained in foreign lands. New sanctions and assurances of a more personal sort were needed. In line with the general social movements of the times, there was a distinct breakdown of traditional religion, and national cults, popular in the Hellenic period, fell into disuse. But the masses of people did not become irreligious by any means, they instead turned to religions of another type and sought satisfactions of a different variety.

Their quest was no longer for a God/dess powerful enough to save the state but rather for one who was benevolent enough to save the individual. Oracles were consulted, not so often in the interest of the community but more frequently for the guidance of individuals in their personal affairs. More than ever before the home became a temple and the daily life of the family was filled with the trappings of piety. The shrines of the healing Gods/esses were overcrowded, and magicians, who were considered the chief mediators of divine power, carried on a thriving business.

In particular, people turned for the satisfaction of personal desires to the group of mystery religions, which

were very ancient cults that had hitherto been comparatively insignificant. Most of them came to the Greco-Roman world from the Orient, with the authority of a venerable past, with an air of deep mystery, and with rites that were most impressive.

But the chief reason for their popularity at this time was the satisfactory way in which they ministered to the needs of the individual. Completely denationalized and liberated from racial prejudices, they could be practiced anywhere within or without the empire. They no longer depended upon a natural focus such as a cave or spring or mountain, so it was possible to worship anywhere they found themselves. This allowed popular cults like that of Isis to spread throughout the Roman empire with little or no resistance. Being genuinely democratic brotherhoods in which rich and poor, slave and master, Greek and barbarian met on a parity, they welcomed men of all races to their membership.

WHAT THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS HAVE TO OFFER HUMANITY

A new birth for the individual

When the neophytes were initiated into the cult they became new people. In earlier centuries, when the emphasis in religion was tribal or national, this had no special advantage. Then the individual felt certain of his salvation because of his birth into a particular tribe or race. This still holds true for tribal religions like Judaism, where it is not enough to be a good Jew. All Jews must be good because they are the chosen people and their God will not make good on His promises until the whole tribe meets his requirements.

Mankind in the Roman world had confidence in neither racial connections nor in the potentiality of human nature. The first century Roman wanted a salvation that included the immortality of the soul as well as the present welfare of the body. An essential change of being was felt to be necessary, and the mystery religions guaranteed this by means of the initiatory rites.

The mystery initiation met the basic religious need for individual as opposed to racial guarantees. Mystical experience was a common denominator of all the Greco-Oriental cults of the mystery type.

The imperial age was a time when religion was turning inward and becoming more emotional, while philosophy, converted to religion, was following the same trend. There was a cultivated antagonism between spirit and matter and a conscious endeavor to detach one from the other by means of ascetic practices. It was a period of world-weariness and other worldliness.

There was a demand for fresh emotional experiences, and the culminating effort was to overleap the bounds of nature and to attain union with the divine in the region of the occult. These experiences found expression in the popular religions of redemption, in the mysteries of Eleusis, Attis, Isis and the rest.

Fulfilling The Yearning For The Mystical Type Of Religious Experience

Two considerations that have a direct bearing on why the yearning for mystical religious experience arose at this time are:

- The thought-world of the average person had suddenly enlarged to proportions that were frightening. The horizon of a Syrian trader in Nero's time was vastly more inclusive than that of a few hundred years before. And this new horizon included a far greater number of facts to be classified and accounted for, and a constantly enlarging group of problems and difficulties to be settled. This expanded thought-world of the middle of the 1st century was in a very chaotic state.
- The social structure of an earlier age had been completely wrecked. Greek democracy and Oriental despotism alike had been crushed by imperial power. National and racial distinctions, once considered very important, had been all but forgotten. Whole classes in society had been wiped out. Old things had passed away and what chiefly impressed the ordinary man about the new order of things imposed by Rome, was not so much its orderliness, as its newness. The citizen of the Greek Polis had lived in a friendly town that was his own; but the Roman citizen found himself bewildered in the crowded streets of a strange city that was everyman's world.

The man of the early empire felt that the ultimate control of his disordered universe was not at all in his own hands, but that it rested with supernatural powers on the outside. According to the 1st century point of view, the more important relationships of life were with the controlling powers in the supernatural realm. Whether these powers were friendly, unfriendly, both or neither according to circumstances, there was a great variety of opinion; but generally speaking there was no doubt of their power.

One way the common man had of establishing safe relations with the occult powers was the way of mysticism. He either projected himself emotionally into the supernatural realm and so came into contact with deity, or else by magic and sacrament drew the God down into the human sphere and in this fashion realized the desired alliance. Not until this 'unio mystica' was accomplished did many men feel completely secure in the face of the uncertainties of life. The mystery religions offered this form of salvation through union with the lord of the cult. This alliance with the lord of the cult robbed the unknown spiritual world of its terrors and gave the initiate the assurance of special privilege in relation to the potent beings who controlled the destinies of men.

In the background of each of the mysteries hovered the vague form of the supreme power itself. The Anatolian Magna Mater Deum or the Ahura Mazda of the Persians. In the foreground, ready for action, stood the mediator who chiefly made the divine power manifest in life and nature, the youthful Attis, or the invincible Mithra. The mystery Gods and Goddesses were also potent as netherworld divinities. Persephone reigned as queen of the dead and Osiris presided as judge of the souls of the departed. By means of initiation into their cults, the devotee was enabled to share vividly in the experiences of these divinities and even to attain realistic union with them.

United with the Gods themselves, the initiate was in touch with currents of supernatural power which not only operated to transform his very being but rendered him immune from evil both in this life and in the next. It provided emotional stimulation through the mystical experience of contact with a sympathetic savior.

The mysticism of the cults was not of the intellectualized type but rather of a more realistic, objective, ecstatic and highly emotional variety. This emotional character of cult mysticism answered directly to an inordinate appetite for emotional stimulation among the masses.

This abnormal craving, directly or indirectly, was due to the terribly depressing experiences through which society had passed during the wars that filled the years immediately preceding the Piscean Age. For 400 years the wars had been unceasing. The Mediterranean world had known war at its worst, and this long series of conquests, civil wars, proscriptions, and insurrections had produced an untold amount of agony.

All these military operations had entailed terrible suffering for all classes. There was, of course, the killing and maiming of the combatants themselves. Bread-winners had been drafted into service, leaving their families to fend for themselves. Crops over large areas had been destroyed to prevent the enemy from living off the land when the armies retreated. Leaving the local farmers as well as the invading army to starve. Conquered lands had been plunged into debt and bankruptcy, while thousands of men, women, and children, formerly free, had been sold as slaves.

The indirect consequences of these military operations were quite as disastrous for the happiness of large numbers of people as were the direct results. One of the most deplorable effects was the practical destruction of the middle classes, which had been the backbone of the society. This left a bad social cleavage between the wealthy aristocratic class on the one hand, and the masses, including the slaves, on the other. Conditions were such that the upper classes had the opportunity of becoming more wealthy and prosperous, while the proletariat correspondingly became more destitute and wretched.

Enormous sums of gold and silver, the accumulated wealth of the east, was disgorged on the empire. This created a demand for more luxuries, raised the standard of living for the rich, and multiplied the miseries of the poor. Throughout the period, the number of slaves was constantly being augmented. This lowered the wages and drove free laborers to the idleness of cities where they were altogether too willing to be enrolled on what we would call *welfare*. The first lesson new Emperors learned, if they were to keep their crowns, was to feed and entertain this huge number of idle workers so that they would not decide to overthrow the government. This is where the phrase "give them bread and circuses" came from.

With such an unequal distribution of the goods of life, it was inevitable that both extremes in Roman society should feel the need of special emotional uplift and stimulation. The aristocrat felt the need of it because he

had pleasures too many. There was a disgust with life, bred of self-indulgence and brought to birth by satiety. It was the weariness that comes when amusements cloy and the means of diversion seem exhausted. And the poor freeman because he had pleasures too few. There was a genuine sensitiveness to suffering in this age born of a sympathetic understanding of its pain and an earnest attempt to provide alleviation. It was a period when all classes were sensitive to emotional needs, but chiefly the inarticulate masses who were most miserable and knew not how to express their misery.

Generally speaking, the officials of the state religion remained unresponsive to this need and the marble Gods of Greece and Rome had no word for men in agony. Judaism, which had itself gone through a prolonged martyrdom, should have learned from suffering to minister to personal need, but it had not, for its hope was still a national one, not personal.

The religions of redemption that came from the east furnished exactly the emotional satisfaction that the age demanded. They told men of savior-Gods that were very human, who had come to earth and toiled and suffered with men, experiencing to an intensified degree the sufferings to which flesh is heir. These savior-Gods had known the agony of parting from loved ones, of persecution, of mutilation, of death itself. In this hard way they had won salvation for their devotees and now they stood ready to help all men who had need. The rites of these mystery religions were impressively arranged to represent the sufferings and triumphs of the savior-Gods.

In this way it was possible for the initiate to feel as his God had felt, and sometimes more realistically, to repeat the archetypal experiences of his lord. His initiation was a time of great uplift, that elevated him above commonplace worries and gave him an exalted sense of security. In after days the memory of that great event remained with him to buoy him up amid the hardships of his daily lot, or in such special crises as might come to him. By means of initiatory rites of great impressiveness, the mystery cults were able to satisfy the desire for realistic guarantees in religion.

The majority of people were not satisfied with a merely emotional assurance that the desired mystical union had taken place. Something more tangible and objective was required to supplement the evidence furnished by subjective experience. Both the Greek and Romans conceived of their Gods as being very real and humanistic. They gave them admirable representation in painting and sculpture and sought to secure their favor by rites that were correspondingly realistic.

At the beginning of the imperial period, when the uncertainties of life made man feel more dependent than ever on supernatural assistance, the operations whereby they strove to assure themselves of the desired aid became, if anything, more realistic than ever. In such an age and amid people who thought in these vivid terms, the rites of religion, in order to satisfy, had to give actual and dramatic representation of the processes they were intended to typify and induce. This was what the ceremonies of the mystery cults did, and this was another reason for the great attractive power of the cults.

Most of the rites of the mystery religions had come down in traditional forms from an immemorial antiquity. Originally performed among primitive people in order to assure the revival of vegetable life in springtime, they were enacted in these later imperial days for the higher purpose of assuring the rebirth of the human spirit. Yet, among the masses at least, the efficacy of these ceremonials was as little questioned as it had been in their original primitive settings. The baptismal rite, in particular, whether by water or blood, was regarded as marking the crucial moment in a genuinely regenerative process.

Once reborn the initiates were treated as such, their birthday was celebrated and they were nourished in a manner appropriate for infants. Childish though those rites may seem, they were fraught with spiritual significance for the initiate. The semblance of mystic marriage and the partaking of consecrated foods were other realistic sacraments in which the neophyte found assurance that he was really and vitally united with his lord and endowed with the divine spirit.

What usually gives the modern student pause is the very sincere conviction of pagan initiates that their spiritual transformation was not only symbolic, but was also really accomplished by these dramatic ceremonies. The personal transformation which was the initial feature of cult mysticism had its ethical as well as its religious aspect, thus producing a blend of ethics and religion.

The early imperial period was a time of great moral disorder and confusion, paralleling the stress and strain in other areas of life. The continuous social upheavals of the Hellenistic and republican times, the free mingling of populations in commerce and conquest, and the enormous increase of slaves furthered the process of cutting thousands of human beings loose from moral restraints. However, the general trend in society as a whole was not only a period of moral anarchy but of ethical awakening as well. Interest was alive on moral questions.

Almost every characteristic vice in Roman society was being met with the most vigorous protests and sometimes by active measures to correct them. There was at this time a particular demand for a greater correctness in ethical teaching. Teachers of the time studied the writings of philosophers and moralists to find texts and maxims to use with their pupils. Catalogues were made of virtues and vices and the former were summarized as certain cardinal qualities especially to be desired. There was a call for living examples, which could be referred to as demonstrations of the practicality of these ideals.

The conditions of life were such that most men did not have confidence in their own unaided ability to achieve character. They looked to the supernatural realm for the powers that controlled personal conduct as well as the more ultimate destinies of humanity. What the men of the 1st century wanted was not so much ideals, but the power to realize those ideals; not a code of morals, but supernatural sanctions for morality. In the last analysis, it was divine will, and not human welfare, that was the generally accepted criterion whereby the validity of any ethical system was tested. Accordingly, the religion which could furnish supernatural guarantees along with its ethical ideals had a preferred claim to 1st century loyalty.

The stern morality of Judaism was very attractive. The element that fascinated was not the inherent excellence of Jewish rules for living, but the fact that there were venerable sanctions bearing the impress of divine authority. The Law of the Jews was quoted as the ipse dixit of Yahweh himself and the scriptures were referred to as authentic documents proving the genuineness of the representation. Such confirmation was impressive to men who were seeking for divine authority to make moral conduct obligatory.

The religion of the Egyptian Hermes was one that offered supernatural guarantees for its ethical ideals. In the process of Hermetic rebirth, the powers of the God drove out hordes of vices and left the regenerated individual divinely empowered for right living.

That was Mithraism's point of strength also, and accounted not a little for the vogue it continued to enjoy for some time after the beginning of the Christian Era. The "commandments" of Mithraism were believed to be divinely accredited. The Magi claimed that Mithra himself revealed them to their order. One of the chief reasons why the high Mithraic ideals of purity, truth, and righteousness had real attraction, was because Mithra himself was the unconquerable champion of these ideals and the ready helper of men who were willing to join with him in the eternal fight of right against wrong and good against evil. Mithraism was the outstanding example of a mystery religion which gave supernatural sanctions to the demands of plain morality.

The mysticism of the mysteries came in effectively at just this point to give both realistic content and divine authorization to the ethic of brotherhood. The ideals of the group found personification and embodiment in the divine Lord or Lady who was the object of the cult worship. Osiris was the model righteous man who functioned in the divine state as the judge of the departed. Hence the Isian initiate, reborn as the new Osiris, was supposed to exhibit the Osirian type of righteousness.

So, too, in the other mystery systems, the initiate realistically united with his Lord, and actually transformed by the virtue of the union, had his ideal incorporated within himself as a part of his very being. In the end, mystical experience became the theoretical basis and practical incitement to good conduct. In this close articulation of mysticism and morality, the cults made an important and distinctive contribution to the ethical life of the age. The mysteries were unusually well equipped to meet the need for assurances regarding the future.

The ultimate pledge that the mystery religions made pertained not to the present but to the future. It was the assurance of a happy immortality. Whatever attitude a man might adopt on the continued existence after death, he could not well avoid the issue. The mystery cults from Greece and the Orient specialized in future guarantees. Originally intended to assure the miracle of reviving vegetation in the springtime, they were perfectly adapted to guarantee the miracle of the spirit's immortality after physical death.

These were the cults which in the form of Dionysian and Orphian brotherhoods had first brought the promise of a happy future life to Greece in the religious revival of the 6th century BCE. In Hellenistic times the Greek cults merged with similar religions from the east which offered equivalent guarantees, and in this syncretized form came into their own. In the early imperial period of Rome, they were more popular than ever, for they gave positive and definite answers to the questioning of the common man about the future.

Their answer had the authority of revelation and it included the guarantee of divine aid in the realization of that blessed after-life which they vividly depicted to their devotees.

Summary

When consideration is given to the fundamental character of the interests represented by the mystery religions, one can well understand their popularity in the Greco-Roman world. In an era of individualism, when men were no longer looking to religion for guarantee of a racial or national order, the mystery cults offered the boon of personal transformation through participating in rites of initiation.

At a time when men were seeking a larger life through contact with supernatural powers, the mysteries guaranteed absolute union with the divine beings who controlled the universe. In an age when men were craving emotional uplift, mystery initiation gave them such encouragement as they could scarcely find elsewhere. At a period where realism characterized thought in all departments of life, the religions of redemption offered men realistic rites to guarantee the actuality of spiritual processes.

The supernatural sanctions were sought to validate ethical ideals, the mystery cults provided a unique combination of mysticism and morality that was effective. When, as never before, people were questioning about the future fate of the individual soul, the mysteries, through initiation, gave guarantee of a happy immortality. At every one of these points the mystery religions of redemption were effectively meeting the needs of large numbers of people in Greco-Roman society.

PRACTICAL WICCAN HISTORY #4

BIRTH OF THE OF THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS

A Mystery Religion Was A Religion Of Symbolism

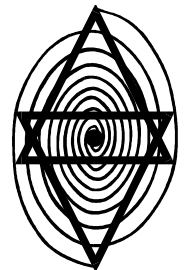
Through the use of myth and allegory, iconic representations, blazing lights and dense darkness, liturgies and sacramental acts, as well as suggestion, the intuitions of the heart of the initiate were quickened until s/he was provoked into a mystical experience. This experience led to a feeling of regeneration, which was the object of every initiation.

A Mystery Religion was a religion of Redemption. It professed to remove the estrangement between humankind and God, to procure forgiveness of sins, and to furnish mediation. Means of purification. the formulae of access to the God, and acclamations of confidence and victory were part of the apparatus of every Mystery.

The Mystery Religions Were Systems Of Gnosis

The Mysteries brought men into contact with that God "who wishes to be known and is known to his own." They offered esoteric equipment by which the initiate might ward off the attacks of demons, thwart the menace of Fate, and after death reach the abodes of the blessed mysteries.

There was something, whether doctrine, symbol, or divine drama, which could not be imparted except by initiation to those duly qualified to receive it, a supernatural revelation which gave the recipient a new outlook on life, the world and the deity, and security that was denied to the uninitiated. The 'mystery' consisted of an objective presentation of the history of the cult Deity, in his or her struggles, sorrows, and triumphs, repeated subjectively by the initiate in sacramental acts, together with prayers and liturgic formulae.



A Mystery Religion Was A Sacramental Drama

The Sacramental Drama, appealing primarily to the emotions, aimed at producing psychic and mystic effects. Thus the neophyte experienced the exaltation of a new life. The mysteries were eschatological religions, having to do with the interests and issues of life and death. For the multitudes, it was the mysteries that illuminated the hereafter.

A mystery religion was a personal religion, to which membership was open, not by accident of birth into any particular class, but by a religious rebirth. A mystery religion, as a personal religion, presents another side, which is the necessary complement of an individualistic religion; that is, it takes on the character of a cosmic religion.

The ancients lived in a world in which the primitive association of man's life with the earth and plant and animal life was taken for granted, in which the Universe itself was a rational living being, in which man, by his good deeds, might be elevated on the path of the divine.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE MAJOR MYSTERY RELIGIONS

Fundamental Force Behind Development

Once, there was no purely 'native' or 'hermetic' tradition; only a universal response by the very ancient ones to the Earth-lore and the Star-magick of their shamanic priests. Later, as the single religious impulse of those old times split into separate cults, these two approaches, which we may think of as earthly (or chthonic) and stellar, grew further apart, until the beginnings of the Hermetic traditions were seeded in Egypt and the Hellenic world, while in Europe the Native traditions remained more or less grounded in the magick of the earth. This is not to say that Greece and Egypt did not have their own native traditions, or that development of religion and magick in the Celtic West was so primitive and slow that it required cross-fertilization with other sources to pull it into subtle realms of experience.

The Major Mystery Religions

It has often been said the Egyptian mysteries are the true foundation upon which the Western Hermetic systems are built. This is due in part to the early identification of the Egyptian God Thoth, scribe and guardian of mysteries, with Hermes Trismegistus, the supposed founder of Western occult practice.

Egypt had many mysteries, none more important than those of Isis. Her name is said to mean 'throne', 'wisdom', or 'savior', though she possessed many other titles which testify to the universality of her cult. The deepest mysteries of Isis, and her consort-brother Osiris, then the God of vegetation, revolve around his death at the hands of his brother Set, who then cut Osiris' body into 14 parts and scattered them through the world.

Isis undertook a terrible journey, suffering great hardship, seeking out the broken body of her lord and reassembling the parts. She found and reassembled all but one part, the phallus, which was thrown into the Nile and consumed by a fish. Despite this, such was the creative power of Isis that she was able to conceive by means of an artificial phallus, and bore the child Horus who avenged his father by killing Set.

This is an archetypal mystery-telling, introducing themes found later in the teachings of the Hellenistic schools and in the work of modern esoteric orders. It prefigures the death and rising of many Gods and show forth the power of the Creative Principle. It also establishes Isis as Queen of Heaven, more powerful in the eyes of many than even the great God Ra himself, whose representative upon earth was the Pharaoh.

In Mithraism, which descended from the Persian Mysteries, Mithra stands as a mediator between light and dark, a position adopted by his followers. In humanity, the battle for the soul is fought out in the territory of the flesh. Mithra, entering there, keeps all in balance. Mithraism was the Freemasonry of the Roman world. Like the other cults of Oriental origin, it moved with the vast commerce in human beings that was such a notable feature of the ancient world. The cult of Mithra is one that traveled extremely well, from Syria to Scotland.

The Mithraic community was all men, women gravitated to the parallel cult of Cybele or the exclusively female one of Bona Dea. The congregations were small; no surviving Mithraeum could house more than a hundred, but of course bigger lodges may have formed, and dissolved, at army camps, because Mithraism was

extremely popular among the Roman Legions. There were no social barriers, so that slaves and privates could become high initiates. The ceremonies were solemnly enacted and the initiations were quite awe-inspiring.

Mithra was born on the 25th of December, called the “Birthday of the Unconquered Sun.” This date was not taken over by the Christians for the birth of their Savior until the 4th century BCE. Some also said that Mithra sprang from the union of the Sun God and his own mother. Some claimed his mother to be a mortal virgin. Others said Mithra had no mother, but was miraculously born of a female Rock, the *petra genetrix*, fertilized by the Heavenly Father’s phallic lightning. December 25th — virgin birth — sound familiar?

In the many histories of the ancient world, only one figure is described as being of equal or greater importance than Hermes. This is the Persian mage Zoroaster, who may actually have lived around 1000 BCE., or even earlier, but who clearly did not predate the foundation of the Egyptian mysteries from which he drew heavily for his own system. It is from the Persian mysteries that we derive the dualistic spectre which has haunted esoteric philosophy and teaching ever since.

In the Zoroastrian pantheon these opposing forces are Ormuzd and Ahriman, who derive ultimately from Ahura Mazda, the divine principle. Known as the Holy Immortals, or *Amesha Spentas*, they correspond to the levels of creation, clearly foreshadowing the teaching of later mystery schools such as those of Orpheus and Mithra. Against the *Spentas* are arrayed the *Devas*, the companions of the Evil One, who are seen as ruling over the earth.

The position of Persian dualism is confused by a Zoroastrian heresy called Zurvanism, which is often mistaken for mainstream Zoroastrianism. In Zoroastrianism proper, Ahura Mazda is supremely God: his *Spentas* are not on the same footing. In Zurvanism, however, Ahura Mazda is made into a lesser creator or demiurge, hence the cosmic struggle of good against evil which takes place in the world of matter. In Zoroastrian teaching, a savior or *saoshyant* was to be born, who would combat evil and bring the struggle to an end once and for all, thus betokening the making perfect at the end of time.

In this we see an echo of the Egyptian mysteries, and a prefiguring of the gnostic position, as well as the appearance of a third figure which becomes a requirement of all dualistic thinking sooner or later. This third figure who will balance out the struggle is a Messiah.

Mithra’s birth was witnessed by shepherd and Magi, who brought gifts to his sacred birth-cave of the Rock. Mithra performed the usual assortment of miracles — raising the dead, healing the sick, making the blind to see, the lame to walk, and casting out devils. As a ‘Peter’, son of *petra*, he carried the keys of the kingdom of heaven. His triumph and ascension to heaven were celebrated at the spring equinox, when the sun rises toward its apogee.

Before returning to heaven, Mithra celebrated a Last Supper with his 12 disciples, who represented the signs of the zodiac. In memory of this, his worshippers partook of a sacramental bread marked with a cross. This was one of the seven Mithraic sacraments. It was called *mizd*, in latin — *missa*, in english — *mass*.

Mithra’s image was buried in a rock tomb, the same sacred cave that represented his Mothers’ womb. His image was later withdrawn from the cave and was said to live again.

What began in water would end in fire, according to Mithraic beliefs. The great battle between the forces of light and darkness in the Last Days would destroy the earth with its upheavals and burnings. Virtuous ones who followed the teachings of the Mithraic priesthood would join the spirits of light and be saved. Sinful ones who followed other teachings would be cast into hell with Ahriman and the fallen angels.

More *dejavu* — the above added onto the previous comments about December 25th and the virgin birth seem to solidify where Christianity’s primary ideas came from.

Mithra’s cave-temple on the Vatican Hill was seized by the Christians in 376 CE. Christian Bishops of Rome pre-empted the Mithraic high priest’s title of *Pater Patrum*, which became *Papa*, or *Pope*.

While the Mithraic mysteries succeeded those of Zoroaster, they followed those of Dionysus, through which the core of Hellenic mystery teaching found its way into the Western Mystery Tradition. Two streams of consciousness are discernible within the Classical mysteries, which might be called Dionysian and Apollonian.

The Apollonian mysteries related to reason, to the heavens and to order; this is in contradistinction to the chaotic mysteries of Dionysus. The priests of Apollo were more interested in wresting the political power away from the earlier Goddess worshipping peoples who held sway as the Oracle at Delphi, and so their mysteries were not so widely spread because they were tied to a specific location and shrine.

The Mysteries of Dionysus were those of the sacrificial king: they pertain to the earthy and underworld side of. Of all the mystery Gods, it is Dionysus whose character has become most firmly fixed in the collective imagination. His worship spells orgies and drunkenness; he personifies the irrational and uncontrollable urges of mankind and beasts; he drives to frenzy the maenads and the poets.

The myth of Dionysus' origins tells that he was first born from the union of Zeus with Persephone. Zeus designated this 'Zagreus' as his heir, but the jealous Titans lured him away while he was yet a child, killed, dismembered him and devoured all the pieces except for the heart, which Athena rescued and preserved. Zeus, in anger, reduced the Titans to ashes, from which the new race of humanity was fashioned. Thus each person contains a fragment of Dionysus within their 'Titanic' earthly body.

From the heart of the God was brewed a love-potion, which was given to Semele, a mortal, who then forced her lover, Zeus again, into revealing himself to her in his primal form. This unveiling was so overwhelming as to annihilate her, but the child she was carrying was saved by Zeus enclosing it in his loins until the time came for its birth as the second Dionysus.

The young God grew up in Thrace, suckled by goats and raised by satyrs and sileni. When he reached maturity, he descended through the Alcyonian Lake to rescue the shade of his mother Semele from Hades and then raised her to Olympus. Afterward, accompanied by a motley train of semi-human beings, maenads and panthers, he set off on wanderings throughout the world, from Libya to Arabia to India and thus back to his homeland.

Everywhere he went he brought humanity knowledge of agriculture, arts and crafts, and most especially the cultivation of the vine and wine-making. On the Isle of Naxos he discovered the Cretan Princess Ariadne, abandoned there by Theseus, and joined with her as her husband. Together they ascended to the heavens, whence he offers a similar blissful reward to his devotees, temporarily in this life and permanently after death.

There had been an initiatic institution in Greece at Eleusis at least since the 8th century BCE, with both Greater and Lesser Mysteries. The function of all Lesser Mysteries, and equally of the lower grades of initiation was to impart information on the nature of higher worlds.

The Eleusinian symbolism of corn, pomegranates and poppies refers to the unseen forces which affect humanity via the vegetable kingdom, building the body and informing the mind. The intuitive grasp of this relationship, in all its wonder and complexity, was summarized in the famous climax of the Mystery, so disappointing to non-initiates, the displaying of an ear of wheat. Certain information was also given at Eleusis by word of mouth, including the 'password to the Paradise of Demeter' to be used after death.

In the Lesser Mysteries of other Gods, it is suggested that the fact of heliocentricity was revealed. Jewish esotericism includes the teaching of reincarnation. So Lesser Mysteries give the initiates theoretical knowledge which changes their whole view of humanity and the cosmos, and stands them in better stead when they have to leave this world for the unknown.

The Mysteries of Demeter were celebrated every five years at Eleusis. The candidate of the Lesser Mysteries underwent a symbolic journey in which the quest of Demeter for her lost daughter Persephone in Hades was reenacted with the would-be candidate in the role of Demeter. The journey within was that of the darkened soul: the candidate passed through a door into total darkness: if they survived the experiences met within they passed through a second door into brilliant light — symbolizing rebirth into the heavenly sphere. Here they actually meet the Gods, experiencing Demeter's journey as their own recovery of lost enlightenment.

The function of the Greater Mysteries of Eleusis was to bring about direct contact with the beings who inhabit the higher worlds. The higher grades of initiation were conducted individually rather than collectively as in the Lesser Mysteries. The Initiation of Isis was given to those selected by the Goddess through having had significant dreams, whether they were laity, priests or priestesses.

In the inner truth of the Eleusinian mysteries, the birth of the soul into matter is seen as death; only through participation in the mysteries can the initiate rise to a timeless reality where he is utterly free and alive. The soul sleeps in the body for most of the time, awakening only when it has been transformed by ritual and the use of an initiatory drink. To die without this experience is to sleep forever or to wander houseless in the caverns of Hades.

The primary objective in these initiations was to take the candidate through the gates of death. As in shamanic, Masonic, and other later initiations, the candidate was placed in a trance, the consciousness taken out of the body, and in this state to experience higher states of being and meet some of the denizens of the invisible worlds. Through direct experience the candidates would learn that they could live freely without their physical bodies, and that the Gods they worshipped were perfectly real. Then they would return to earth fully convinced of their own immortality and prepared to meet death fearlessly, knowing it is the gate to freedom and the soul's true home.

As a descendant of Dionysus, Orpheus is the intellectual image of a demi-God, raised to deity by his sufferings in the underworld: a perfect symbol for all who follow the paths of the mysteries. The movement from the cult of Dionysus and Apollo to Orphism, marks a change from a more primitive religious response towards an ethically-based philosophy and mysticism which included belief in the transmigration of souls, reincarnation and the final assumption into Godhead.

Orpheus has the lyre and the gift of music from Apollo, yet ends like Dionysus, torn apart by Thracian bacchantes. The shamanic practices of the Native Tradition overlapping the priestly function of the mystery school.

The suffering of Orpheus, who loses Euridice (through fear, the first pitfall of all mystery knowledge) and is then dismembered by the Maenads, is a paradigm of the suffering and rebirth of the sleeping soul. The Orphic mysteries are complex in the extreme. The most important aspect of the Orphic Mysteries was that humanity and the Gods are related. At a most subtle and sensitive level a blurring of the edges occurs, an overlapping of human consciousness and divine awareness. "Everything that lives is Holy" becomes a reality in the interaction of the divine and the mundane.

The hierarchy of spiritual creation is supremely complex, but the Gods are like a ladder, a system of related possibilities, the potentiality of which is seeded within the whole of creation. We are all related, not just in a familial sense but also to everything else: earth and water, sky and stone; not only because all of creation is made up of the same *stuff*, just in different arrangements, but because we are all a part of the divine hierarchy.

This is the true meaning of the mystery teaching concerning the divine spark; the God like potential of humanity is far better expressed by this means. The divine fragment is that part of us which is always seeking reunion, a reassembly of separated parts into the whole from which they were created; a return to the paradisaical state.

The Orphic school was, above all, syncretic. Orpheus is credited with the dissemination of the mysteries, with passing on rather than inventing much that became the basis of subsequent Greco-Roman theosophy. Pythagoras followed many of the Orphic teachings and made Orpheus the central deity of his own esoteric system, establishing a canon of Orphic Hymns. Between the Orphic mysteries and their partial revival in the Renaissance, there is a long gap not only in time but in understanding.

CHRISTIANITY VIEWED AS A MYSTERY RELIGION

The Foundation Of Christianity

Most people think of Christianity as if it were a single specific thing, a coherent, homogeneous, and unified entity. Christianity is actually nothing of the sort.

There are numerous forms of Christianity: Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Church of England (Anglican, formed by King Henry the VIII). Various other forms of Protestantism are from the original Lutheranism and Calvinism of the 16th century to such relatively recent developments as Unitarianism. There are multitudinous "fringe" or "evangelical" congregations. Such as the Seventh Day Adventists, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Assembly of God. There are assorted contemporary sects and cults like the Children of God and the Unification Church of Reverend Moon.

If one surveys this bewildering spectrum of beliefs — from the rigidly dogmatic and conservative to the radical and ecstatic — it is difficult to determine what exactly constitutes Christianity. If there is a single factor that does permit one to speak of Christianity, a single factor that does link the otherwise diverse and divergent Christian creeds, it is the New Testament and more particularly the unique status ascribed by the New Testament to Jesus, his Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Even if one does not subscribe to the literal or historical truth of those events, acceptance of their symbolic significance generally suffices for one to be considered a Christian. If there is any unity then, in the diffuse phenomenon called Christianity, it resides in the New Testament, and more specifically, in the accounts of Jesus known as the Four Gospels. These accounts are popularly regarded as the most authoritative on record and for many Christians they are assumed to be both coherent and unimpeachable.

The Origin And Birth Of Jesus

So far as popular tradition is concerned, the origin and birth of Jesus are well enough known, and can be found in the Bible. We will not take the space to go into it here.

Jesus And The Essenes

As we have seen, the Judaic religion was still a tribal religion offering little chance for individual salvation during a time when people were looking for some assurance that they mattered beyond which tribe, city or province they came from. Mystery religions were well established in the east and making inroads into Rome herself.

In addition to the Pharisees and Sadducees who were vying for control of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' life, there was a sect of ascetics known as the Essenes. It has been said that the Essenes were the founders of a Mystery religion based along the lines of the sun worshipping Persian anchorites, who in turn evolved their system from Jain yogis professing to work miracles by living apart from the world and practicing extreme self denial.

From historians and chroniclers writing at the time, it is known that the Essenes maintained communities throughout the Holy Land. A large colony of Essenes occupied the Qumran community from 110 BCE to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, with a significant period of vacancy during the reign of Herod, 31 BCE - 4 CE.

Jesus, John the Baptist, and Simon Magus are said to have been trained in Essenic communities. Jesus' parents, Joseph and Mary, are also said to have belonged to the Essenic movement and Jesus may have received his rabbinical training in their schools. John the Baptist is thought by some to have been an 'advance man' to prepare the way for Jesus to fulfill the old prophecies of being the Messiah.

The Essenic hierarchy included a chief priest called the Christos (Anointed One), "head of the entire Congregation of Israel." There were ordinary priests called the "sons of Aaron", and another functionary known as the Messiah of Israel. The Messiah of Israel was also called Teacher of Righteousness. He suffered physical abuse in atonement for the sins of the entire community, enduring "vindictive sentences of scourging and the terrors of painful sicknesses, and vengeance on his fleshly body."

Christianity After Jesus

The strength of the message that Jesus had used to gain his following had captured the hearts and minds of the followers who were not "insiders" and they fought to keep the hope alive. The first major crisis for the early Christians was whether they could afford to be associated with the Jewish peoples, who were becoming increasingly rebellious toward Rome. It was clear that Rome would have to take action against the rebels.

Against this backdrop the early Christians needed to decide whether it was necessary to first be a Jew before becoming a Christian. Paul, always adept at reading the writing on the wall, decided it was not. It was also Paul who decided that the best place to take the new religion was the heart of the empire where there were many oppressed and downtrodden gentiles who, very possibly would be receptive to the message of hope.

The new religion was oriented primarily toward a Roman or Romanized audience. Thus the role of Rome in Jesus' death was of course whitewashed, and guilt was transferred to the Jews. But this was not the only liberty

taken with events to render them palatable to the Roman world. For the Roman world was accustomed to deifying its rulers, and Caesar had already been officially instated as a God. In order to compete, Jesus, whom nobody had previously deemed divine, had to be deified as well. In Paul's hands, he was.

Before the message could be successfully disseminated from Palestine to Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Egypt, Rome and western Europe, the new religion had to be made acceptable to the people of those regions. And it had to be capable of holding its own against already established creeds. The new God needed to be comparable in power, majesty, and in his repertoire of miracles, to those he was intending to displace.

If Jesus were to gain a foothold in the Romanized world of his time, he had to become a full-fledged God. Not a Messiah in the old sense of the term, not a priest-king, but God Incarnate. Who, like his Syrian, Phoenician, Egyptian, and classical counterparts, passed through the underworld and the harrowing of Hell, and emerged rejuvenated, with the spring. It was at this point that the idea of the Resurrection first assumed such critical importance, and for a fairly obvious reason, to place Jesus on a par with Tammuz, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, and all the other dying and resurrected Gods who populated both the world and the consciousness of their time.

For precisely this reason the doctrine of the virgin birth was promulgated. The Easter festival, the festival of death and resurrection, was made to coincide with the spring rites of other contemporary cults and mystery schools. The Pagan holiday of Ostara has been long held in conjunction with the spring equinox.

Given the need to disseminate a God myth, the actual corporeal family of the 'God' and the political elements in his history would become superfluous. Fettered as they were to a specific time and place, they would have detracted from his claim to universality. Thus, to further the claim of universality all political elements may have been rigorously excised from Jesus' biography. Also all references to Zealots, for example, and Essenes, may also have been discreetly removed.

In the end nothing was left but what was contained in the Gospels, an account of mythic simplicity, occurring only incidentally in the Roman occupied Palestine of the first century, and primarily in the eternal present of all myth.

And thus becoming a real Truth to the minds of many!

