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*All things arise and cease due to
interdependent causes and conditions*

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The Mysteries: Past to the Present

by

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A mystery refers to a fact or phenomena whose meaning or cause is unknown, as in an enigma or puzzle. And rightly so, as the Mysteries were kept secret. Thus, history conjectures them as a form of religious sacrament or of ancient religious rites; a mystery play, or medieval religious drama based on the Scriptures. Mystery as in *whodunit* stories is not the way it is used here.

The role of the Mysteries is to preserve and to pass on the truths of the ageless wisdom. They tend to remain hidden because of the misunderstandings and persecutions that continue to prevail. Moreover, knowledge confers power that is liable to be misused, unless those who have come to it are sufficiently grounded on spirituality or on a trustworthy ethical orientation.

The Druidic Mysteries (*Spiritual Culture of the Druids*)

Associated with the Stone Henge, the word *Druid* is derived from *DerWydd*, *Go-Wydd*, or *O-Vydd*. Note the close similarity to *vide* or *vidya*, both words meaning, *to see, to know, or to realize*.

The practices of the Druids closely resembled those of the Bacchic Mysteries and the Eleusinian Mysteries of Greece, and the Egyptian rites of Isis and Osiris.

The Druidic Order had three divisions, all under vows of secrecy:

- 4 • (Not a division, the Arch-Druid was the Head or Initiator)
- 3 • Druid or Derwyddon—the Stage of the Sun, robed in white, representing purity; they ministered to the people.
- 2 • Bard or Beirdd—teachers of the candidates; robed in sky-blue, representing harmony and truth.
- 1 • Ovate or Ovydd—candidates in the first stage of special purification and preparation; dressed in green, representing learning; studied astronomy and astrology, medicine (herbology) and healing, poetry (literature) and music.

Their approach was to grow less in darkness, falsehood, and death; and to grow more in light, truth, and life.

Their conception of Nature may be briefly summarized as follows:

<u>The 3-Worlds</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
Higher (Happiness)	Nature	Darkness	Light
Middle (Purgatory)	Cause	Falsehood	Truth
Lower (Earth)	Influence	Death	Life

Symbols used in their teachings were:

- 1 • The Madonna, Virgin Mother, Spiritual Birth
- 2 • Child in Her arms, representing growth and development

- 3 • Sun God as Resurrection
- 4 • The Sacred Cross and Serpent (Spirit-Matter and Wisdom)
- 5 • Veneration (recognition) of Nature Spirits (fairies, gnomes, undines)

The Teachings and instructions covered the following:

- 1 • Creation or manifestation of the universe
- 2 • Personalities of Gods or Divine Beings (Powers of the Supreme)
- 3 • Laws of Nature
- 4 • Occult (hidden or inner side of) medicine (herbology, healing)
- 5 • Mysteries of celestial bodies (symbolic astrology)
- 6 • Rudiments of magic, use and misuse of awakened latent powers

Initiations took place during the Solstice of Winter and of Summer; and the Equinox of Spring and of Autumn. In symbolic form candidates were—

- 1 • Buried in a coffin (withdrawal from or the conquest of the senses), then resurrected (from limited to unbounded consciousness).
- 2 • Sent out to sea in an open boat (the *boat* is symbolic of a *mayavi-rupa* or temporarily created illusory form, *out to sea* represents travel into the inner planes or higher worlds of nature). As reported, “some did not survive,” that is, they did not pass the test, their spiritual powers still undeveloped.

The Mithraic Mysteries (*Spiritual Culture of Mithra*)

Mithras is the Lord of the Sun, the most significant of the *Yazatas* (Izods or Genii of the Sun, representing the powers of the Light of Wisdom); considered both male and female, meaning, the resolution of the polarities of nature. The legend is that Mithras was born out of a rock breaking open. Interpreted, Mithras is the [our] Christ [Anointed] consciousness that breaks open from the rock, symbolizing the open mind or universal mental consciousness.

The Rites of Mithras were done in caves, the Cave of the Nymphs. Caves or caverns were symbolic of earth or the lower world of darkness. The cave walls were adorned with signs of the zodiac. The Solstice of Summer and of Winter were significant, also the—

- Zodiacal sign Cancer as the Gate of Descent of the Soul
- ” ” Capricorn as the Gate of Ascent of the Soul

The following symbols (pre-Christian) were objects of veneration:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 • Light & the Sun | 6 • Use of bell & candle |
| 2 • Legends of shepherds,
gifts, adoration | 7 • Holy water & communion |
| 3 • The Flood and the Ark | 8 • Sanctification of Sunday |
| 4 • Fiery Chariot in their art | 9 • Sanctification of the
25th of December |
| 5 • Drawing water from rock | 10 • Moral or ethical conduct |
| | 11 • Abstinence & self-control |

- 12 • Doctrine of Heaven (inner life) & Hell (earth life)
- 13 • Primitive (primal or original) revelation
- 14 • Mediation of the Logos emanating from the divine
- 15 • Atonement (karma) & Sacrifice (restoration of wholeness)
- 16 • Good & Evil conflict, the final of triumph of the former
- 17 • Immortality of the soul
- 18 • Last judgment (evolution cut off points at end cycles)
- 19 • Resurrection & fiery destruction of the universe

In the pre-Christian Mithraic Mysteries, initiations involved the challenge of the *Twelve Tortures*. Those who fearlessly overcame the last of them received a small round cake or wafer of unleavened bread. This symbolized the solar disk, also known as the heavenly bread or "manna" with symbolic figures traced on it. Then the *Seven* rules or mysteries were delivered to the "newly born." Later this got represented in the biblical *Revelation* as the seven seals which are opened accordingly "in [a certain] order."

In the ritual, a *lamb* or a *bull* was killed, and its blood sprinkled on the candidate being initiated. Herein is a blind, the *lamb* refers to the birth of the zodiacal sign Aries and, the *bull*, to the zodiacal sign Taurus, both alluding to the time of the initiation. The shedding of *blood* refers to expanding consciousness, unconfined, into the awakening of its higher reaches. The *sprinkling of blood* is the contact or descent of divine consciousness into that of the initiate. Blood (in plants, sap) which determines health is a symbol of life.

The Universal Tenets of the Mysteries are, thus, summarized:

- 1 • The principle of unity or wholeness
- 2 • Truth, reality, the perception of the noumena behind phenomena
- 3 • Tolerance, open-mindedness, compassion, in and for all
- 4 • Upholding respect for the nobility of character and conduct
- 5 • Humility, submission to the decrees of fate (karma), courage, perseverance, endurance
- 6 • Trustworthiness, loftiness of action, purity of body, mind, soul
- 7 • Selflessness in the service of the less fortunate or of humanity

As in the Other Mysteries (Spiritual Cultures):

- Arthurian, Holy Grail
- Hiramic, Masonic
- Orpheus, Orphic
- Eleusis, Eleusinian
- Isis, Sabazius, Cybele
- Pythagorean
- Gnosis, Gnostic
- Kabalistic, Sephirothic
- Rose Croix
- Hermes, Hermetic
- Odin, Odinic
- Etc. ~ Δ ~

In a short paper such as this, we have merely touched, and very lightly, on the presence of the Mysteries. Their most essential features are presented, yet even to this day, sincere seekers can undertake the same aspirations.

Suggested readings for further study—

• Helena P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, (Wheaton, IL: T.P.H., 1972; original ed., 1877) vols. 1 & 2. See also, *H.P.B. Collected Writings of 1877*.

• Manly P. Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, (Los Angeles, CA: Philosophical Research Society, 1975; second printing, 1977), oversized edition.