



Pluto serves Persephone a pomegranate, the fruit of mortality

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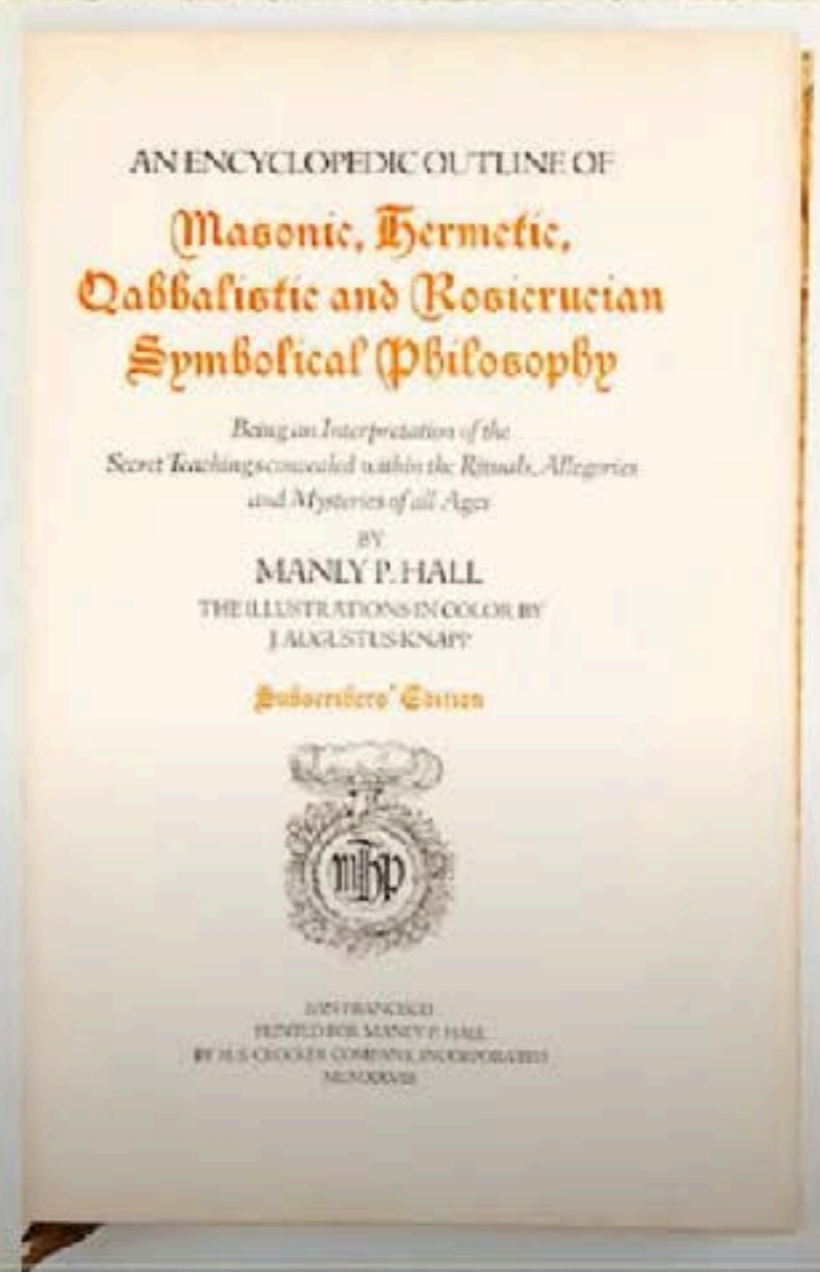
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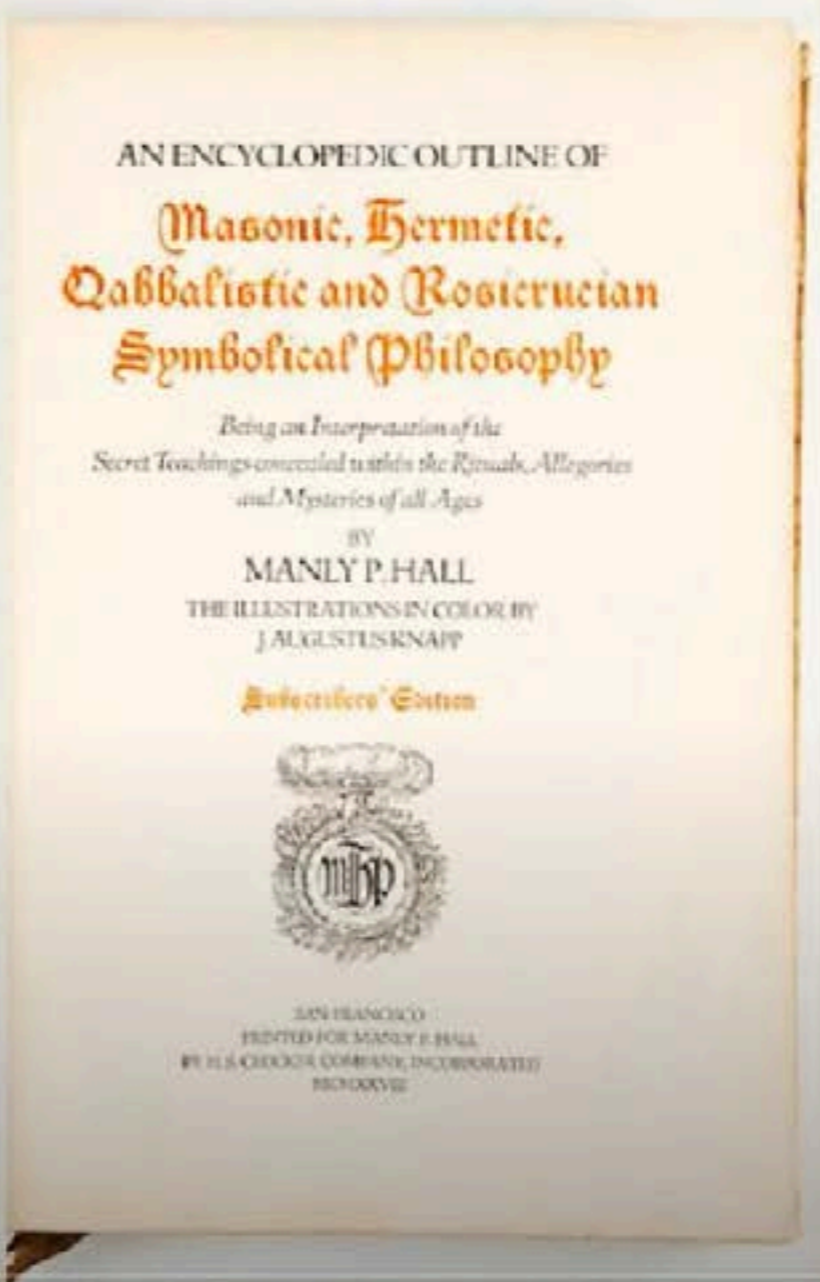
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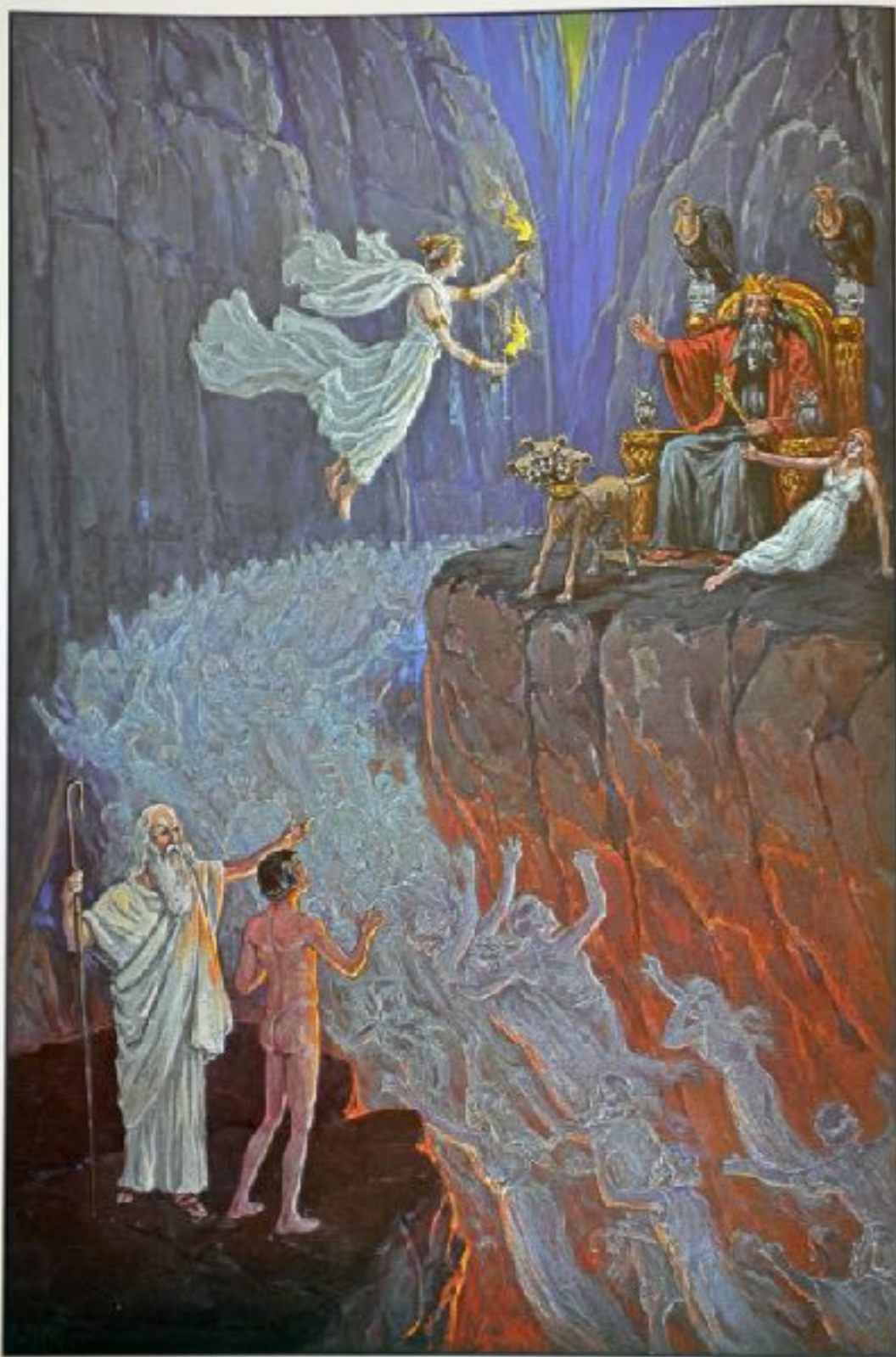
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AN INITIATION CEREMONY IN THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES.

The candidate and his attendant are here shown undergoing the trial of immortality in the cave of the spring beneath the cliff, and through which descends the chthonic light. On the further side of the stream Hades, the god of the underworld, sits on his golden throne, surrounded by his attendants, and the candidate is led by Hermes, the messenger of the gods, to the gates of death. Above the entrance to the cave, the figure of Ceres, carrying the cornucopia, which she has taken from the underworld, is seen. The scene is the abode of her daughter Persephone, whom Hades has abducted and carried off to become his queen.

John A. Wilson thus describes the ritual of the Eleusinian Mysteries: "The candidate is led by Hermes, the messenger of the gods, to the gates of death. Above the entrance to the cave, the figure of Ceres, carrying the cornucopia, which she has taken from the underworld, is seen. The scene is the abode of her daughter Persephone, whom Hades has abducted and carried off to become his queen. The candidate is led by Hermes, the messenger of the gods, to the gates of death. Above the entrance to the cave, the figure of Ceres, carrying the cornucopia, which she has taken from the underworld, is seen. The scene is the abode of her daughter Persephone, whom Hades has abducted and carried off to become his queen."

The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

Part Three



THE most famous of the ancient religious Mysteries were the Eleusinian, whose rites were celebrated every five years in the city of Eleusis to honor Ceres (Demeter, Rhea, or Isis) and her daughter, Persephone. The initiates of the Eleusinian School were famous throughout Greece for the beauty of their philosophic concepts and the high standards of morality which they demonstrated in their

daily lives. Because of their excellence, these Mysteries spread to Rome and Britain, and later the initiations were given in both these countries. The Eleusinian Mysteries, named for the community in Attica where the sacred dramas were first presented, are generally believed to have been founded by Esopos about fourteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, and through the Platonic system of philosophy their principles have been preserved to modern times.

The rites of Eleusis, with their mystic interpretations of Nature's most precious secrets, overshadowed the civilizations of their time and gradually absorbed many smaller schools, incorporating into their own system whatever valuable information these lesser institutions possessed. Heckerthoen sees in the Mysteries of Ceres and Bacchus a metamorphosis of the rites of Isis and Osiris, and there is every reason to believe that all so-called secret schools of the ancient world were branches from one philosophic tree which, with its root in heaven and its branches on the earth, is—like the spirit of man—an invisible but ever-present cause of the objectified vehicles that give it expression. The Mysteries were the channels through which this one philosophic light was disseminated; and their initiates, resplendent with intellectual and spiritual understanding, were the perfect fruitage of the divine tree, bearing witness before the material world of the recondite source of all Light and Truth.

The rites of Eleusis were divided into what were called the Lesser and the Greater Mysteries. According to James Gairdner, the Lesser Mysteries were celebrated in the spring (probably at the time of the vernal equinox) in the town of Agræ, and the Greater, in the fall (the time of the autumnal equinox) at Eleusis or Athens. It is supposed that the former were given annually and the latter every five years. The rituals of the Eleusinians were highly involved, and to understand them required a deep study of Greek mythology, which they interpreted in its esoteric light with the aid of their secret keys.

The Lesser Mysteries were dedicated to Persephone. In his *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, Thomas Taylor sums up their purpose as follows: "The Lesser Mysteries were designed by the ancient theologians, their founders, to signify occultly the condition of the unperfected soul invested with an earthly body, and enveloped in a material and physical nature."

The legend used in the Lesser rites is that of the abduction of the goddess Persephone, the daughter of Ceres, by Pluto, the lord of the underworld, or Hades. While Persephone is picking flowers in a beautiful meadow, the earth suddenly opens and the gloomy lord of death, riding in a magnificent chariot, emerges from its somber depths and, grasping her in his arms, carries the screaming and struggling goddess to his subterranean palace, where he forces her to become his queen.

It is doubtful whether many of the initiates themselves understood the mystic meaning of this allegory, for most of them apparently believed that it referred solely to the succession of the seasons. It is difficult to obtain satisfactory information concerning the Mysteries, for the candidates were bound by inviolable oaths never to reveal their inner secrets to the profane. At the beginning of the ceremony of initiation, the candidate stood upon the skins of animals sacrificed for the purpose, and vowed that death should seal his lips before he would divulge the sacred truths which were about to be communicated to him. Through indirect channels, however, some of their secrets have been preserved. The teachings given to the neophytes were substantially as follows:

The soul of man—often called *Psyche*, and in the Eleusinian Mysteries symbolized by Persephone—is essentially a spiritual thing. Its true home is in the higher worlds, where, free from the bondage of material form and material concepts, it is said to be truly alive and self-expressive. The human, or physical, nature of man, according to this doctrine, is a tomb, a quagmire, a false and impermanent thing, the source of all sorrow and suffering. Plato describes the body as the *sepulcher of the soul*; and by this he means not only the human form but also the human nature.

The gloom and depression of the Lesser Mysteries represented the agony of the spiritual soul unable to express itself because it has accepted the limitations and illusions of the human environment. The crux of the Eleusinian argument was that man is neither better nor wiser after death than during life. If he does not rise above ignorance during his sojourn here, man goes at death into eternity to wander about forever, making the same mistakes which he made here. If he does not outgrow the desire for material possessions here, he will carry it with him into the invisible world, where, because he can never gratify the desire, he will continue in endless agony. Dante's *Inferno* is symbolically descriptive of the sufferings of those who never freed their spiritual natures from the cravings, habits, viewpoints, and limitations of their Platonic personalities. Those who made no endeavor to improve themselves (whose souls have slept) during their physical lives, passed at death into Hades, where, lying in rows, they sleep through all eternity as they had slept through life.

To the Eleusinian philosophers, birth into the physical world was death in the fullest sense of the word, and the only true birth was that of the spiritual soul of man rising out of the womb of his own fleshly nature. "The soul is dead that slumbers," says Longfellow, and in this he strikes the keynote of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Just as Narcissus, gazing at himself in the water (the ancients used this mobile element to symbolize the transitory, illusory, material universe) lost his life trying to embrace a reflection, so man, gazing into the mirror of Nature and accepting as his real self the senseless clay that he sees reflected, loses the opportunity afforded by physical life to unfold his immortal, invisible Self.

An ancient initiate once said that the living are ruled by the dead. Only those conversant with the Eleusinian concepts of life

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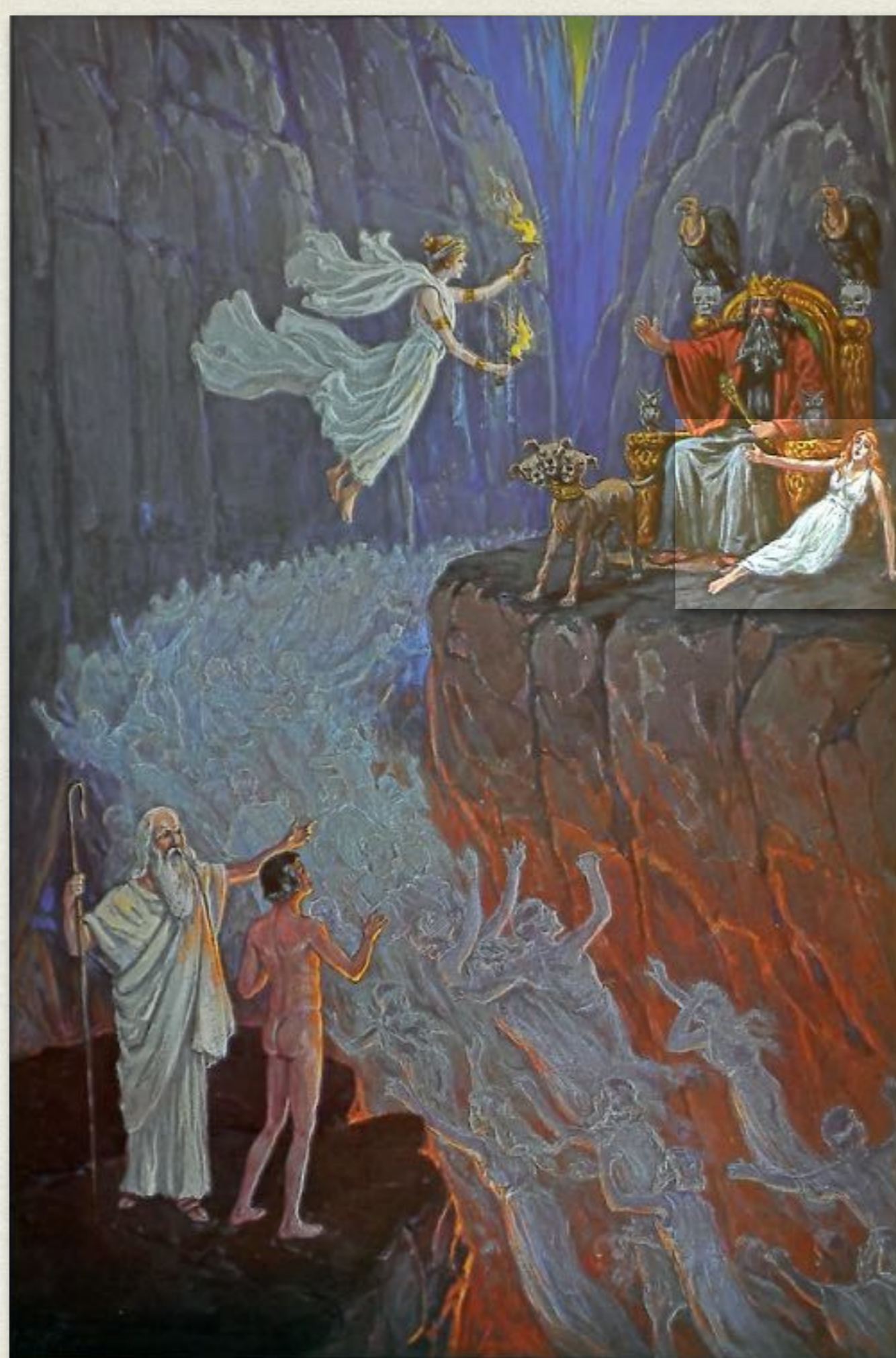


From Theophrastus's *Revelation of the Mysteries*, Gropius, Florence, Florence, 1888.

THE RITE OF PERSEPHONE.

Pluto, the lord of the underworld, represents the body intelligence of man; and the rite of Persephone is symbolic of the divine nature assumed and defiled by the animal soul and dragged downward into the sinister darkness of Hades, which it has used as a sepulcher for the material, or objective, sphere of incarnation.

In his *Disquisitiones upon the Sacred Greek Vows*, James Collins presents the Eleusinian version of the mysteries taking place during the nine days required for the enactment of the Greater Eleusinian Rites. The first day was that of general meeting, during which there to be individual vows questioned concerning their several qualifications. The second day was spent in a procession to the sea, possibly for the submerging of an image of the presiding goddess. The third day was opened by the sacrifice of a bull. On the fourth day the mystic basket containing certain sacred symbols was brought to Eleusis, accompanied by a number of female devotees carrying smaller baskets. On the evening of the fifth day there was a torch race, on the sixth a procession led by a statue of Ceres, and on the seventh an athletic contest. The eighth day was devoted to the repetition of the previous ceremonies for the benefit of any who might have been prevented from attending sooner. The ninth and last day was devoted to the deepest philosophical truths of the Eleusinians, during which an image of the symbol of Bacchus was exhibited as an emblem of supreme importance.



An Initiation Ceremony in the Eleusinian Mysteries

The candidate and his aged initiator are here shown standing on the brink of a chasm dividing the world of the living from that of the dead and through which stream the shades of the departed. On the farther side of the chasm Hades, the god of the underworld, sits on his golden throne surrounded by the emblems of death and attended by Cerberus, the three-headed dog, guardian of the gates of death. Above the yawning cleft hovers the figure of Ceres, carrying the two torches which light her way through the gloom of the netherworld. She pleads for the liberation of her daughter Persephone, whom Hades has abducted and would force to become his queen. John A. Weisse thus describes the ritual of the Eleusinia: “Soon the thunder rolled, lightning flashed, strange and fearful objects appeared, and the place seemed to shake and be on fire; hideous spectres glided through the building, moaning and sighing; frightful noises and howlings were heard. Mysterious apparitions, representing the messengers of the infernal deities, Anguish, Madness, Famine, Disease, and Death, flew around. As the trembling crowd of novices advanced amid this fearful spectacle, representing the torments of this life and those of *Tartarus*, they heard the solemn voice of the hierophant explaining them and exhibiting his symbols of supreme deity, which but added to the horrors of the scene, when suddenly a serene light and objects of bliss appeared and opened an *Elysium* to the initiated Eleusinian phalanx, who had, in a short time and space, experienced the miseries of Earth, the tortures of Tartarus, and the happiness of Elysium.” (See *The Obelisk in Freemasonry*.) –text beneath the color plate facing STOAA:29

The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

Part Three

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The mystics of Eleusis also laid stress upon the evil of suicide, explaining that there was a profound mystery concerning this crime of which they could not speak, but warning their disciples that a great sorrow comes to all who take their own lives. This, in substance, constitutes the esoteric doctrine given to the initiates of the Lesser Mysteries. **As the degree dealt largely with the miseries of those who failed to make the best use of their philosophic opportunities, the chambers of initiation were subterranean and the horrors of Hades were vividly depicted in a complicated ritualistic drama.** After passing successfully through the tortuous passageways, with their trials and dangers, the candidate received the honorary title of *Mystes*. This meant one who saw through a veil or had a clouded vision. It also signified that the candidate had been brought up to the veil, which would be torn away in the higher degree. The modern word *mystic*, as referring to a seeker after truth according to the dictates of the heart along the path of faith, is probably derived from this ancient word, for faith is belief in the reality of things unseen or veiled.

The Greater Mysteries (into which the candidate was admitted only after he had successfully passed through the ordeals of the Lesser, and not always then) were sacred to Ceres, the mother of Persephone, and represent her as wandering through the world in quest of her abducted daughter. Ceres carried two torches, intuition and reason, to aid her in the search for her lost child (the soul). At last she found Persephone not far from Eleusis, and out of gratitude taught the people there to cultivate corn, which is sacred to her. She also founded the Mysteries. Ceres appeared before Pluto, god of the souls of the dead, and pleaded with him to allow Persephone to return to her home. This the god at first refused to do, because Persephone had eaten of the pomegranate, the fruit of mortality. At last, however, he compromised and agreed to permit Persephone to live in the upper world half of the year if she would stay with him in the darkness of Hades for the remaining half.

The Greeks believed that Persephone was a manifestation of the solar energy, which in the winter months lived under the earth with Pluto, but in the summer returned again with the goddess of productiveness. There is a legend that the flowers loved Persephone and that every year when she left for the dark realms of Pluto, the plants and shrubs would die of grief. While the profane and uninitiated had their own opinions on these subjects, the truths of the Greek allegories remained safely concealed by the priests, who alone recognized the sublimity of these great philosophic and religious parables.

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Temple of Hecate in Ephesus



Hecate

While in the city of Ephesus, Julian formally renounced his Christian baptism and was initiated into the cult of the Mother of the Gods in subterranean chambers beneath the Temple of Hecate which was one of the vast complex of buildings composing the sanctuary of Diana. According to Madame Blavatsky, the ritual used on the occasion was Mithraic, and it should be remembered that Neoplatonism had already permeated all of these systems and embraced their secret rituals. She writes: "When Maxime, the Ephesian, initiated the Emperor Julian into the Mithraic Mysteries, he pronounced as the usual formula of the rite, the following: 'By this blood, I wash thee from thy sins. The word of the Highest has entered unto thee, and His Spirit hence forth will rest upon thee NEWLY-BORN, the now-begotten of the Highest God... Thou art the son of Mithra.'" –The Initiates of Greece and Rome (MPH):88-9



Such an underground chamber is referred to in the old mysteries as the Grotto of Dionysius... The subterranean chamber is indicative of locked, hidden meaning, anything that is obscure, anything that cannot be easily discovered. For example, we are told by the Cabbalists that certain secrets, certain mysteries, are concealed in caves. The caves are words, hiding places for meanings. So an old story of the Old Testament represents light hidden in darkness, ideas in words, spirit in matter. The words obscure the meaning, but the words are yet like the walls of the caves which protect the meaning while they obscure it. –MPH's Horizon Magazine 9/43:13-4

The Sacred Cave
by Nantanut Srisangnum

The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

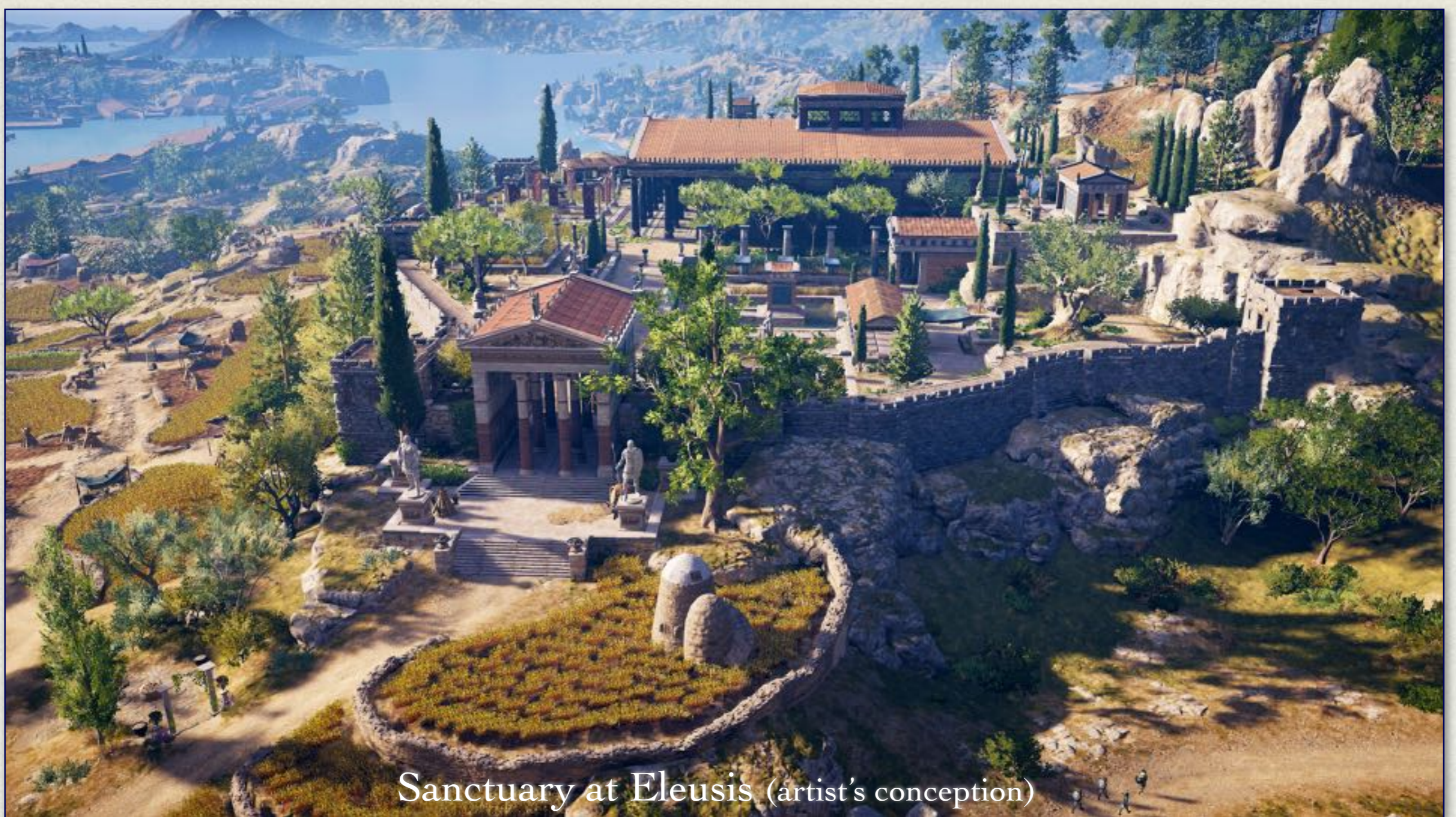
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Sanctuary at Eleusis (artist's conception)

There was a distinction between the lesser and greater Mysteries. One must have been for some years admitted to the former before he could receive the latter, which were but a preparation for them, the Vestibule of the Temple, of which those of Eleusis were the Sanctuary. There, in the lesser Mysteries, they were prepared to receive the holy truths taught in the greater. The Initiates in the lesser were called simply *Mystes*, or Initiates; but those in the greater, *Epoetes*, or Seers. An ancient poet says that the former were an imperfect shadow of the latter, as sleep is of Death. After admission to the former, the Initiate was taught lessons of morality, and the rudiments of the sacred science, the most sublime and secret part of which was reserved for the *Epoet*, who saw the Truth in its nakedness, while the *Mystes* only viewed it through a veil and under emblems fitter to excite than to satisfy his curiosity.

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The Greeks believed that Persephone was a manifestation of the solar energy, which in the winter months lived under the earth with Pluto, but in the summer returned again with the goddess of productiveness. There is a legend that the flowers loved Persephone and that every year when she left for the dark realms of Pluto, the plants and shrubs would die of grief. While the profane and uninitiated had their own opinions on these subjects, the truths of the Greek allegories remained safely concealed by the priests, who alone recognized the sublimity of these great philosophic and religious parables.



Ceres.—Roman.

“But Ceres, upon discovering the loss of her daughter, with lighted torches, and begirt with a serpent, wandered over the whole earth for the purpose of finding her, till she came to Eleusis; there she found her daughter, and also taught to the Eleusinians the cultivation of corn.” Now, in this fable, Ceres represents the evolution of that intuitional part of our nature which we properly denominate intellect (or the unfolding of the intuitional faculty of the mind from its quiet and collected condition in the world of thought); and Proserpina, that living, self-moving, and animating part which we call soul.

[According to] the philosopher Sallust, Ceres is (among the mundane divinities) the deity of the planet Saturn. So that in consequence of this, our intellect (or intuitive faculty) in a descending state must aptly symbolize [identify] with the divinity of Ceres. But Pluto signifies the whole of a material nature; since the empire of this god, according to Pythagoras, commences downward from the Galaxy or milky way. And the cavern signifies the entrance, as it were, into the profundities of such a nature, which is accomplished by the soul’s union [represented by Proserpina’s marriage] with this terrestrial body.

...But the design of Proserpina in venturing from her retreat, is beautifully significant of her approaching descent: for she rambles from home for the purpose of gathering flowers; and this in a lawn replete with the most enchanting variety, and exhaling the most delicious odors. This is a manifest image of the soul operating principally according to the natural and external life, and so becoming effeminated and ensnared through the delusive attractions of sensible form. —Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries:136-47



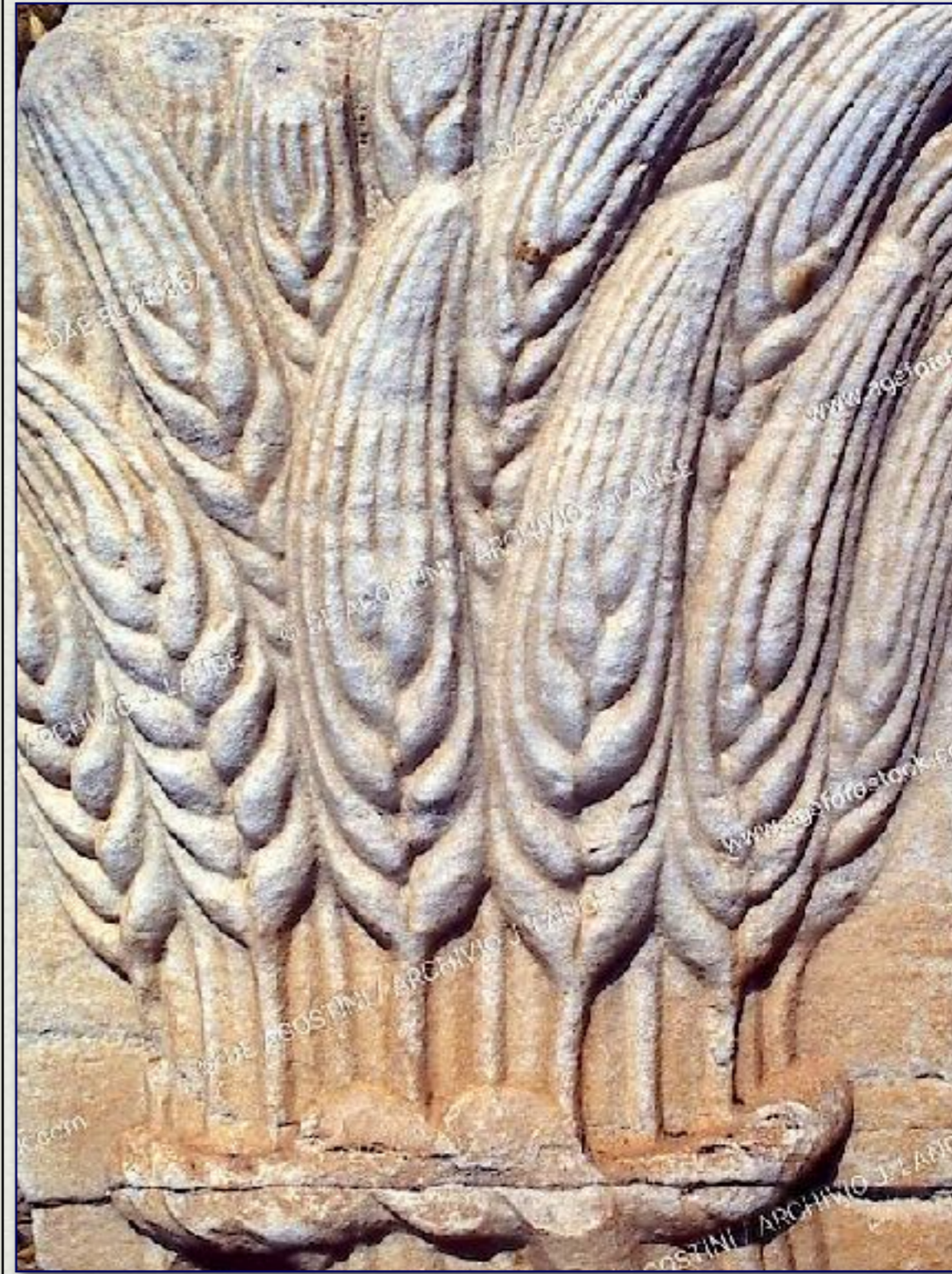
Ceres before Pluto.

But what emblem can more beautifully represent the evolutions and out goings of an intellectual nature into the regions of sense than the wanderings of Ceres by the light of torches through the darkness of night, and continuing the pursuit until she proceeds into the depths of Hades itself? For the intellectual part of the soul,* when it verges towards body, enkindles, indeed, a light in its dark receptacle, but becomes itself situated in obscurity: and, as Proclus somewhere divinely observes, the mortal nature by this means participates of the divine intellect, but the intellectual part is drawn down to death.

*The soul is a composite nature, is on one side linked to the eternal world, its essence being generated of that ineffable element which constitutes the real, the immutable, and the permanent. It is a beam of the eternal Sun, a spark of the Divinity, an emanation from God. On the other hand, it is linked to the phenomenal or sensible world, its emotive part being formed of that which is relative and phenomenal. –Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries:160

Here again the fertilising power of the Corn-mother is indicated. In France, also, in the neighborhood of Auxerre, the last sheaf goes by the name of the Mother of the Wheat, Mother of the Barley, Mother of the Rye, or Mother of the Oats. It is left standing in the field till the last wagon is about to wend homewards. Then a puppet is made out of it, dressed with clothes belonging to the farmer, and adorned with a crown and a blue or white scarf. A branch of a tree is stuck in the breast of the puppet, which is now called 'the Ceres'. At the dance in the evening 'the Ceres' is placed in the middle of the floor, and the reaper who reaped fastest, dances round it with the prettiest girl for his partner. After the dance a pyre is made. All the girls, each wearing a wreath, strip the puppet, pull it to pieces, and place it on the pyre, along with the flowers with which it was adorned. Then the girl who was the first to finish reaping sets fire to the pile, and all pray that Ceres may give a fruitful year. –The Golden Bough v.1:309

A remnant of the Eleusinian mysteries of Ceres is still retained in the festival of St. Agatha in Sicily. The same horse races are continued, the same processions made by friendly societies, (the *sodalitates* of antiquity, in which the image of the saint, on a triumphal car, and the sacred relics, are borne about with wax lights of an enormous size, precisely as was usual in the processions in honour of Ceres. The procession takes place on the fourth day of the festival of the saint, as it did on the fourth day of the festival of Ceres. At the conclusion of the festival in each case, the sacred relics, which were only shewn on those occasions, were offered to the people to kiss; and, finally, as the Eleusinian mysteries were celebrated twice a year, in spring and in autumn, so are the festivals of St. Agatha. – Anacalypsis, v.2:91



The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

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The Abduction of Persephone, by Alessandro Allori

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That part of the allegory referring to the two six-month periods during one of which Persephone must remain with Pluto, while during the other she may revisit the upper world, offers material for deep consideration. It is probable that the Eleusinians realized that the soul left the body during sleep, or at least was made capable of leaving by the special training which undoubtedly they were in a position to give. Thus Persephone would remain as the queen of Pluto's realm during the waking hours, but would ascend to the spiritual worlds during the periods of sleep. The initiate was taught how to intercede with Pluto to permit Persephone (the initiate's soul) to ascend from the darkness of his material nature into the light of understanding. When thus freed from the shackles of clay and crystallized concepts, the initiate was liberated not only for the period of his life but for all eternity, for never thereafter was he divested of those soul qualities which after death were his vehicles for manifestation and expression in the so-called heaven world.

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INVOLUTION

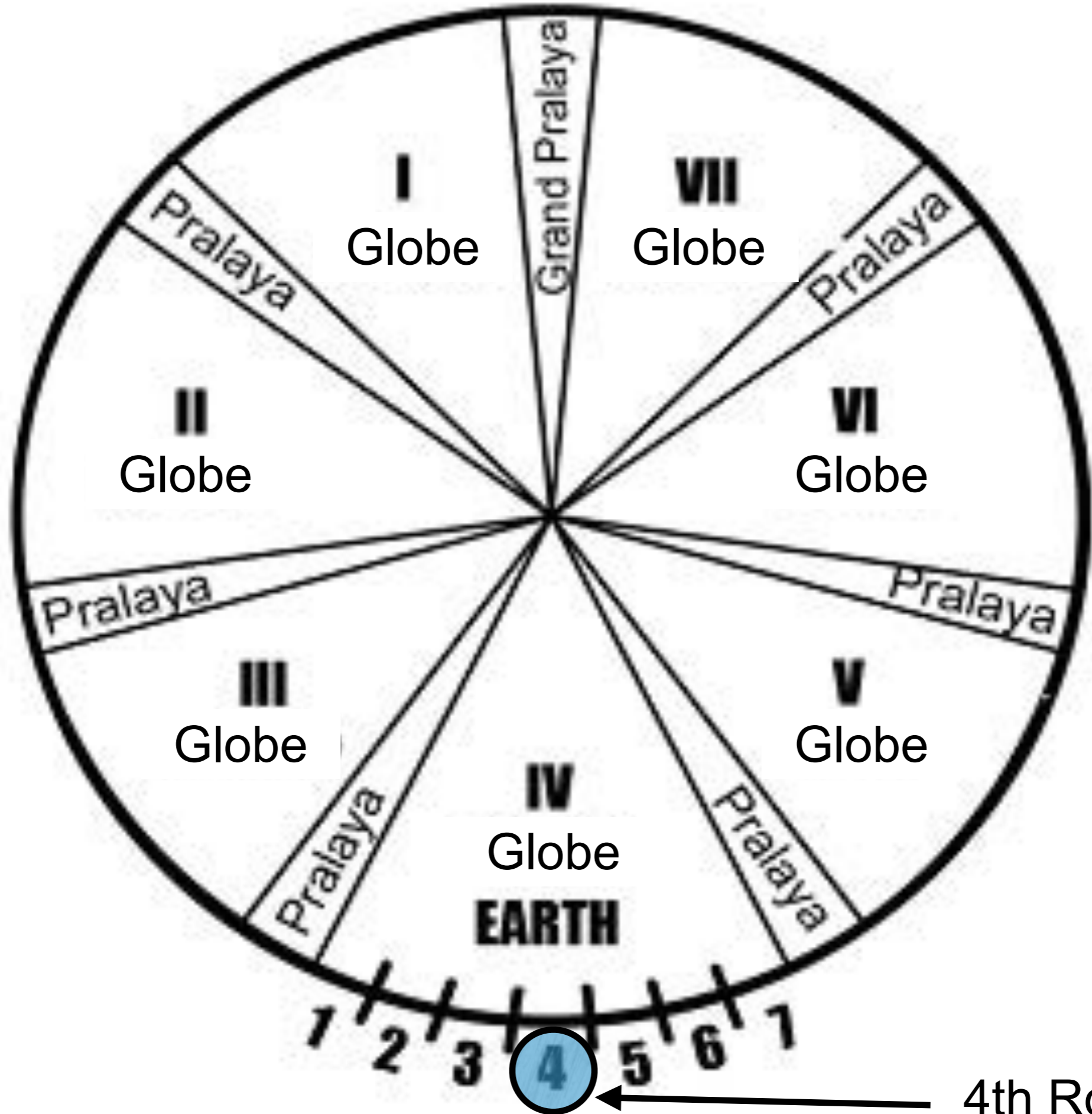
EVOLUTION



4th Globe

INVOLUTION

EVOLUTION



4th Root-race

The Ancient Mysteries and Secret Societies

Part Three

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The Rape of Persephone

Pluto, the lord of the underworld, represents the body intelligence of man; and the rape of Persephone is symbolic of the divine nature assaulted and defiled by the animal soul and dragged downward into the somber darkness of Hades, which is here used as a synonym for the material, or objective, sphere of consciousness.

In his *Disquisitions upon the Painted Greek Vases*, James Christie presents Meursius' version of the occurrences taking place during the nine days required for the enactment of the Greater Eleusinian Rites. The first day was that of general meeting, during which those to be initiated were questioned concerning their several qualifications. The second day was spent in a procession to the sea, possibly for the submerging of a image of the presiding goddess. The third day was opened by the sacrifice of a mullet. On the fourth day the mystic basket containing certain sacred symbols was brought to Eleusis, accompanied by a number of female devotees carrying smaller baskets. On the evening of the fifth day there was a torch race, on the sixth a procession led by a statue of Iacchus, and on the seventh an athletic contest. The eighth day was devoted to a repetition of the ceremonial for the benefit of any who might have been prevented from coming sooner. The ninth and last day was devoted to the deepest philosophical issues of the Eleusinia, during which an urn or jar--the symbol of Bacchus--was exhibited as an emblem of supreme importance.

From Thomassin's *Recueil des Figures, Groupes, Themes, Fontaines, Vases et autres Ornaments*.





Procession of Iacchos and Phallus.

The sixth was a great occasion. The statue of Iacchus, the son of Zeus and Demeter, was brought from Athens, by the *Iacchogoroi*, all crowned with myrtle. In the way was heard only an uproar of singing and the beating of brazen kettles, as the votaries danced and ran along. The image was borne “through the sacred Gate, along the sacred way, halting by the sacred fig-tree (all sacred, mark you, from Eleusinian associations), where the procession rests, and then moves on to the bridge over the Cephissus, where again it rests, and where the expression of the wildest grief gives place to the trifling farce, even as Demeter, in the midst of her grief, smiled at the levity of Iambé in the palace of Celeus. Through the mystical entrance we enter Eleusis. On the seventh day games are celebrated; and to the victor is given a measure of barley, as it were a gift direct from the hand of the goddess. The eighth is sacred to Æsculapius, the Divine Physician, who heals all diseases; and in the evening is performed the initiatory ritual. –Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries:14-7

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There is a passage in the Bhagavat-gita (ch. viii.) wherein Krishna, speaking symbolically and esoterically, says: 'I will state the times (conditions at which devotees departing (from this life) do so never to return (be reborn), or to return (to incarnate again). The Fire, the Flame, the day, the bright (lucky) fortnight, the six months of the Northern solstice, departing (dying) in these, those who know the Brahman (Yogis) go to the Brahman. Smoke, night, the dark (unlucky) fortnight, the six months of the Southern solstice, (dying) in these, the devotee goes to the lunarlight (or mansion the astral light also) and returns (is reborn).

Q. What is the explanation of this passage?

A. It means that the devotees are divided into two classes, those who reach Nirvana on Earth, and either accept or refuse it (though never to be born again, in this Mahakalpa, or age of Brahma); and those who do not reach this state of bliss as Buddha and others did. "The Fire, the Flame, the day, the bright fortnight of the moon," are all symbols of the highest absolute deity. Those who die in such a state of absolute purity, go to Brahman, i.e., have a right to Moksha or Nirvana. On the other hand "Smoke, night, the dark fortnight, etc., are all symbolical of matter, the darkness of ignorance. Those who die in such a state of incomplete purification, must of course be reborn. Only the homogeneous, the absolutely purified unalloyed spirit, can be re-united to the Deity or go to Brahma. —Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge:138

The path of the sun in the heavens: The southern path tends to a lowered vibratory influence and aspirants should bear this in mind in autumn and the early winter months. –TWM:307

In exactly the same way his studies each month will be so arranged that the harder part (dealing with the higher mind) will be undertaken during the part of the month which is called the bright half, whilst the work of the dark half will be more given over to the things concerning lower mind and to an effort to hold the gain of the earlier weeks. –LOM:326

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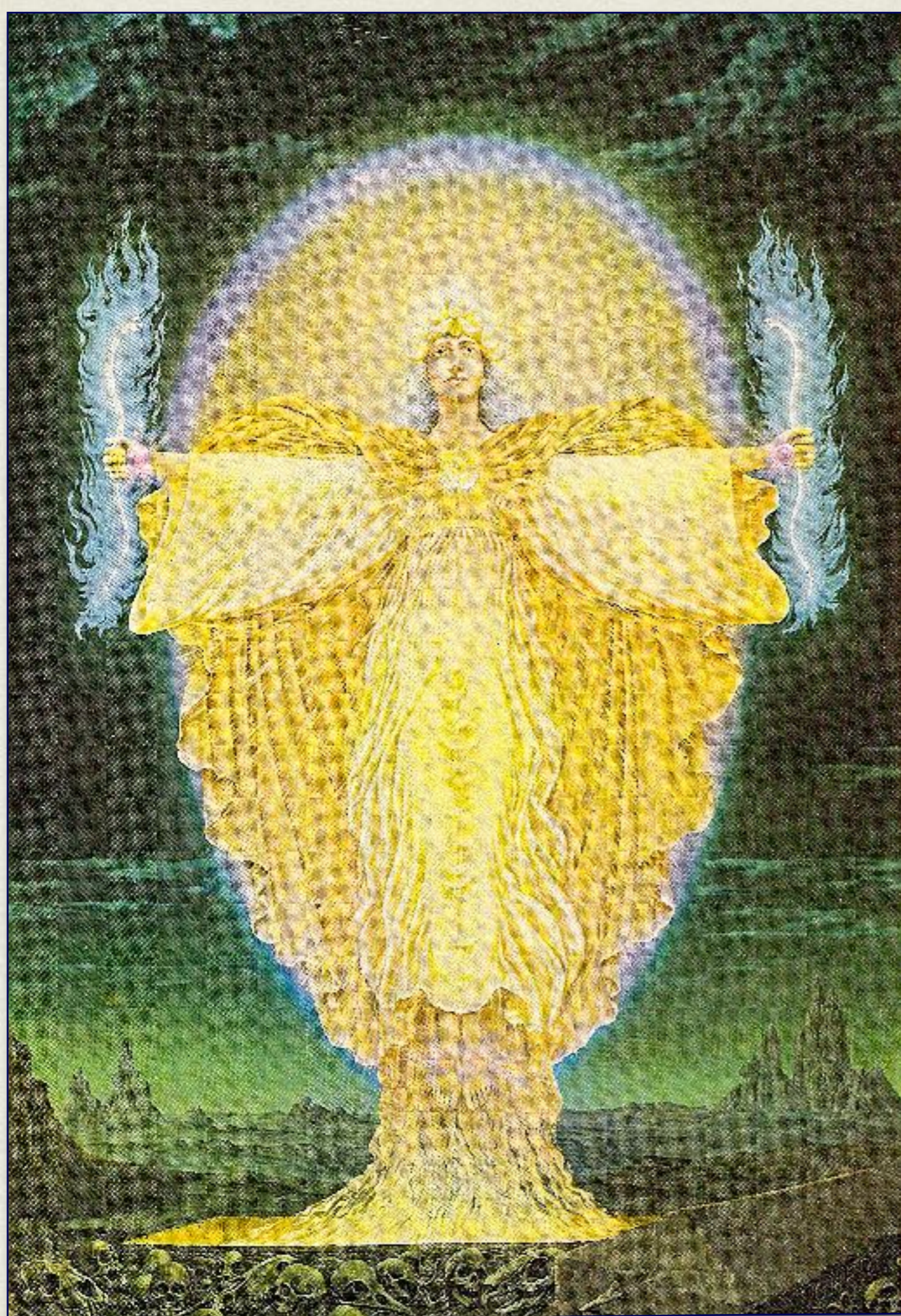
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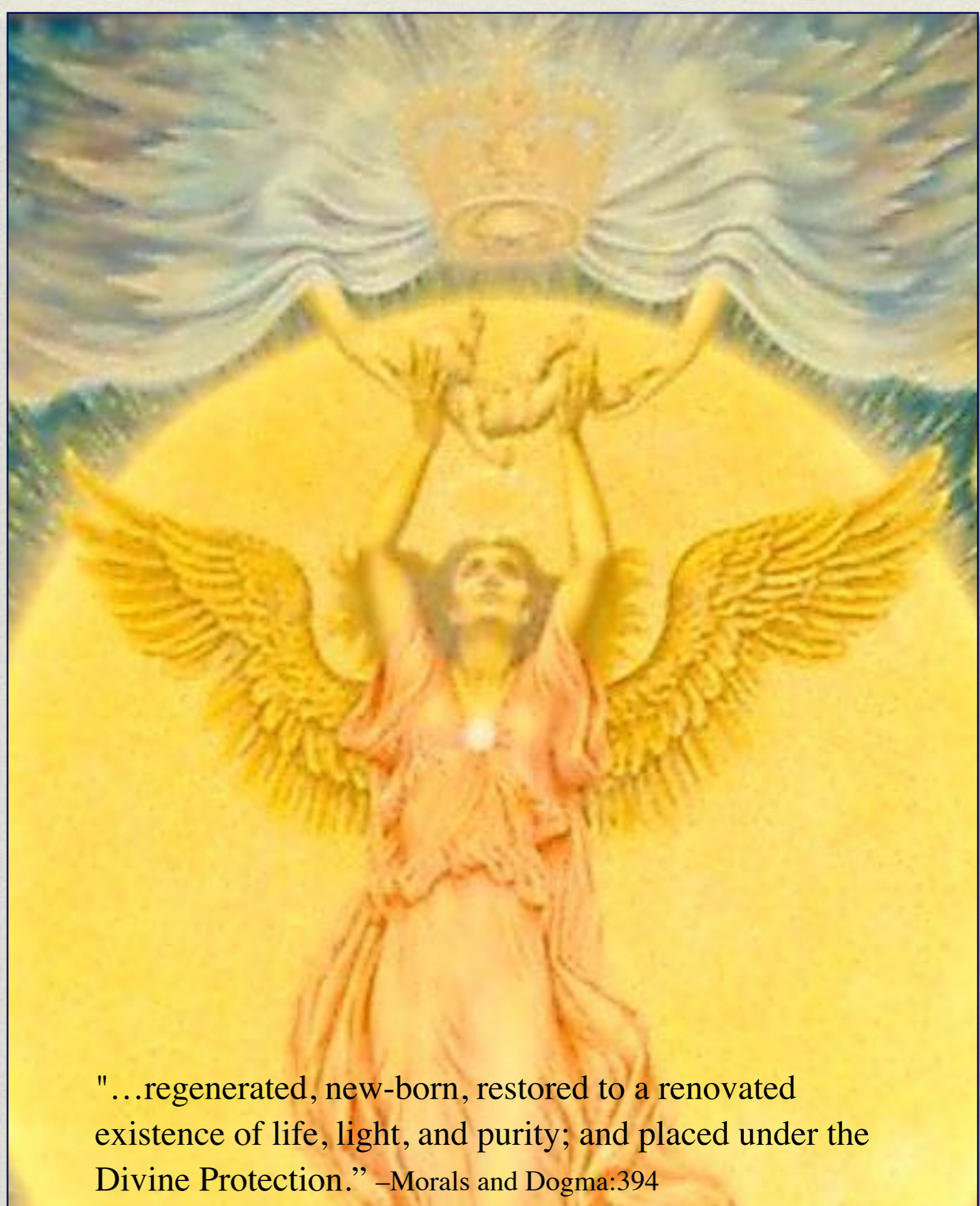


"...regenerated, new-born, restored to a renovated existence of life, light, and purity; and placed under the Divine Protection." –Morals and Dogma:394



The Greater Mysteries completed the work; the candidate was more fully instructed and disciplined, becoming an *epopta* or seer. He was now regarded as having received the arcane principles of life. This was also the end sought by philosophy. The soul was believed to be of composite nature, linked on the one side to the eternal world, emanating from God, and so partaking of Divinity. On the other hand, it was also allied to the phenomenal or external world, and so liable to be subjected to passion, lust, and the bondage of evils. This condition is denominated generation; and is supposed to be a kind of death to the higher form of life. Evil is inherent in this condition; and the soul dwells in the body as in a prison or a grave. In this state, and previous to the discipline of education and the mystical initiation, the rational or intellectual element, which Paul denominates the spiritual, is asleep. The earth-life is a dream rather than a reality. Yet it has longings for a higher and nobler form of life, and its affinities are on high. "All men yearn after God" says Homer. The object of Plato is to present to us the fact that there are in the soul certain ideas or principles, innate and connatural, which are not derived from without, but are anterior to all experience, and are developed and brought to view, but not produced by experience. These ideas are the most vital of all truths, and the purpose of instruction and discipline is to make the individual conscious of them and willing to be led and inspired by them. The soul is purified or separated from evils by knowledge, truth, expiations, sufferings, and prayers. Our life is a discipline and preparation for another state of being; and resemblance to God is the highest motive of action.

—Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries, by Thomas Taylor:25-6



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THE ODINIC MYSTERIES

Balder the Beautiful--the Scandinavian Christ--was the beloved son of Odin. Balder was not warlike; his kindly and beautiful spirit brought peace and joy to the hearts of the gods, and they all loved him save one. As Jesus had a Judas among His twelve disciples, so one of the twelve gods was false--Loki, the personification of evil. Loki caused Höthr, the blind god of fate, to shoot Balder with a mistletoe arrow. With the death of Balder, light and joy vanished from the lives of the other deities. Heartbroken, the gods gathered to find a method whereby they could resurrect this spirit of eternal life and youth. The result was the establishment of the Mysteries.

The Odinic Mysteries were given in underground crypts or caves, the chambers, nine in number, representing the Nine Worlds of the Mysteries. The candidate seeking admission was assigned the task of raising Balder from the dead. Although he did not realize it, he himself played the part of Balder. He called himself a wanderer; the caverns through which he passed were symbolic of the worlds and spheres of Nature. The priests who initiated him were emblematic of the sun, the moon, and the stars. The three supreme initiators--the Sublime, the Equal to the Sublime, and the Highest--were analogous to the Worshipful Master and the junior and Senior Wardens of a Masonic lodge.

After wandering for hours through the intricate passageways, the candidate was ushered into the presence of **a statue of Balder the Beautiful**, the prototype of all initiates into the Mysteries. This figure stood in the center of a great apartment roofed with shields. In the midst of the chamber stood a plant with seven blossoms, emblematic of the planets. In this room, which symbolized the house of the Æsir, or Wisdom, the neophyte took his oath of secrecy and piety upon the naked blade of a sword. He drank the sanctified mead from a bowl made of a human skull and, having passed successfully through all the tortures and trials designed to divert him from the course of wisdom, he was finally permitted to unveil the mystery of Odin-- the personification of wisdom. He was presented, in the name of Balder, with the sacred ring of the order; he was hailed as a man reborn; and it was said of him that he had died and had been raised again without passing through the gates of death.

Richard Wagner's immortal composition, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, is based upon the Mystery rituals of the Odinic cult. While the great composer took many liberties with the original story, the Ring Operas, declared to be the grandest tetralogy of music dramas the world possesses, have caught and preserved in a remarkable manner the majesty and power of the original sagas. Beginning with *Das Rheingold*, the action proceeds through *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried* to an awe-inspiring climax in *Götterdämmerung*, "The Twilight of the Gods." --STOAA:28

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In contrast to the idea of Hades as a state of darkness below, the gods were said to inhabit the tops of mountains, a well-known example being Mount Olympus, where the twelve deities of the Greek pantheon were said to dwell together. In his initiatory wanderings the neophyte therefore entered chambers of ever-increasing brilliancy to portray the ascent of the spirit from the lower worlds into the realms of bliss. As the climax to such wanderings he entered a great vaulted room, in the center of which stood a brilliantly illumined statue of the goddess Ceres. Here, in the presence of the hierophant and surrounded by priests in magnificent robes, he was instructed in the highest of the secret mysteries of the Eleusis. At the conclusion of this ceremony he was hailed as an *Epoptes*, which means one who has beheld or seen directly. For this reason also initiation was termed *autopsy*. The *Epoptes* was then given certain sacred books, probably written in cipher, together with tablets of stone on which secret instructions were engraved.

In *The Obelisk in Freemasonry*, John A. Weisse describes the officiating personages of the Eleusinian Mysteries as consisting of a male and a female hierophant who directed the initiations; a male and a female torchbearer; a male herald; and a male and a female altar attendant. There were also numerous minor officials. He states that, according to Porphyry, the hierophant represents Plato's *Demiurgus*, or Creator of the world; the torch bearer, the Sun; the altar man, the Moon; the herald, Hermes, or Mercury; and the other officials, minor stars. –STOAA:30



On that day the crier was accustomed to admonish the *mystae* to betake themselves to the sea. Now the meaning of this will be easily understood, by considering that, according to the arcana of the ancient theology, as may be learned from Proclus, the whole planetary system is under the dominion of Neptune; and this too is confirmed by Martianus Capella, who describes the several planets as so many streams. Hence when the soul falls into the planet Saturn, which Capella compares to a river voluminous, sluggish, and cold, she then first merges herself into fluctuating matter, though purer than that of a sublunary nature, and of which water is an ancient and significant symbol. Besides, the sea is an emblem of purity, as is evident from the Orphic hymn to Ocean, in which that deity is called *theon agnisma megiston*, i. e. the greatest purifier of the gods: and Saturn, as we have already observed, is pure [illumined] intellect. And what still more confirms this observation is that Pythagoras, as we are informed by Porphyry, in his life of that philosopher, symbolically called the sea a tear of Saturn. –Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries:165-6

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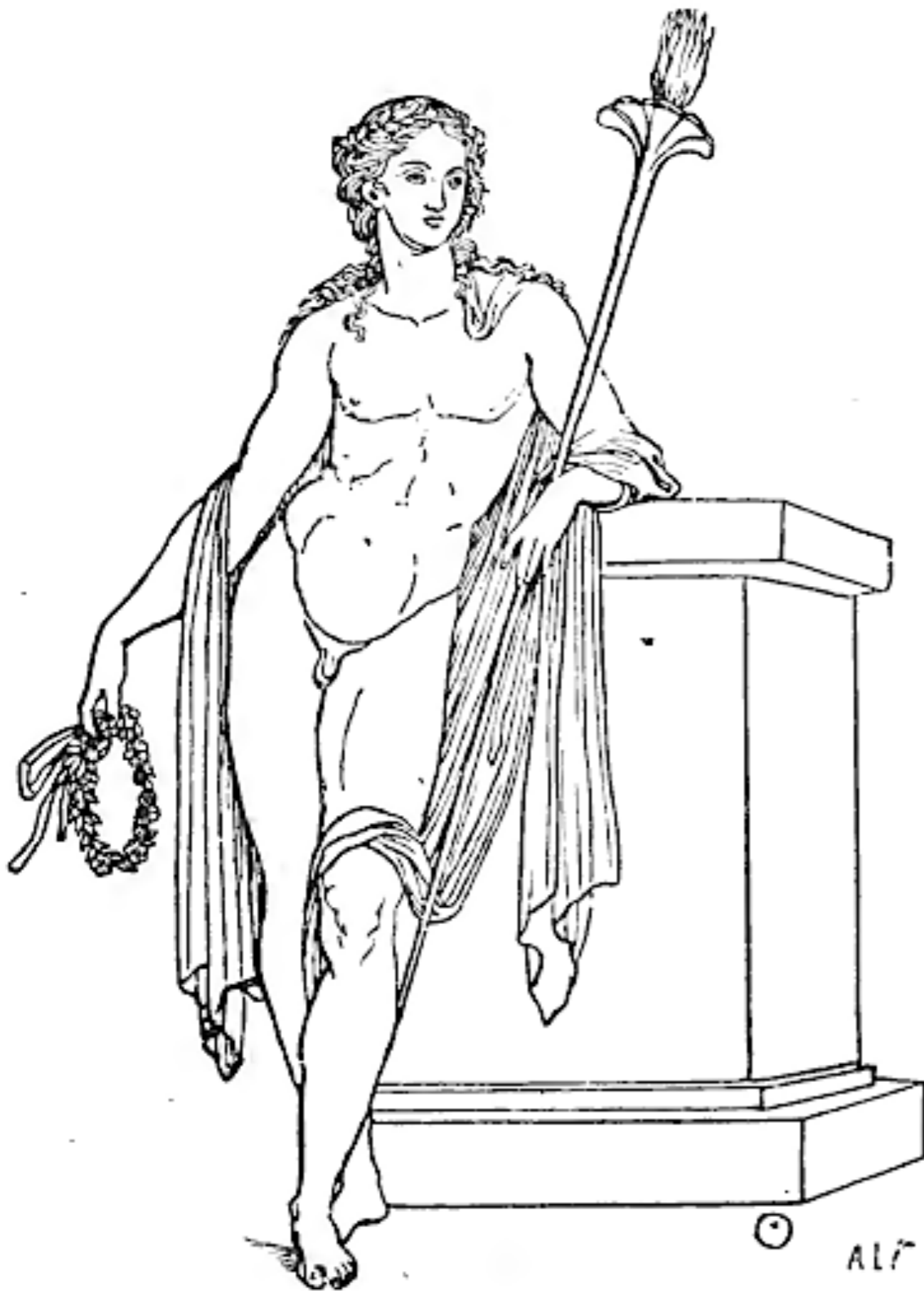
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Torch-bearer as Apollo.

The principal official of the rites was the hierophant. He was elected for life and bound by a vow of celibacy. According to most accounts, he never left the sacred precincts; but worthy persons could have appointments with him in the sanctuary. The hierophant was the narrator of the rituals. He explained the meanings of the symbols and ceremonies and sanctified those who attained the highest grade. While performing his ritualistic responsibilities, he impersonated the god Jupiter and was mystically identified with this deity. The hierophant was assisted by three officials- the torch bearer, the herald, and the servant of the altar. In the astronomical theology, the Sun was the torch bearer, Mercury (Hermes) was the mystic herald, and the Moon the keeper of the altar. – The Initiates of Greece and Rome (MPH):25



The Marriage of Mars and Venus.



Demeter

Ceres, or Demeter, was the daughter of Kronos and Rhea, and by Zeus the mother of Persephone. Some believe her to be the goddess of the earth, but more correctly she is the deity protecting agriculture in general and corn in particular. The Poppy is sacred to Ceres and she is often shown carrying or ornamented by a garland of these flowers. In the Mysteries, Ceres represented riding in a chariot drawn by winged serpents. –STOAA:30

Ceres, Patroness of the Mysteries
from a mural painting in Pompeii

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Eleusinian Mysteries.

It is interesting to note that in the Pythagorean School, women were accepted on the same basis as men and could advance to the highest grades of instruction. This may seem to be a unique circumstance, but actually the education of women was a major consideration among the Grecian states. After the death of Pythagoras, his wife became the head of his school and later married the most advanced member of the Pythagorean community. –The Initiates of Greece and Rome (MPH):44

The identification of [Eleusinian] initiates presents an even greater difficulty. Every free person of good character was entitled to receive the Lesser Mysteries. As none but the initiated could participate in the secret rites, it was necessary that both men and women be accepted and bound by the same obligations. In the course of the ceremonies, the twelve Olympian deities were personified by members of the sacred orders– the gods by men and the goddesses by women. The Eleusinian sanctuary was sustained by the state, and the altars were attended by priests and priestesses serving the deity to be propitiated. –The Initiates of Greece and Rome (MPH):5

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Clemens of Alexandria says that what was taught in the great Mysteries concerned the Universe, and was the completion and perfection of all instruction; wherein things were seen as they were, and nature and her works were made known.

Plato said that the object of the Mysteries was to re-establish the soul in its primitive purity, and in that state of perfection which it had lost.

Epictetus said, "whatever is met with therein has been instituted by our Masters, for the instruction of man and the correction of morals."

Proclus held that initiation elevated the soul, from a material, sensual, and purely human life, to a communion and celestial intercourse with the Gods; and that a variety of things, forms, and species were shown Initiates, representing the first generation of the Gods.

Purity of morals and elevation of soul were required of the Initiates. Candidates were required to be of spotless reputation and irreproachable virtue. Nero, after murdering his mother, did not dare to be present at the celebration of the Mysteries: and Antony presented himself to be initiated, as the most infallible mode of proving his innocence of the death of Avidius Cassius.

The Initiates were regarded as the only fortunate men. "It is upon us alone," says **Aristophanes**, "shineth the beneficent day-star. We alone receive pleasure from the influence of his rays; we, who are initiated, and who practise toward citizen and stranger every possible act of justice and piety." And it is therefore not surprising that, in time, initiation came to be considered as necessary as baptism afterward was to the Christians; and that not to have been admitted to the Mysteries was held a dishonor.

"It seems to me," says the great orator, philosopher, and moralist, **Cicero**, "that Athens, among many excellent inventions, divine and very useful to the human family, has produced none comparable to the Mysteries, which for a wild and ferocious life have substituted humanity and urbanity of manners. It is with good reason they use the term *initiation*; for it is through them that we in reality have learned the first principles of life; and they not only teach us to live in a manner more consoling and agreeable, but they soften the pains of death by the hope of a better life hereafter." –Morals and Dogma:372-3



THE PROCESSION OF THE ELEMICUS

From Goussier's *Mysteries of the East*.

In the illustration of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the city of Eleusis is placed by the sea, and the temple of Demeter is situated on the coast. The Eleusinian Mysteries were given during the year 1775, and the Eleusinian Mysteries were abolished in 1776. The Eleusinian Mysteries were abolished in 1776, and the Eleusinian Mysteries were abolished in 1776.

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The following paragraph from *Purpura* gives a fairly adequate conception of Eleusinian symbolism: "God being a luminous principle, residing in the midst of the most subtle fire, he remains forever invisible to the eyes of those who do not elevate themselves above material life; on this account, the sight of transparent bodies, such as crystal, Persian marble, and even ivory, recalls the idea of divine light; as the sight of gold excites an idea of its purity, for gold cannot be sullied. Some have thought by a blackstone was signified the invisibility of the divinity itself. To express supreme reason, the Divinity was represented under the human form—and beautiful, for God is the source of beauty; of different ages, and in various attitudes, sitting or upright; of one or the other sex, as a virgin or a young man, a husband or a bride, that all the shades and gradations might be marked. Every thing luminous was subsequently attributed to the gods; the sphere, and all that is spherical, to the universe, to the sun and the moon—sometimes to Fortune and to Hope. The circle, and all circular figures, to eternity—to the celestial movements, to the circles and zones of the heavens. The section of circles, in the phases of the moon; and pyramids and obelisks, to the igneous principle, and through that to the gods of Heaven. A column passes the sun, a cylinder the earth, the pyramid and triangle (a symbol of the triangle) designate generation." (From *Essays on the Mysteries of Eleusis* by M. Ovaroff.)

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THE ORPHIC MYSTERIES

Orpheus, the Thracian bard, the great initiate of the Greeks, ceased to be known as mortal and was celebrated as a divinity several centuries before the Christian Era. "As to Orpheus himself," writes Thomas Taylor, "scarcely a vestige of his life is to be found amidst the immense mass of time. For who has ever been able to affirm any thing with certainty of his origin, his age, his country, and condition? This alone may be depended on, from general consent, that there formerly lived a person named Orpheus, who was the founder of theology among the Greeks, the initiator of their laws and morals, the fount of prophets, and the prince of poesy; himself the offspring of a Muse, who taught the Greeks their sacred rites and mysteries, and from whose wisdom, as from a perennial and abundant fountain, the divinest oracles of Homer and the sublime theology of Pythagoras and Plato flowed." (See *The Mystical Doctrines of Orpheus*.)

Orpheus was founder of the Grecian mythological system which he used as the medium for the promulgation of his philosophical doctrines. The origin of his philosophy is uncertain. He may have got it from the Brahmins, there being legends to the effect that he was a Hindu, his name possibly being derived from *Apsaras*, meaning "dark." Orpheus was initiated into the Egyptian Mysteries, from which he derived extensive knowledge of magic, astrology, sorcery, and medicine. The Mysteries of the Cabiri at Samothrace were also conferred upon him, and these undoubtedly contributed to his knowledge of medicine and music.

The romance of Orpheus and Eurydice is one of the best Greek episodes of Greek mythology and apparently constitutes the outstanding fea-

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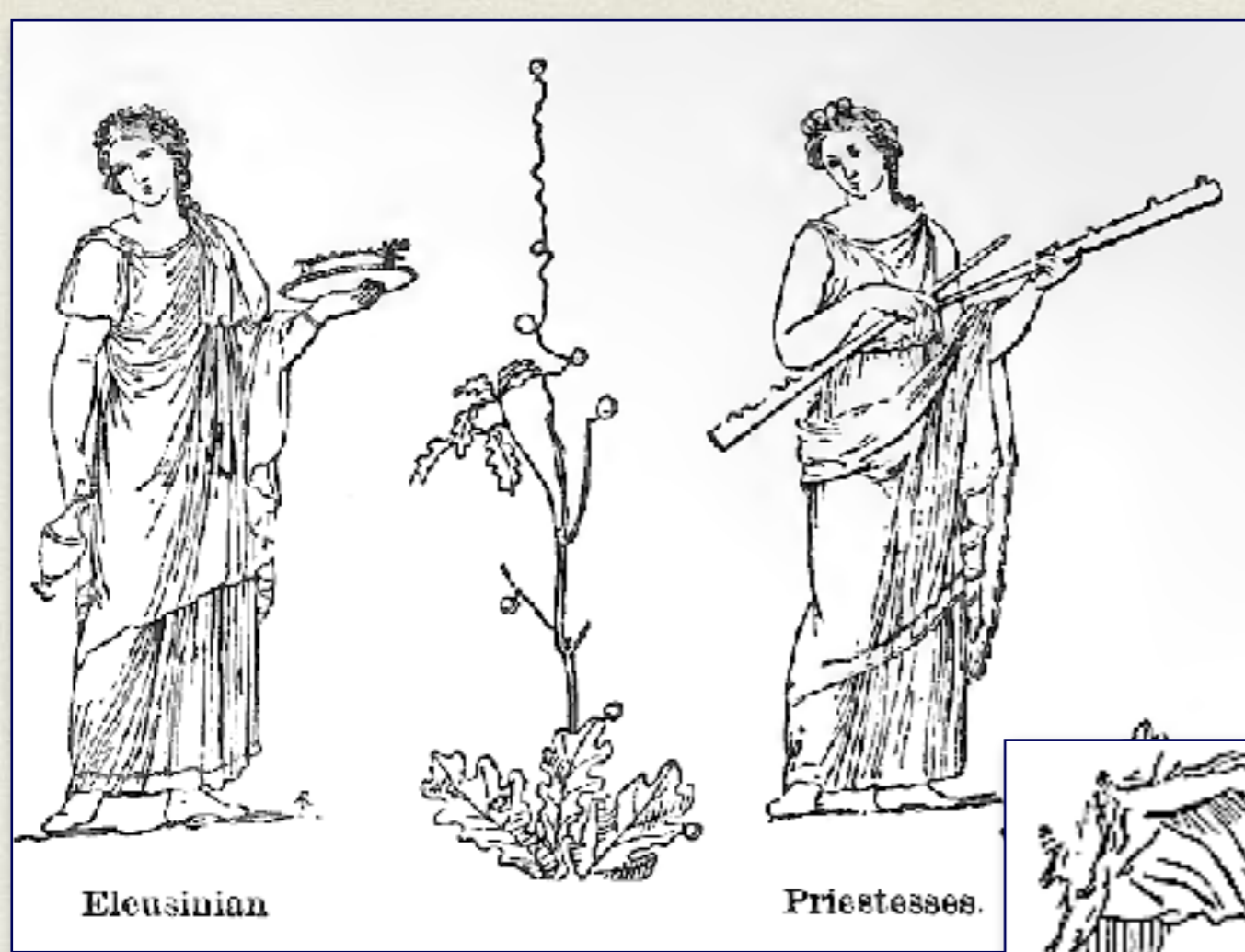
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Illustrations from Thomas Taylor's
Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries



The same author notes that those who were initiated continued to wear the garments they had worn at the blessed ceremony as long as even fragments of the cloth were held together; and when the shreds alone remained, they were dedicated in some temple as a memorial to the Mysteries of Demeter. –*The Initiates of Greece and Rome* (MPH):28

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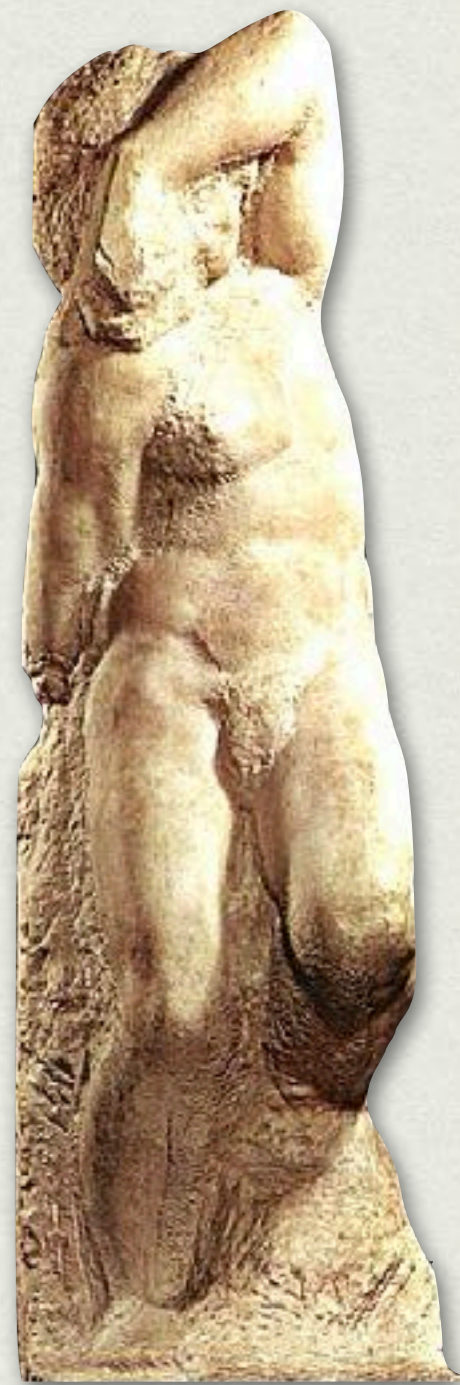
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...is it not obvious that by *Avernus*, and the dark gates of Pluto, we must understand a corporeal or external nature, the descent into which is, indeed, at all times obvious and easy, but to recall our steps, and ascend into the upper regions, or, in other words, to separate the soul from the body by the purifying discipline, is indeed a mighty work, and a laborious task? For a few only, the favorites of heaven, that is, born with the true philosophic genius,* and whom ardent virtue has elevated to a disposition and capacity for divine contemplation, have been enabled to accomplish the arduous design.

*i.e., a disposition to investigate for the purpose of eliciting truth, and reducing it to practice. –*Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*:51

The Awakening Slave, by Michaelangelo



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The polar opposite to Capricorn is Cancer and, as you have been taught, these two signs are the two great Gates of the zodiac—one opening the door into incarnation, into mass life, and into human experience, whilst the other opens the door into the life of the spirit, into the life of the Kingdom of God, the life and purposes of the Hierarchy of our planet. Cancer admits the soul into the world centre which we call Humanity. Capricorn admits the soul into conscious participation in the life of that world centre which we call the Hierarchy. –Esoteric Astrology by AAB:168

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Attica, Greece



'The Temple of Eleusis' by artist, visionary architect, and architectural theorist Joseph Michael Gandy (1771-1843)



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