

A Study on

The CULT of Cybele

The Cult of Cybele



The goddess Cybele

The cult of Cybele is said to have originated in Asia Minor, near Pergamum. As a deity connected to the concerns of women, as a healer, and as a protector from enemies, Cybele was often associated with Rhea, mother of Zeus and Demeter. Cybele is known by several epithets, such as Magna Mater and Mater Deum (deum = deorum, a syncopated poetic form). Her home was said to be Mount Ida, near the city of Troy. Early depictions show her first as a lump of black stone, then as an earth mother. After the Greeks colonised Asia Minor, the cult spread -- but not without violence. A priest of Cybele is said to have been murdered while trying to introduce the cult into Athens. When the city was struck by a plague, Greeks consulted an oracle (probably the one at Delphi) and were told to build a temple to Cybele.

During the second Punic War, Hannibal was having much success subduing towns and villages in Italy and was approaching Rome. The Senate consulted the Sybilline Books and learned that, should a foreign enemy invade Italy, he could be deterred only if the worship of the "Mother of Mount Ida" were brought to Rome. Always ones to hedge their bets, the Romans sent a delegation to the oracle at Delphi. A treaty was made with Philip V of Macedon and he permitted the Romans to bring back to Rome both the statue and a black meteorite that personified the divine Cybele. In 194 BCE, a temple was built on the Palatine Hill to the new goddess, who was known as Magna Mater. New games were initiated to celebrate her (the normal procedure for introducing a new deity to Rome). Her popularity grew so fast that, by the end of the Roman Republic, the cult of Cybele had become one of the most important in the Roman world. She must have had a powerful reputation, since her temple was frequented by some of the powerful of Rome. She was considered responsible for good crops (in her Demeter connection) and military victories.

Dionysus of Halicarnassus records that specific laws were passed when some of the undesirable aspects of the cult became apparent. Cybele's religion was a bloody cult that required its priests and priestesses as well as followers to cut themselves during some rituals. The priests castrated themselves at their initiation; there was wild music, chanting, and frenzied dancing. During the Republic and early Empire, festival days were celebrated with eunuchs preceding the goddess through the streets, banging cymbals and drums, wearing bright attire and heavy jewelry, their hair long and 'greased'. Priests and priestesses were segregated, their activities confined to their temples, and Roman citizens were not allowed to walk in procession with them. Neither Roman citizens nor their slaves were allowed to become priests or priestess in the cult. No native-born Roman citizen was to be allowed to dress in bright colors, beg for alms, walk the streets with flute players or worship the goddess in 'wild Phrygian ceremonies'. Those Romans who wanted to continue to worship the goddess set up secret societies known as sodalitates so they could dine together in the goddess' honor.

Early Christians condemned the cult as demonic. By the 4th century Emperor Valentinian II officially banned her worship and allowed cruel persecutions of any who continued the practice. During the reign of Justinian, property was seized, any items of worship were burned, temples were destroyed, and those who still followed the cult were tortured, forced to commit suicide, or buried alive. By the 6th century AD the cult was extinct.

Cybele coin - The goddess Cybele is usually depicted in art with a crown and veil (300k - requires Quicktime to view content).

Sources:

Religions of Rome, Volume I, Mary Beard, John North, Simon Pearce, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 96-99, 164-166, 263.

- <http://hunter.apana.org.au/~gallae/pantheon/social/cultofcybele.htm>, website accessed Nov 12, 2003.
- <http://www.eaze.net/~dene/cybele.jpg>, website accessed accessed Nov 12, 2003.
- <http://cthulhu.kittyfox.net/images/cybele.jpg>, website accessed accessed Nov 12, 2003.

- J. Jahnige, November 2003 (revised 2006)

KYBELE (Cybele) was the ancient Phrygian Mother of the Gods, a primal nature goddess worshipped with orgiastic rites in the mountains of central and western Anatolia. The Greeks identified her with their own mother of the gods ... the Titaness Rhea.

This page describes the myths of Kybele set in her homeland of Phrygia including the distinctly non-Greek myth of her hermaphroditic birth and her love for the youth Attis.

Stories in which Kybele's is conflated with the Greek Rhea can be found on the separate Rhea-Kybele page.

FAMILY OF CYBELE

PARENTS

1. SKY-GOD & EARTH-GODDESS * (*Pausanias 7.17.8*)
* Pausanias equates these Phrygian gods with the Greek gods Zeus and Gaia.

OFFSPRING

1. KORYBAS (by Iasion *) (*Diodorus Siculus 5.48.2*)
2. ALKE-KYBELE (by Olympos) (*Diodorus Siculus 5.48.2*)
3. SABAZIOS-DIONYSOS (*suggested in Nonnus Dionysiaca 9.136*)
4. MIDAS (*Hyginus Fabulae 191 & 274*)
* Iasion is the Samothracian counterpart of Attis and Korybas the first of the Korybantes.

ENCYCLOPEDIA

CYBELE. The Thracians conceived the chief divinity of the Samothracian and Lemnian mysteries as Rhea-Hecate, while some of them who had settled in Asia Minor, became there acquainted with still stranger beings, and one especially who was worshipped with wild and enthusiastic solemnities, was found to resemble Rhea. In like manner the Greeks who afterwards settled in Asia identified the Asiatic goddess with Rhea, with whose worship they had long been familiar (Strab. x. p. 471; Hom. Hymn. 13, 31). In Phrygia, where Rhea became identified with Cybele, she is said to have purified Dionysus, and to have taught him the mysteries (Apollod. iii. 5. § 1), and thus a Dionysiac element became amalgamated with the worship of Rhea. Demeter, moreover, the daughter of Rhea, is sometimes mentioned with all the attributes belonging to Rhea. (Eurip. Helen. 1304.) The confusion then became so great that the worship of the Cretan Rhea was confounded with that of the Phrygian mother of the gods, and that the orgies of Dionysus became interwoven with those of Cybele. Strangers from Asia, who must be looked upon as jugglers, introduced a variety of novel rites, which were fondly received, especially by the populace (Strab. 1. c.; Athen. xii. p. 553 ; Demosth. de Coron. p. 313). Both the name and the connection of Rhea with Demeter suggest that she was in early times revered as goddess of the earth ...

Under the name of Cybele, we find her worship on Mount Sipylus (Paus. v. 13. § 4), Mount Coddinus (iii. 22. § 4), in Phrygia, which had received its colonists from Thrace, and where she was regarded as the mother of Sabazius. There her worship was quite universal, for there is scarcely a town in Phrygia on the coins of which she does not appear. In Galatia she was chiefly worshipped at Pessinus, where her sacred image was believed to have fallen from heaven (Herodian, i. 35). King Midas I. built a temple to her, and introduced festive solemnities, and subsequently a more magnificent one was erected by one of the Attali. Her name at Pessinus was Agdistis (Strab. xii. p. 567). Her priests at Pessinus seem from the earliest times to have been, in some respects, the rulers of the place, and to have derived the greatest possible advantages from their priestly functions. Even after the image of the goddess was carried from Pessinus to Rome, Pessinus still continued to be looked upon as the metropolis of the great goddess, and as the principal seat of her worship. Under different names we might trace the worship of Rhea even much further east, as far as the Euphrates and even Bactriana. She was, in fact, the great goddess of

the Eastern world, and we find her worshipped there in a variety of forms and under a variety of names. As regards the Romans, they had from the earliest times worshipped Jupiter and his mother Ops, the wife of Saturn. When, therefore, we read (Liv. xxix. 11, 14) that, during the Hannibalian war, they fetched the image of the mother of the gods from Pessinus, we must understand that the worship then introduced was quite foreign to them, and either maintained itself as distinct from the worship of Ops, or became united with it. A temple was built to her on the Palatine, and the Roman matrons honoured her with the festival of the Megalesia. The manner in which she was represented in works of art was the same as in Greece, and her castrated priests were called Galli.

The various names by which we find Rhea designated, are, "the great mother," "the mother of the gods," Cybele, Cybebe, Agdistis, Berecyntia, Brimo, Dindymene, "the great Idaean mother of the gods." Her children by Cronos are enumerated by Hesiod : under the name of Cybele she is also called the mother of Alce, of the Phrygian king Midas, and of Nicaea (Diod. iii. 57; Phot. Cod. 224). In all European countries Rhea was conceived to be accompanied by the Curetes, who are inseparably connected with the birth and bringing up of Zeus in Crete, and in Phrygia by the Corybantes, Atys, and Agdistis. The Corybantes were her enthusiastic priests, who with drums, cymbals, horns, and in full armour, performed their orgiastic dances in the forests and on the mountains of Phrygia. The lion was sacred to the mother of the gods, because she was the divinity of the earth, and because the lion is the strongest and most important of all animals on earth, in addition to which it was believed that the countries in which the goddess was worshipped, abounded in lions (comp. Ov. Met. x. 682). In Greece the oak was sacred to Rhea (Schol. ad Apollon. Rhod. i. 1124). The highest ideal of Rhea in works of art was produced by Pheidias; she was seldom represented in a standing posture, but generally seated on a throne, adorned with the mural crown, from which a veil hangs down. Lions usually appear crouching on the right and left of her throne, and sometimes she is seen riding in a chariot drawn by lions.

Source: Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology.

CLASSICAL LITERATURE QUOTES BIRTH OF CYBELE-AGDISTIS

LOCALE: Phrygia (central Anatolia)

Kybele was the daughter of the Phrygian sky-god and earth-mother. She was born as an hermaphrodite named Agdistis who was castrated by the gods to become the goddess Kybele. The Phrygian sky-god is identified with the Greek Zeus in Pausanias' account of the myth.

Pausanias, Description of Greece 7. 17. 8 (trans. Jones) (Greek travelogue C2nd A.D.):

"The local (Phrygian) legend about him (Attis) being this. Zeus (i.e. the Phrygian sky-god identified with Zeus), it is said, let fall in his sleep seed upon the ground, which in course of time sent up a Daimon, with two sexual organs, male and female. They call the daimon Agdistis (Kybele). But the gods, fearing Agdistis, cut off the male organ. There grew up from it an almond-tree with its fruit ripe, and a daughter of the river Saggarios (Sangarius), they say, took the fruit and laid it in her bosom, when it at once disappeared, but she was with child. A boy (Attis) was born."

LOVE OF CYBELE & ATTIS

LOCALE: Phrygia (Central Anatolia)

Pausanias, Description of Greece 7. 17. 8 (trans. Jones) (Greek travelogue C2nd A.D.):

"The local (Phrygian) legend about him (Attis) being this. Zeus (i.e. the Phrygian sky-god identified with Zeus), it is said, let fall in his sleep seed upon the ground, which in course of time sent up a Daimon, with two sexual organs, male and female. They call the daimon Agdistis. But the gods, fearing Agdistis, cut off the male organ. There grew up from it an almond-tree with its fruit ripe, and a daughter of the river Saggarios (Sangarius), they say, took the fruit and laid it in her bosom, when it at once disappeared, but she was with child. A boy was born, and exposed, but wastended by a he-goat. As he grew up his beauty was more than human, and Agdistis (Kybele) fell in love with him. When he had grown up, Attis was sent by his relatives to Pessinos (city in Phrygia), that he might wed the king's daughter. The marriage-song was being sung, when Agdistis appeared, and Attis went mad and cut off his genitals, as also did he who was giving him his daughter in marriage. But Agdistis repented of what she had done to Attis, and persuaded Zeus to grant the body of Attis should neither rot at all nor decay. These are the most popular forms of the legend of Attis."

The Anacreontea, Fragment 12 (trans. Campbell, Vol. Greek Lyric II) (C5th B.C.):

"Some say the half-woman (i.e. eunuch) Attis went mad shouting for lovely Kybele (Cybele) in the mountains."

Ovid, Metamorphoses 10. 103 ff (trans. Melville) (Roman epic C1st B.C. to C1st A.D.):

"Pines, high-girdled, in a leafy crest, the favourite of the Gods' Great Mother (Grata Deum Matri) (i.e. Cybele), since in this tree Attis Cybeleius (of Cybele) doffed his human shape and stiffened in its trunk."

Ovid, Fasti 4. 222 ff (trans. Boyle) (Roman poetry C1st B.C. to C1st A.D.):

"'What causes the impulse (of Cybele's initiates) to self-castrate?' I was silent. The Pierid (goddess Muse) began: 'A woodland Phrygian boy, the gorgeous Attis, conquered the towered goddess with pure love. She wanted to keep him as her shrine's guardian, and said, "Desire to be a boy always." He promised what was asked and declared, "If I lie, let the Venus (i.e. lover) I cheat with be my last." He cheats, and in the Nympha Sagaritis stops being what he was: the goddess' wrath punished him. She slashes the tree and cuts the Naiad down. The Naiad dies: her fate was the tree's. He goes mad, and imagines that the bedroom roof is falling and bolts to Dindymus' heights. He cries, "Away torches!", "Away whips!", and often swears the Palestine goddesses have him. He even hacked his body with a jagged stone, and dragged his long hair in squalid dirt, shouting, "I deserved it; my blood is the penalty. Ah, death to the parts which have ruined me!" "Ah, death to them!" he said, and cropped his groin's weight. Suddenly no signs of manhood remained. His madness became a model: soft-skinned acolytes toss their hair and cut their worthless organs.'"

For MORE information on this Phrygian god see [ATTIS](#)

CYBELE MENTOR & NURSE OF SABAZIUS (THE PHRYGIAN DIONYSUS)

LOCALE: Phrygia (Central Anatolia)

Kybele was the mother of the Phrygian god Sabazios--who the Greeks identified with Dionysos. As the Greek god had a different genealogy, the Phrygian myths were adapted to describe Mother Rhea as his nurse and mentor. The Orgiastic Cult (Orgia) of Dionysos-Sabazios was derived from that of Kybele.

Pseudo-Apollodorus, Bibliotheca 3. 33 (trans. Aldrich) (Greek mythographer C2nd A.D.):

"He (Dionysos in his madness driven wanderings) went to Kybela (Cybele) in Phrygia. There he was purified by Rhea (Phrygian Kybele) and taught the mystic rites of initiation, after which he received from her his gear and set out eagerly through Thrake (Thrace) (to instruct men in his orgiastic cult)."

Strabo, Geography 10. 3. 13 (trans. Jones) (Greek geographer C1st B.C. to C1st A.D.):

"(According to Strabo the Orgies of Dionysos were derived from those of the Meter Theon Kybele (Cybele):) When Pindaros (Pindar) (Greek poet), in the dithyramb which begins with these words, 'In earlier times there marched the lay of the dithyrambs long drawn out,' mentions the hymns sung in honor of Dionysos, both the ancient and the later ones, and then, passing on from these, says, 'To perform the prelude in thy honor, Megale Meter (Great Mother) (i.e. Kybele (Cybele)), the whirling of cymbals is at hand, and among them, also, the clanging of castanets, and the torch that blazeth beneath the tawny pine-trees,' he bears witness to the common relationship between the rites exhibited in the worship of Dionysos among the Greeks and those in the worship of the Meter Theon (Mother of the Gods) among the Phrygians, for he makes these rites closely akin to one another.

And Euripides does likewise, in his Bakkhai (Bacchae), citing the Lydian usages at the same time with those of Phrygia, because of their similarity: 'But ye who left Mount Tmolos (Tmolus), fortress of Lydia, revel-band of mine (Dionysos), women whom I brought from the land of barbarians as my assistants and travelling companions, uplift the tambourines native to Phrygian cities, inventions of mine and mother Rhea (i.e. Kybele).'

And again, 'happy he who, blest man, initiated in the mystic rites, is pure in his life . . . ((lacuna)) who, preserving the righteous Orgia (Orgies) of the great mother Kybele, and brandishing the thyrsos on high, and wreathed with ivy, doth worship Dionysos. Come, ye Bakkhai, come, ye Bakkhai, bringing down Bromios, god the child of god, out of the Phrygian mountains into the broad highways of Greece.'

And again ... 'the triple-crested Korybantes in their caverns invented this hide-stretched circlet (the tambourine), and blent its Bacchic revelry with the high-pitched, sweet-sounding breath of Phrygian flutes, and in Rhea's hands placed its resounding noise, to accompany the shouts of the Bakkhai, and from Meter (Mother) Rhea frenzied Satyroi (Satyrs) obtained it and joined it to the choral dances of the Trieterides, in whom Dionysos takes delight.'"

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 9. 136 ff (trans. Rouse) (Greek epic C5th A.D.):

"(The infant Dionysos is rescued by Hermes when Hera drives his foster-parents Athamas and Ino mad.) She (Hera) would have destroyed the son (Dionysos) of Zeus; but Hermes caught him up, and carried him to the wooded ridge where Kybele (Cybele) dwelt. Moving fast, Hera ran swift-shoe on quick feet from high heaven; but he was before her, and assumed the eternal shape of first-born Phanes (a primordial creator-god). Hera in respect for the most ancient of the gods, gave him place and bowed before the radiance of the deceiving face, not knowing the borrowed shape for a fraud. So Hermes passed over the mountain tract with quicker step than hers, carrying the horned child folded in his arms, and gave it to Rheia (i.e. Kybele), nurse of lions, mother of Father Zeus, and said these few words to the goddess mother of the greatest: 'Receive, goddess, a new son of your Zeus! He is to fight with the Indians, and when he has done with earth he will come into the starry sky, to the great joy of resentful Hera! Indeed it is not proper that Ino should be nurse to one whom Zeus brought forth. Let the mother of Zeus be nanny to Dionysos--mother of Zeus and nurse of her grandson!'

This said he put off the higher shape of selfborn Phanes and put on his own form again, leaving Bakkhos (Bacchus) to grow a second time in the Meter's (Mother's) nurture.

The goddess took care of him; and while he was yet a boy, she set him to drive a car drawn by ravening lions. Within that godwelcoming courtyard, the tripping Korybantes (Corybantes) would surround Dionysos with their childcherishing dance, and clash their swords, and strike their shields with rebounding steel in alternate movements, to conceal the growing boyhood of Dionysos; and as the boy listened to the fostering noise of the shields he grew up under the care of the Korybantes like his father.

At nine years old the youngster went a-hunting his game to the kill ... he would hold lightly aloft stretched on his shoulders a bold fellstriped tiger unshackled, and brought in hand to show Rheia the cubs he had torn newborn from the dam's milky teats. He dragged horrible lions all alive, and clutching a couple of feet in each hand presented them to the Mother that she might yoke them to her car. Rheia looked on laughing with joy, and admired the manliness and doughty feats of young Dionysos; his father Kronion (Cronion) (Zeus) laughed when he saw with delighted eyes lobakkhos driving the grim lions ...

Often he stood in the chariot of immortal Rheia, and held the flowing reins in his tenderskin hand, and checked the nimble team of galloping lions ... Thus he grew up beside cliffloving Rheia, yet a boy in healthy youth, mountainbred."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 9. 206 ff:

"(Semele--the mother of Dionysos, now an Olympian goddess--rebukes Hera :) 'See (the baby) Dionysos in the arms of your own mother (Rhea), he lies on that cherishing arm! The Dispenser of the eternal universe, the first sown Beginning of the gods, the Allmother, became a nurse for Bromios (Dionysos); she offered to infant Bakkhos the breast which Zeus High and Mighty has sucked! What Kronides was ever in labour, what Rheia was ever nurse for your boy? But this Kybele (Cybele) who is called your mother brought forth Zeus and suckled Bakkhos (Bacchus) in the same lap! She dandled them both, the son and the father.'"

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 1. 20 ff:

"(The infant) Bakkhos (Bacchus) (Dionysos) on the arm of buxom Rheia, stealthily draining the breast of the lion-breeding goddess."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 10. 139 ff:

"Dionysos, in the latitude of Lydia's fields, grew into youthful bloom as tall as he wished, shaking the Euian gear of Rheia Kybele (Cybele)."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 12. 330 ff:

"When Bakkhos (Bacchus) saw the (wild) grapes with a bellyful of red juice, he bethought him of an oracle which prophetic Rheia had spoken long ago. He dug into the rock, he hollowed out a pit in the stone with the sharp prongs of his earth-burrowing pick, he smoothed the sides of the deepening hold and made an excavation like a winepress (and made the first ever batch of wine)."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 12. 380 ff:

"To Dionysos alone had Rheia given the amethyst, which preserves the winedrinker from the tyranny of madness." (N.B. The name amethyst means 'not drunken' for the stone was reputed to work as a talisman against drunkenness.)

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 12. 394 - 13. 18:

"After the revels over his (Dionysos') sweet fruit (i.e. wine, newly discovered by the young god), Dionysos proudly entered the cave of Kybeleid (Cybeleid) goddess Rheia (his foster mother), waving bunches of grapes in his flowerloving hand, and taught Maionia (Maeonia) the vigil of his feast. Father Zeus sent Iris to the divine halls of Rheia, to inform wakethefray Dionysos, that he must drive out of Asia with his avenging thyrsus the proud race of Indians untaught of justice ...

She paddled her way with windswift beat of wings, and entered the echoing den of stabled lions. Noisless her step she stayed, in silence voiceless pressed her lips, a slave before the forest queen. She stood bowing low, and bent down her head to kiss Rheia's feet with suppliant lips. Rheia unsmiling beckoned, and the Korybantes (Corybantes) served her beside the bowl of the divine table. Wondering she drank a sop of the newfound wine, delighted and excited; then with heavy head the spirit told the will of Zeus to the son of Zeus (Dionysos) ...

At once Rheia Allmother sent out her messenger to gather the host, Pyrrhikhos (Pyrrhichus) (one of the Korybantes), the dancer before her loverattle timbrel, to proclaim the warfare of Lyaïos under arms. Pyrrhikhos, gathering a varied army for Dionysos, scoured all the settlements of the eternal word."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 13. 470 ff:

"The grapegrowing land of Bakkhos (Bacchus), where the vinegod first mixed wine for Mother Rheia in a brimming cup, and named the city Kerassai (Cerassae), the Mixings (in Lydia)."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 14. 1 ff:

"(Rheia-Kybele summons an army of rustic deities to her palace in Phrygia for Dionysos' campaign against the Indians :) Then swiftshoe Rheia haltered the hairy necks of her lions beside their highland manger. She lifted her windfaring foot to run with the breezes, and paddled with her shoes through the airy spaces. So like a wing or a thought she traversed the firmament to south, to north, to west, to the turning-place of dawn, gathering the divine battalions for Lyaios: one all-comprehending summons was sounded for trees and for rivers, one call for Neiaides (Naiads) and Hadryades, the troops of the forest. All the divine generations heard the summons of Kybele (Cybele), and they came together from all sides. From high heaven to the Lydian land Rheia passed aloft with unerring foot, and returning lifted again the mystic torch in the night, warming the air a second time with Mygdonian (Lydian) fire." (N.B. She summons the Kabeiroi (Cabeiri), Daktyloi (Dactyls), Telkhines (Telchines), Kyklopes (Cyclopes), Panes, Kentauroi (Centaur), Nymphai (Nymphs), and others.)

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 14. 247 ff:

"As soon as Dionysos had donned the well-wrought golden gear of war in the Korybantian (Corybantian) courtyard, he left the peaceful precincts of danceloving Rheia and went past Meionia (Maeonia): the warriors with the hillranging Bakkhantes (Bacchantes) hastened to meet the lord of the vine. The drivers of wheeled wagons carried shoots of the new plant of Bakkhos (Bacchus). Many lines of mules went by, with jars of the viney nectar packed on their backs; slow asses had loads of purple rugs and manycoloured fawnskins on their patient backs. Winedrinkers besides carried silver mixingbowls with golden cups, the furniture of the feast. The Korybantes (Corybantes) were busy about the bright manger of the panthers, passing the yokestraps over their necks, and entrusted their lions to ivybound harness when they had fastened this threatening bit in their mouths."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 14. 291 ff:

"(Dionysos prepares to lead his army into battle against the Indians :) Lyaios (Lyaeus) (Dionysos) kept vigil; all night long heaven thundered, threading fiery streaks among the stars; since Rheia then foretold with witnessing flash the bloodshed of the Indian victory. In the morning the god went forth to war."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 15. 123 ff:

"(Dionysos commands his troops to capture the drunken, sleeping Indians :) 'Take them all prisoners in bloodless conflict: let the Indian bend a slave's knee to mighty Dionysos, and do menial service to my Rheia and her company, shaking the purple thyrus.'"

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 15. 370 ff:

"Rheia Dindymis (of Mount Didymos) upon her lion's car, with her tearless eyes, groaned for the gallant lad (the shepherd Hymnos) so heavily fallen (slain by her votary Nikaia (Nicaea)), even the mother of Zeus, the queen."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 17. 62 ff:

"He (Dionysos) was reminded of the frugal banquet on that bloodless table, when there was a meal for his Mother, Kybele (Cybele) of the highlands."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 20. 35 ff:

"A dream came to Bakkhos (Bacchus)--Eris (Discord) the nurse of war, in the shape of Rheia the loverattle goddess, seated in what seemed to be her lionchariot. Phobos (Rout) drove the team of this dreamchariot, in the counterfeit shape of Attis with limbs like his; he formed the image of Kybele's (Cybele's) charioteer, a softskinned man in looks with shrill tones like the voice of a woman. Gadabout Eris stood by the head of sleeping Bakkhos and reproached him with brawl-inciting voice : "You sleep, godborn Dionysos! Deriades (King of the Indians) summons you to battle, and you make merry here! Stepmother Hera mocks you, when she sees your Enyo on the run, as you drag your army to dances! I am ashamed to show myself before Kronion (Zeus), I shrink from Hera, I shrink from the immortals, because your doings are not worthy of Rheia. I avoid Ares, destroyer of the Titanes . . . and I fear your sister (Athena) still more ... The Virgin Archeress (Artemis) denounces Dionysos the dancer, the friend of mountains, when she sees him leaving his thyrsos alone; drives only a weak team of stags, she kills only running hares, she ranges the mountains beside Rheia of the mountains ... in Olympos I shrink from Leto, still a proud braggart, when she holds up at me the arrow that defended her bed and slew Tityos the lustful giant. I am tortured also with double pain, when I see sorrowing Semele and proud Maias among the stars ... There may be banquet after battle, there may be dancing after the Indian War in the palace of Staphylos; viols may let their voice be heard again after the victory in the field. But without hard work it is not possible to dwell in the inaccessible heavens. The road to the Blessed is not easy; noble deeds give the only path to the firmament of heaven by God's decree. You too then, endure hardship of every kind. Hera for all her rancour foretells for you the heavenly court of Zeus."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 21. 91 ff:

"Rheia of the mountains armed against Arabia (i.e. against King Lykourgos (Lycurgus) who had driven Dionysos into the sea) the sea-god, Earthshaker (Poseidon) who splits the foundations of the earth with a crash, and hurls them about."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 25. 185 ff:

"Bakkhos (Bacchus) too when still a young lad, while playing the mountains, grasped a deadly lion by the shaggy throat with one hand, dragged him away and presented him to his mother Rheia, pressing down the maned neck of the gaping beast--dragged him still alive, and fastened him under the yokestrap, put on the guiding bridle over slavish cheeks, then seated high in the ar whipt the back of the frightful creatures."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 25. 310 ff:

"While Bakkhos (Bacchus) was thus despondent (after five long years laying siege to the Indian capital), came a messenger in haste through the Skythian mountains from divine Rheia, sterile Attis in his trailing robe, whipping up the travelling team of lions . . . This was the messenger who came driving the car of goddess Kybele (Cybele), to comfort discouraged Lyaios (Lyaeus). Seeing him Dionysos sprang up, thinking perchance he might have brought the allconquering Rheia to the Indian War. Attis checked the wild team, and hung the reins on the handrail, and disclosing the smooth surface of his rosy cheeks, called out a flood of loud words to Bakkhos--"Dionysos of the vine, son of Zeus, offspring of Rheia! Answer me: when will you destroy the woollyheaded nation of Indians and come back to the Lydian land?"

Not yet has Rheia seen your blackskin captives; not yet has she wiped off the sweat from your Mygdonian lions after the war, beside the highland manger, where the rich river of Paktolos (Pactolus) runs; but without a sound you roll out the conflict through circuits of everlasting years! Not yet have you brought a herd of eastern lions from India as a token of victory for the breeder of beasts, the mother of the gods! Very well, accept from Hephaistos (Hephaestus) and your immortal Rheia this armour which the Lemnian anvil made; you will see upon it earth and sea, the sky and the company of stars!

Before he had finished, Bakkhos called out angrily--'Hard are the gods and jealous ... Hera keeps me back from victory ...'

Lydian Attis answered these words of Dionysos : 'If you carry this starry shield of the sky inviolate, my friend, you need not tremble before the wrath of Ares, or the jealousy of Hera, or all the company of the Blessed, while Allmother Rheia is with you; you need fear no army with bended bows . . . Be of good courage: to the battle again! For my Rheia has prophesied victory for you at last. The war shall not end until the four Seasons complete the sixth year. So much the eye of Zeus and the threads of the unturning Moira (Fate) have granted to the will of Hera; in the seventh lichtgang which follows, you shall destroy the Indian city.'

With these words he handed the shield to Bromios (Dionysos) ... and guided the hillranging car on the road back to Phrygia ... There he entered the divine precinct selfbuilt of Rheia, mother of mighty sons. He freed his ravening lions from the yokestraps, and haltered them at the manger which he filled with ambrosial fodder."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 34. 214 ff:

"Vineclad Phrygia, where Rheia dwells who cared for Bromios (Dionysos) in boyhood."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 36. 414 ff:

"And Dionysos amid the anxieties of war (his campaign against the Indians) remembered the prophecy of his own Rheia: that the end of the war would be seen, when Bakkhantes (Bacchantes) fought by sea against Indians."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 43. 440 ff:

"He (Dionysos) entered Maionia (Maeonia), and stood before Rheia his mother, offering royal gifts from the Indian Sea."

Nonnus, Dionysiaca 45. 96 ff:

"(Dionysos) whom Rheia mother of the gods nursed with her cherishing milk."

CYBELE MOTHER OF MIDAS

LOCALE: Phrygia (Central Anatolia)

Kybele was sometimes described as the mother of the mythical Phrygian King Midas--the man with the golden touch.

Pseudo-Hyginus, Fabulae 191 (trans. Grant) (Roman mythographer C2nd A.D.):

"Midas, Mygdonian king, son of the Mother goddess of (Mount) Timolus (Matris deae a Timolo) (i.e. Cybele) was taken as judge at the time when Apollo contested with Marsyas, or Pan, on the pipes."

Pseudo-Hyginus, Fabulae 274:

"King Midas, a Phrygian, son of Cybele."

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Cybele was an originally [Anatolian](#) form of [Earth Mother](#) or [Great Mother](#). Little is known of Her oldest Anatolian cults, other than Her association with mountains, hawks and lions. She was [Phrygia's](#) State deity; Her Phrygian cult was adopted and adapted by Greek colonists of Anatolian Asia Minor, and spread from there to mainland Greece and its more distant western colonies from around the 6th century BCE.

"Also known as Kybele and Magna Mater and the Mother of the Gods, the worship of this Goddess spread throughout the Roman Empire. As a Phrygian deity, She was a Goddess of caverns, of the Earth in its primitive state; worshipped on mountain tops. She ruled over wild beasts, and was also a bee Goddess. Cybele was the Goddess of nature and fertility. Because Cybele presided over mountains and fortresses, Her crown was in the form of a city wall.



[The famous leopard-enthroned goddess from the granary at Çatal Hüyük.](#)

Her Greek mythology counterpart was [Rhea](#).”



“Cybele” by Picot

In Greece, Cybele met with a mixed reception. She was partly assimilated to aspects of [Gaia](#) (the “Earth”), Her [Minoan](#) equivalent [Rhea](#), and the Corn-Mother Goddess [Demeter](#). Some city-states, notably Athens, evoked Her as a protector but Her most celebrated Greek rites and processions show Her as an essentially foreign, exotic mystery-Goddess, who arrives in a lion-drawn chariot to the accompaniment of wild music, wine, and a disorderly, ecstatic following. Uniquely in Greek religion, She had a transgendered or eunuch mendicant priesthood. Many of Her Greek cults included rites to Her divine “Phrygian” castrate shepherd-consort [Attis](#), whose rites and myths appear to have been Greek inventions. In Greece, Cybele is associated with mountains, town and city walls, fertile nature, and wild animals, especially lions.

In Rome, Cybele was known as [Magna Mater](#) (“Great Mother”). The Roman State adopted and developed a particular form of Her cult, and claimed Her conscription as a key religious component in their success against Carthage during the [Punic Wars](#). They also reinvented Her as a [Trojan](#) Goddess, and thus as an ancestral Goddess of the Roman people by way of the Trojan prince [Aeneas](#), in [Rome’s foundation myth](#). With Rome’s eventual [hegemony](#) over the Mediterranean world, Romanised forms of Cybele’s cults spread throughout the Roman Empire. The meaning and morality of Her cults and priesthoods were topics of debate and dispute in Greek and Roman literature, and remain so in modern scholarship.

[Dionysius of Halicarnassus](#) records that specific laws were passed when some of the undesirable aspects of the Cybele cult became apparent. Cybele's religion was a bloody cult that required its priests and priestesses as well as followers to cut themselves during some rituals. The priests castrated themselves at their initiation; there was wild music, chanting, and frenzied dancing. "As part of their worship, priests also performed mysterious rites in Her honor. Of particular note was the sacrifice of a bull performed as part of an initiation into Cybele's cult. This ritual was known as the taurobolium, and during the rite a candidate for initiation stood in a pit under a floor with a wooden grate. The bull was sacrificed above the grate, and the blood ran through holes in the wood, showering the initiate. This was a form of ritual purification and rebirth."



Atia undergoing the taurobolium from HBO/BBC's series "Rome"

<http://popclassicsjg.blogspot.co.za/2010/02/rome-stolen-eagle.html>

Along with Her consort, the vegetation god [Attis](#), Cybele was worshipped in wild, emotional, bloody, orgiastic, cathartic ceremonies. Her annual spring festival celebrated the death and resurrection of Her beloved Attis. During the Republic and early Empire, festival days were celebrated with eunuchs priests, called [Corybantes](#), preceding the Goddess through the streets, banging cymbals and drums, wearing bright attire and heavy jewelry, their hair long and 'greased'. Priests and priestesses were segregated, their activities confined to their temples, and Roman citizens were not allowed to walk in procession with them. Neither Roman citizens nor their slaves were allowed to become priests or priestess in the cult.

No native-born Roman citizen was to be allowed to dress in bright colors, beg for alms, walk the streets with flute players or worship the Goddess in 'wild Phrygian ceremonies'. Those Romans who wanted to continue to worship the Goddess set up secret societies known as [sodalitates](#) so they could dine together in the Goddess' honor.

"The Cult of Cybele has frequently been looked upon as a mystery religion, similar to the Cults of Isis and Demeter. Cybele, however, was completely unlike those two positive and loving Mother Goddesses. Indeed, Cybele appears to have come out of a completely different mold. In fact, Cybele was so completely opposite from Isis, that it is impossible to imagine her even being in the presence of children, much less breast-feeding one. It is extremely doubtful, as well, whether anyone could ever picture Cybele wandering through and nurturing the green fields and peaceful forests of Earth."

Celibacy Written By: [The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica](#)

Celibacy, the state of being unmarried and, therefore, sexually abstinent, usually in association with the role of a religious official or devotee. In its narrow sense, the term is applied only to those for whom the unmarried state is the result of a sacred vow, act of renunciation, or religious conviction. Celibacy has existed in one form or another throughout history and in virtually all the major religions of the world.

Wherever celibacy has appeared, it generally has been accompanied by the view that the religious life is essentially different or even alienated from the normal structures of society and the normal drives of human nature. On the other hand, the religious style that disparages celibacy gives priority to the role of religion as employing and sanctifying the "natural" states of life: sexuality, family, and work.

Types of celibacy

Celibacy is practiced in a variety of different contexts. One type of celibacy is sacerdotal, the celibacy of priests and priestesses. A priest may be defined as one who, as a mediator, performs the sacred function of communicating through rites the needs of the people to heaven and the sacred power and presence from heaven to the congregation. His function is objective. Its efficacy is assured if the priest conducts the proper rite and has the proper qualifications of ordination and, perhaps, of ritual purity, regardless of whether he is particularly moral or fervent. Celibacy serves as such an objective mark of special state and ritual purity. Celibacy probably is derived from taboos that regarded sexual power as a rival to religious power, and the sexuality of the opposite sex as a polluting factor, especially in sacred or crisis situations.

Another type of celibacy is that associated with monasticism. The main purpose of the monk's celibacy is moral and spiritual advancement, not the ritual purity required for sacerdotal rites. To this end, celibacy helps the monk to achieve inner freedom and affords him the opportunity for asceticism and meditation. These experiences, possibly together with the "new family" of the religious community, contribute to a sense of separation from the ordinary that facilitates the monk's spiritual growth. Types of monasticism include the solitary—the hermit in the woods or the desert, the anchorite living in isolation in a church or monastery—the cenobite living a stabilized monastic life in community, and the mendicant ascetic who wanders from place to place gathering alms. In any case, the celibate state is viewed as an inseparable part of the monk's way of life.

Institutional celibacy for women is also typically conceived of as an aid to spiritual advancement. Virginity and celibacy are regarded as assets in the attainment of spiritual goals. Most institutional female celibates are nuns in residential cloisters—though there have been occasional solitary figures, such as the anchoress (female hermit) Dame Julian of Norwich (born 1342).

Individual noninstitutional and nonsacerdotal religious celibacy may be practiced by the layperson or the occasional clergyman in a faith not requiring celibacy who makes a vow to remain unmarried out of devotion or to allow the performance of some special religious service.

Pagan religions of the ancient Mediterranean

In the great pagan religions of the ancient Mediterranean, celibacy was practiced in various contexts. In Rome the institution of the Vestal Virgins, who were required to remain celibate for at least the 30 years of their service, indicates that celibacy was a very ancient aspect of Roman religion. As Classical civilization developed, two ideals of masculine celibacy appeared, that of the ascetic philosopher and that of the priest of the mystery religions. The Pythagoreans are an excellent example of the former. Pythagoras (c. 580 bc–c. 500) established a small community that emphasized study, vegetarianism, and sexual restraint or abstinence. Many later philosophers believed that celibacy is conducive to the detachment and equilibrium required by the philosopher's calling. The Stoic philosopher Epictetus (ad 55–c. 135) for example, held that the ideal teacher would be unmarried and that his task would require freedom from the cares of family life.

A different mood was set by the celibate priests of the mysteries. Celibacy was especially characteristic of priest-devotees of the Great Mother cults. The well-organized priesthood of the religion of Isis, for example, represented a serene sacerdotalism; sexual abstinence was an absolute requirement of those who celebrated her holy mysteries. In many other cults—e.g., Manichaeism, Gnosticism, and Hermeticism—an inner circle of worshipers was required to observe strict continence. The philosophical and religious ideals of celibacy in the Classical world strongly influenced subsequent practices of celibacy and monasticism in Christianity.

The religious traditions of India embody a variety of attitudes toward celibacy. In Hinduism the priesthood is hereditary and thus not celibate. Among the prominent religious personages of India, however, are the sadhus (“holy men”), who live a life free of possessions and family obligation. The sadhus have no organization or corporate discipline. Many sadhus, male and female, become celibate after marriage or widowhood; others do so early in life. The sadhu is one who has left the type of life ruled by the order of dharma (cosmic and societal law—i.e., of caste, family, money, and state) in order to seek moksha (final liberation). Celibacy is also an important practice in Jainism. All Jain monks vow to avoid sexual relations, and the laity are encouraged to be chaste and even to become celibate after the birth of a son.

Buddhism began as a celibate order in India dedicated to the attainment of enlightenment through control of the passions and withdrawal from attachment to material objects. As Buddhism became a world religion, certain variations arose: in Southeast Asia, most young men spent only a year in the order; in Tibet, Tantric monks were married; in Japan, the large Jōdo Shinshū denomination dispensed with the celibacy ideal altogether.

Adherents of Chinese Daoism include monastics and independent celibate adepts. Although the tradition was probably derived originally from shamanism, Daoist monasticism and the Daoist priesthood are now modeled on Buddhist practices.

Shintō in Japan has no monks or celibate priesthood, though it has embraced shamanesses “married” to the shrine god and celibate priestesses in major shrines, especially in premodern times. Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

Celibacy was not part of the original practices of Islam, and most of the famous Islamic saints were married. Even among bands of Sufi mystics, such as the dervishes, celibacy was exceptional (see Sufism). Muslims believe that marriage is a gift from God or a kind of service to God. Islamic celibacy, where it exists, is a matter of personal spiritual advancement or enthusiasm rather than sacerdotal purity or institutional control.

Celibacy has played little role in Judaism, in which marriage and raising children are understood as holy obligations. The prophet Jeremiah, who apparently chose not to have children, is the only prophet who did not marry. Even in biblical times, however, there were prescribed periods of sexual abstinence in connection with rituals and sacrifices and the prosecution of holy wars. In post-biblical times, some members of the Essene sect, according to the historian Josephus, rejected marriage, and the medieval Talmudic scholar Ben Azzai remained celibate. Traditionally, unmarried males cannot assume leadership positions in the Jewish community.

Celibacy was first practiced in Christianity as a result of expectations of the apocalypse. The original Christians believed that the kingdom of God was at hand and that in the new age there would be no marriage, since all would be like angels. Some of the followers of Jesus gave up family life in order to devote themselves to proclaiming the coming of the kingdom. St. Paul (c. ad 10–c. 67) commended celibacy, though he recognized the legitimacy of marriage for those who could not follow this higher ideal.

In the subapostolic period (the late 1st and early 2nd centuries) some Christian thinkers took the extreme view that all Christians should renounce marriage. More moderate positions were developed to defend marriage against the view that the flesh and all matter were evil and to defend celibacy against the widespread sexual license of the times. Many writers held that marriage was good but that celibacy was better.

The pre-Christian idea that sexual activity was particularly wrong for those who officiated at the altar was assimilated by Christians, and it thus became common for ordained men to give up sexual relations with their wives. The regional Council of Elvira in Spain (c. ad 306) decreed that all priests and bishops, married or not, should abstain from sexual relations. The ecumenical Council of Nicaea (ad 325) declined to make such a prohibition but did forbid priests to live with women other than their mothers, sisters, or aunts. The position of the Eastern churches was made clear by the decrees of the Quinisext Council in 692: bishops must be celibate, but ordained priests, deacons, and subdeacons could continue in existing marriages.

The subsequent history of celibacy in the Western church is a bit more complicated and reveals the ambivalence found in Paul. The monastic tradition and its celibate lifestyle were adopted in the Western church in the 4th century. In the later part of that century, the Church Fathers, especially Saints Ambrose and Augustine, endorsed celibacy in their writings and personal lives. Although it was not as rigorously enforced in the early Middle Ages, the practice of clerical celibacy was promoted as part of the Carolingian reform of the church in the 8th and 9th centuries. Official church teachings continued to emphasize the importance of clerical celibacy, though as late as the 10th century many priests and even some bishops had wives.

As part of their attempt to restore the independence and integrity of the clergy, the supporters of the Gregorian reform movement of the 11th century sought to enforce clerical celibacy. Their efforts were made part of church law at the first and second Lateran Councils (1123 and 1139), which abolished clerical marriage and thus established the official and still-existing position of the Roman Catholic church.

The issue of clerical celibacy arose again in the 15th and 16th centuries, when the church became increasingly secularized and numerous clerics, including Pope Alexander VI, fathered children. Although the Roman Catholic church remained committed to the ideal of clerical celibacy, the churches of the Reformation—the Lutheran church, the Church of England (Anglican Communion), the Reformed church, and others—rejected it. Indeed, the leader of the Reformation, Martin Luther, renounced his vow of celibacy, married the former nun Katherina von Bora, and raised a family with her. Opposition to clerical celibacy remained the norm in Protestant countries after the Reformation. In the 18th century, however, Ann Lee, the founder of the Christian millenarian sect known as the Shakers, established celibacy as the standard for all members of her church. About 1845 monastic orders began to reappear in the Church of England, and about a century later small Protestant monastic groups were founded on the continent of Europe.

Clerical celibacy once again became a cause of ferment in the Roman Catholic church during and after the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). The council permitted a married diaconate. After the council, the number of priests seeking to leave the priesthood to marry vastly increased, and many European and American Catholics began to urge that celibacy for priests be made optional. Nevertheless, Pope Paul VI reaffirmed the traditional rule on clerical celibacy in his encyclical *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* (June 23, 1967). The pope returned to the New Testament texts: for the sake of Christ and the coming kingdom of heaven, the priest must be totally free of domestic responsibilities; he must witness by his way of life to the transcendent reality that fills and grips him. Paul's teachings on clerical celibacy were reaffirmed by Pope John Paul II.

In the early 21st century, revelations that thousands of priests in Australia, Europe, and the United States had committed acts of child molestation prompted calls for reconsideration of the rule on clerical celibacy. Although the church hierarchy resisted these pleas, it did eventually take steps to ensure that such crimes would not be committed again.

Meanwhile, some defenders of the church publicly emphasized that celibacy does not lead inevitably to pedophilia, noting that the vast majority of priests had honoured their vows.

The veil of Isis Gnosis

All aspects of the [divine feminine](#) have a side that is mysterious, shrouded, veiled. We see this in the famous veil of Isis-Neith of the Egyptian mysteries, the veil of Mary mother of Jesus, and the ancient veiled goddesses Cybele, Brigid, Atargadis, and Demeter.

“The conquest of the Otra Mare Vitae or super-liminal and ultra terrestrial world would be more than impossible if we make the mistake of underrating women. The delightful Word of Isis comes forth from the deep bosom of all ages awaiting the moment of its fulfillment. The ineffable words of the Goddess Neith have been carved in letters of gold on the radiant walls of the temple of wisdom: I am the one who has been, is, and will be, and no mortal has lifted my veil.”

- Samael Aun Weor, [The Mystery of the Golden Blossom](#)

“God as love is Isis, whose veil no mortal has lifted. Who would lift the terribly divine veil? Woe to the profane and profaners who attempt to lift the veil of Isis. The Divine Mother is not a woman, nor is she an individual. She is in fact an unknown substance. Any form that she takes disintegrates afterwards – that is love.”

- Samael Aun Weor, [The Yellow Book](#)

Divine Mother

[The Divine Mother](#), loving matrix and substance of the universe, always disintegrates her form, her form is always unknown.

Divine Mother Death

Known as Hecate, Coatlique, Kali, the female goddesses of death. Death is the final crown of everyone, is unknown, and yet contemplating her mystery is the greatest aspiration of the sincere seeker of the mysteries of life and death.

Divine Mother Cosmic Space

The Prakrit is both the Abyss and the divine primordial Chaos that precedes even the Absolute Abstract Space. The Prakriti is the [cosmic womb](#) of creation.

Divine Isis

The [Divine Isis](#), priestess of the temple, initiator of the sexual mysteries, inspires a deep love that can never be understood by the intellect and can never be experienced by the profane.

Divine Mother Nature

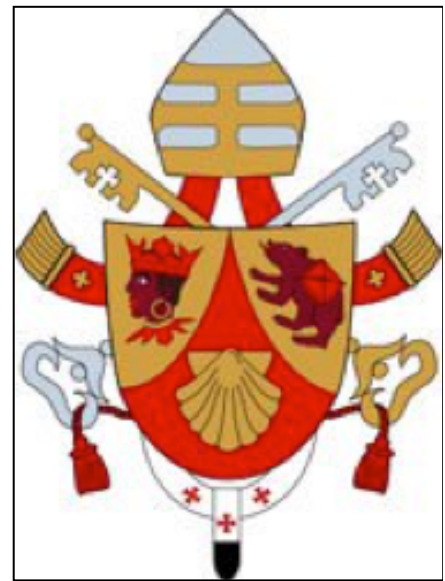
[Mother nature](#) provides our physical world, all of nature, and our own bodies and is most closely related with our physical mother. She also gives birth to the internal bodies of the soul with her own elements of nature, and yet she always remains obscured.

Practice

Filled with hope, joy and faith, we can pray to that mysterious part of our inner divine Being:

*Oh Isis, Mother of the Cosmos,
root of Love, Trunk, Bud, Leaf, Flower and Seed of all that exists.
We conjure Thee, Naturalizing Force,
we call upon the Queen of the space and of the night,
and kissing your loving eyes, drinking the dew from your lips,
breathing the sweet aroma of your body, we exclaim:
Oh, Thou, Nuit, Eternal Seity of Heaven,
who art the Primordial Soul,
Thou who art what was and what shall be, whose veil no
mortal has lifted,
when Thou art beneath the irradiating stars
of the nocturnal and profound sky of the desert,
with purity of heart and in the flame of the serpent we call
upon Thee!*

Very early, indeed, did the bishops of Rome show a proud and ambitious spirit; but, for the first three centuries, their claim for superior honour was founded simply on the dignity of their see, as being that of the imperial city, the capital of the Roman world. When, however, the seat of empire was removed to the East, and Constantinople threatened to eclipse Rome, some new ground for maintaining the dignity of the Bishop of Rome must be sought. That new ground was found when, about 378, the Pope fell heir to the keys that were the symbols of two well-known Pagan divinities at Rome. Janus bore a key, and Cybele bore a key; and these are the two keys that the Pope emblazons on his arms as the ensigns of his spiritual authority.



Pope Benedict XVI's Coat of Arms

It was a brilliant move. By presenting himself to the pagans as the representative of Janus and Cybele, and thus the rightful heir of their "keys," the pope secured for himself a position of power among them. The next step was merely to convince the Christians that he was the rightful successor of Peter the apostle and the rightful possessor of his "keys."

Thus, though the temporal dignity of Rome as a city should decay, his own dignity as the Bishop of Rome would be more firmly established than ever. On this policy it is evident he acted. Some time was allowed to pass away, and then, when the secret working of the Mystery of iniquity had prepared the way for it, for the first time did the Pope publicly assert his preeminence, as founded on the keys given to Peter. About 378 was he raised to the position which gave him, in Pagan estimation, the power of the keys referred to. In 431, and not before, did he publicly lay claim to the possession of Peter's keys.



Vatican City coat of arms displaying the keys of Janus and Cybele, now claimed by the pope. This emblem also appears on a white and gold background on the

Taking advantage of the credulity of the Christians, the pope secured for himself the preeminent position of power as the head of both the Christian Church and the pagan religion.

It is not difficult to see the Pagans would rally round the pope all the more readily when they heard him found his power on the possession of Peter's keys. The keys that the Pope bore were the keys of a "Peter" well known to the Pagans initiated in the Chaldean Mysteries. There was a "Peter" at Rome who occupied the highest place in the Paganpriesthood. The priest who explained the Mysteries to the initiated was sometimes called by a Greek term, the Hierophant; but in primitive Chaldee, the real language of the Mysteries, his title, as pronounced without the points, was "Peter" – i.e., "the interpreter."

The high priest of the pagan mysteries, the Grand Interpreter who taught the hidden secrets to the highest levels of the initiates was naturally decorated with the keys of Janus and Cybele, for he was the one through whom these mysteries were revealed.

Thus we may see how the keys of Janus and Cybele would come to be known as the keys of Peter, the "interpreter" of the Mysteries. Yea, we have the strongest evidence that, in countries far removed from one another, and far distant from Rome, these keys were known by initiated Pagans not merely as the "keys of Peter," but as the keys of a Peter identified with Rome ... The existence of such a title was too valuable to be overlooked by the Papacy; and, according to its usual policy, it was sure, if it had the opportunity, to turn it to the account of its own aggrandizement. And that opportunity it had. When the Pope came, as he did, into intimate connection with the Pagan priesthood; when they came at last . . . under his control, what more natural than to seek not only to reconcile Paganism and Christianity, but to make it appear that the Pagan "Peter-Roma," with his keys, meant "Peter of Rome," and that that "Peter of Rome" was the very apostle to whom the . . . (Master Yahushua the Anointed) gave the "keys of the kingdom of heaven"? Hence, from the mere jingle of words, persons and things essentially different were confounded; and Paganism and Christianity were jumbled together, that the towering ambition of a wicked priest might be gratified; and so, to the blinded Christians of the apostacy, (sic) the Pope was the representative of Peter the apostle, while to the initiated Pagans, he was only the representative of Peter, the interpreter of their well-known Mysteries.

The title the pope bears is very descriptive. The word "catholic" means "universal." As the head of the Catholic Church, he is also the head of the Roman Catholic Church. The secret carefully preserved within the very core of an interconnected maze of rites, symbols, ceremonies and rituals is the identity of the hidden god. By his assumption of power in inheriting the keys of Janus and Cybele, the pope is the sole legitimate head of the Babylonian mysteries. The very name of this amalgamated system of religion as given in the Bible is "Mystery Babylon."

We have now only to inquire what was the name by which Nimrod was known as the god of the Chaldean Mysteries. **That name . . . was Saturn.** Saturn and Mystery are both Chaldean words, and they are correlative terms. **As Mystery signifies the Hidden system, so Saturn signifies the Hidden god.** To those who were initiated the god was revealed; to all else he was hidden. Now, the name Saturn in Chaldee is pronounced Satur; but, as every Chaldee scholar knows, consists only of four letters, thus – Stur.

This name contains exactly the Apocalyptic number 666:

S = 60

T = 400

U = 6

R = 200

666

If the Pope is, as we have seen, the legitimate representative of Saturn, the number of the Pope, as head of the Mystery of Iniquity, is just 666. But still further it turns out, ... that the original name of Rome itself was Saturnia, "the city of Saturn." This is vouched alike by Ovid, by Pliny, and by Aurelius Victor. Thus, then, the Pope ... is the only legitimate representative of the original Saturn at this day in existence, and he reigns in the very city of the seven hills where the Roman Saturn formerly reigned; and, from his residence in which, the whole of Italy was "long after called by his name," being commonly named "the Saturnian land."

The deeply buried secret of the Babylonian mysteries is that all worship on a counterfeit calendar is actually directed to the hidden god, Saturn, a.k.a. the arch-rebel, Nimrod. While the external parade of rites and ceremonies is primarily performed on Sunday, the hidden god at the root of it all remains Saturn. The coat of arms of the current pope, Benedict XVI, clearly symbolizes this. Every pope since the 12th century has had his own personal coat of arms. Each one has similarly incorporated the "keys of Peter" into the design.

The Vatican website explains the symbols emblazoned on his personal coat of arms as "a Moor's head in natural colour ... This is an ancient emblem of the Diocese of Freising (Bavaria), . . . the Moor's head is not rare in European heraldry. It ... is common in the Bavarian tradition." The scallop shell at the bottom is explained: "The scallop shell ... has been used for centuries to distinguish pilgrims. Benedict XVI wanted to keep this symbolism alive ..." The animal is described: "A brown bear, in natural colour, is portrayed ... An easy interpretation: the bear tamed by God's grace is the Bishop of Freising himself; the pack saddle is the burden of his Episcopate."

This may be a suitably simple, politically correct explanation for the masses, but it is not the deeper, hidden meaning. The pope's coat of arms was created specifically for him by Archbishop Andrea Cordero Lanza di Montezemolo (later created a Cardinal.) Anyone as well-acquainted with heraldry as to be commissioned to design the new pope's personal coat of arms is also well-acquainted with its traditional heraldic meaning. A bear symbolizes "strength, cunning, ferocity in the protection of one's kindred."



St. James the Moor-Slayer. This famous statue is on display in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. While one Muslim is being trampled to death under his horse's hooves, two other dying Moors flank him on either side. Directly in front is a Moor's head separated from its body, blindly staring up at his killer.

A Moor's head "dates back to the Middle Ages when it was considered an honor to take a Moor's head." Such symbology is not only a racial insult, but is also an affront to every Muslim as Moors were, without exception, of the Islamic faith. The Crusades mercilessly slaughtered Muslims, Jews and apostolic Christians alike. It was during the Crusades that it was considered an honor to decapitate a Moor because of his religion.

This meaning is underscored by the scallop shell. While it may be true that the scallop shell "has been used for centuries to distinguish pilgrims," specifically it symbolizes St. James, the patron saint of Spain. His shrine is in Santiago de Compostela, one of only three Catholic "holy cities." Because Santiago de Compostela is near the coast of Spain, a scallop shell became a symbol of the saint whose shrine was located there. St. James is more commonly known as Santiago Mantamoros: St. James the Moor Slayer! According to tradition, "Saint James the Apostle appeared as a ferocious sword wielding warrior on horseback to help Christian armies in battles against the Moors during the Reconquista. By virtue of his sainthood, battles in which Saint James the Moor-slayer took part always resulted in Christian victories against their Muslim foes."

These appalling symbols were carefully selected. They were used in a different arrangement by Cardinal Ratzinger before becoming Pope Benedict. In 1981, Ratzinger was appointed Perfect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, formerly known as the Holy Office of the Inquisition. This made him the successor to the Grand Inquisitor. Even before being selected pope, Benedict was a prominent and knowledgeable theologian. His decision to include a bear, a scallop and a Moor's head was a purposeful choice, as the Vatican concurs, "Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, elected Pope and taking the name Benedict XVI, has chosen a coat of arms *rich in symbolism and meaning that transmits to history his personality and Pontificate.*"

In September of 2006, Benedict angered Muslims around the world when he quoted from an obscure medieval text, saying, "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." Muslims were outraged and demanded an apology. "Salih Kapsuz, the deputy head of the Turkish ruling AKP party, said Pope Benedict's remarks were either the result of pitiful ignorance or a deliberate distortion. 'He has a dark mentality that comes from the darkness of the Middle Ages,' he said. 'He is going down in history in the same category as leaders such as Hitler and Mussolini.'"²⁹ The Pope has never offered an apology, opting instead to simply express sorrow that some people had been upset.

The fact that the pope deliberately chose to include such inflammatory symbols in "a coat of arms rich in symbolism and meaning" for the specific reason of transmitting to history "his personality and Pontificate" begs the question: Precisely what is Benedict planning for his pontificate?

Aside from the gruesome, barbarous connotations which accompany using a Moor's head on one's personal coat of arms, there is yet a deeper level of symbolism that must be understood. A head with the coloring and features of a man from the Negroid race is revealing when compared with how Nimrod was represented.



I have already noticed the fact that Nimrod, as the son of Cush, was a negro. Now, there was a tradition in Egypt, recorded by Plutarch, that "Osiris was *black*," which, in a land where the general complexion was dusky, must have implied something more than ordinary in its darkness. Plutarch also states that Horus, the son of Osiris, "was of a fair complexion," and it was in this way, for the most part, that Osiris was represented. But we have unequivocal evidence that Osiris, the son and husband of the great goddess-queen of Egypt, was also represented as a veritable negro. In Wilkinson may be found a representation of him with the unmistakable features of the genuine Cushite or negro.

This illustration from *The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* directly links Osiris with Nimrod. The name "Nimrod" comes from *Nimr*, a "leopard," and *rada* or *rad* "to subdue." Therefore, the name means "the subduer of the leopard." Thus, a leopard's skin was closely identified with Nimrod and the high priests of Osiris wore leopard skins when called upon to officiate at any high occasion.

"That dress directly connects him (Osiris) with Nimrod. This negro-featured Osiris is clothed from head to foot in a spotted dress, the upper part being a leopard's skin, the under part also being spotted to correspond with it."

Another image of Osiris shows him with darker skin than the already dusky Egyptians and, furthermore, portrays him as being a giant. Notice the priest standing in front of Osiris. This is not a child; he has a beard. The priest is wearing a leopard skin, showing he is a priest of Osiris. The artist was not taking "artistic license," portraying the figures disproportionately. Rather, this picture is consistent with the various accounts that claim Nimrod was of gigantic stature.

Elsewhere as well, Nimrod was represented as black. "In India, the infant Crishna (emphatically the black god), in the arms of the goddess Devaki, is represented with the wooly hair and marked features of the Negro or African race." More modern representations also show Crishna/Krishna as having a different color of skin from his mother.

