

THE COMING Nativity Issue

Genie: children
of Heaven

Dancing to the
Music of the Spheres

The Rhythm
of Life

The Meaning of
NATIVITY

A Legend of
The Three Crowns

Symbolism: The
Star and the
Sacred Grove



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Editorial

Greetings for Nativity! We have a little more space this issue, but we are still pressed for it, so I shall have to be brief. The last two seasons of the year are very full, with Nativity and all its preparations, the Feast of Lights and then Moura as well as several minor festivals, so a lot of our articles are on themes connected with one or more of these events (penance for Moura, Geniae for the two Genia-Days, Geniad and Nativity, etc.). May our Lady's peace be with you through the coming months and may you remember always the Nativity message of Her Genia: "Be not afraid, for a new light is dawning over the world" (Aythos, II, 8).

Praise be to the Goddess on Earth and in the Heaven!

Back Issues

THE COMING AGE 1: including: Virgin Birth; The Oedipus Complex; a Sermon against Crown-Ups; Symbolism: The Venus Symbol; The Unpronounceable Names of the Goddess; The Story of Hera Pellegrina; Book Reviews &c.

THE COMING AGE 2: including: Anima: Jung and the Female soul; The Legend of the Sun; The Feminine Principle; Introduction to the Rosary; The True Meaning of Easter; Symbolism: The Egg and the Dove; Three Paths into the Secret Garden, &c.

THE COMING AGE 3: including: Apocalypse: The End of the World or the Age of the Goddess? Spirituality: Going All the Way; The Femaleness of God; Symbolism: The Rose and the Ear of Corn; Adventuring Inwards; The Songs of the Wood-Maiden, &c.

THE COMING AGE 4: including: The Veil of Matter: Madrianism & Modern Science; The Myth of the Twentieth Century; The Madrian Way of Life; Thanatos, the Ultimate Death-Wish; Symbolism: The Tree of Life and the Golden Apples of Immortality; "East of the Sunset & West of the Dawn", &c.

Back issues 25p each. The Coming Age 6 will be published in Moura at 35p.

THE COMING AGE: A Madrian review of religion, life and culture. Issued under the hand of the Goddess by Lux Madriana at 40 St John Street, Oxford, in the month of Astraea, in the year 3710 after the foundation of the temple of Artenis at Ephesus and the year 119 after the appearance of our Lady at Lourdes. No. 5.

The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of Lux Madriana, but they do not conflict with the essential tenets of the Madrian religion.

THE COMING

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Correspondence of the sacred and secular dates for the seasons of Winter and Moura:

Astraea: November 28th - December 25th
Hestia: December 26th - January 22nd
Brighde: January 23rd - February 19th
Moura: February 20th - March 19th

MAJOR FESTIVALS

The commencement of the Advent 13th Astraea (New Moon, 10th Dec)
The Nativity of our Lady 8th Hestia (January 2nd)
The Feast of Lights 10th Brighde (February 1st cross-quarter day)
Eve of Moura 28th Brighde (February 19th)
The Passion of Our Lady: 28th Moura (March 19th)

MINOR FESTIVALS

Athene's Day: 7th Astraea (December 4th)
Day of All Geniae (Geniad): 28th Astraea (December 25th)
Day of Hestia (Hestiad) 6th Hestia (December 31st)
Duodecima: 19th Hestia (January 13th)
Purple Monday: 1st Brighde (January 23rd)
Moura Day: 1st Moura (February 20th)
Med-Moura: 14th Moura (March 5th)

THE ADVENT OF NATIVITY. The Advent begins on 13th Astraea this year and continues for twenty three days. This is the period of preparation for Nativity, both material and spiritual. This season combines "feast and fast" very closely. While the air is filled with joyful anticipation of Nativity, and there are celebrations such as the Commencement and the Day of all Geniae, we also prepare the spirit in acts of devotion to the Goddess,

through unselfishness towards others, through prayer and through self-denial for Her sake. During the Advent, the cloth for shrines and altars should be green.

The Commencement is usually the day on which we decorate our homes and shrines for Nativity. The five-pointed star, the central symbol of Advent and Nativity is prominent among decorations. The evergreens, especially ivy, holly, mistletoe and fir are traditional, often combined with candles and other decorations. Strictly speaking, the silver-fir is the true symbolic Birth-Tree, but the pointed-topped spruce-fir is more usually seen. Representations of scenes from the Mythos are also familiar, although images of Mother and Daughter are often not put up until the beginning of Hestia. In Madrian households, Advent calendars are also prepared to mark the passing of the days, and each member of the family will join in contributing seasonal pictures to be concealed under numbered panels. The final panel (this year no. 23) is opened on the day before Nativity to reveal the Mother and Child.

ATHENE'S DAY: This is the ancient festival of Athene, who is seen by modern Madrians to be the Genia of wisdom as reason, intelligence and knowledge (contrasted with Alethea, Genia of Divine wisdom or revelation). She is the guardian Genia of students, philosophers and all connected with academic pursuits, who may call on her for inspiration. Her symbol is the owl, traditionally the wisest or most knowing of birds.

DAY OF ALL GENIAE. (GENIAD): One of the most important of the minor festivals, Geniad celebrates the Geniae,* both the better known ones such as Hestia, Hebe (Genia of childhood) and the Elemental Geniae, and those whose names we do not know. We especially remember our personal Genia, who watches over our soul on her journey to the Mother. One of the important aspects of this festival is the call to each of us to recognise her own potential Geniahood, to develop her particular gifts in the service of our Lady, and more generally to seek to allow Her light to shine through us. The colour of the festival is blue. It is a joyous occasion for feasting and may include the exchange of presents, especially those reflecting the creative gifts of the giver. Geniad falls on a full moon this year - the Preface for the Rite is Mythos, VII, 14, and the text VII, 9-15.

*See article: "The Children of Heaven".

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= The Rhythm of Life =

"For there are ways and rhythms in the course of life; of day and night, of seasons and the moon, of all the movements of the starry heavens by which all life, all thought, all work are governed" The Teachings of the Daughter*

THE SEASONS are one of the most important factors in bringing human life in tune with the rhythm of the Divine. Through the eternal cycles of the seasons we are given a hierophany - a showing-forth of the Divine Mysteries in physical existence.

It is no accident that as society grows ever further from the Goddess human life is increasingly estranged from the seasons. In ancient Madrian-matriarchal societies, not only outward activities but the whole of spiritual, emotional and intellectual life was governed by the seasons. Over the last few centuries, almost all work has been "regularised" so that human activity carries on more or less without variance throughout the year.

Between these extremities a gradual decline has taken place throughout the patriarchal period. For example, let me quote from the manual of Madrian ritual magic*:

"Throughout the Madrian ages, and to a lesser extent up until the protestant 'Reformation'... life was governed by a rhythm of fasts and feasts based on the inherent rhythms of nature, which in turn are reflections of the essential rhythm of the Macrocosm. With the 'Reformation', an entirely new rhythm was set in motion, one which remains with us to this day: that of the five- or six-day working week. In other words, a rhythm geared solely to material ends and acquisitions which ignores as far as possible the rhythm of the Macrocosm. Time is made flat and featureless, like a railway track or a motorway, and like them, it is regarded merely as a means to an end, having no intrinsic value."

It is essential to understand that the seasonal rhythm' is not merely or even primarily a physical phenomenon, but affects every area of mental and spiritual life, and it affects everybody, whether they choose to ignore it, or whether they accept it and work with it.

* Available through the Literature Circle.

In the Artemid paper on Madrian education* it is suggested that the subjects and approach of academic work should be varied according to the spiritual and intellectual principles which each season brings to the fore. The paper continues:

"In doing this, we swim, as it were, with the tides and currents of nature, rather than swimming indifferently against or across them. The power of the mind is enhanced both in force and (since we are attuning ourselves to the true interior of things...) in subtlety."

The alienation of modern life is largely caused by the breaking and separating of one part of life from another - the mental, the emotional, the physical and the spiritual are all filed away in separate boxes. Life is split into a series of unnatural activities called work and an unnatural passivity called leisure. Natural life is whole and unified: an organic expression of the spiritual Reality which underlies all things.

To attune our lives to the inner meaning of the seasons is a first and very important step toward regaining this wholeness. To go fully into these meanings would take us far beyond the length of a single article, but let us outline them:

Spring/Resurrection/water: Emotional life; the working of the Daughter's love in all nature; rebirth, and all the mysteries of new life and achievement springing from sacrifice.

Summer/Rosa of the World/fire: Self-perfection; straining for union with the Mother; the conflict of true self and false self; energy.

Autumn/Divine Life/earth: Patterns of destiny; death and afterlife; the spiritual reality behind physical things; the knowledge that all material existence is the consolidation of the perfect creation of the Mother.

Winter/Nativity/air: The birth of the Daughter-principle within the self; intellectual life; knowledge of the inner self as something objective and separate from our ego consciousness.

Mourning/Our Lady's Death/Spirit: Penance; purification.

Even from this brief description, certain general principles become apparent. The four long seasons are governed by combinations of two pairs of principles, as follows:

Spring: Daughter, External. Summer: Mother, Internal.

Autumn: Mother, External. Winter: Daughter, Internal.

The internal principle looks at the self, the external at the world. The Mother principle is stable, active, transcendent; the Daughter principle is transforming, passive, immanent (patriarchal cultures sometimes erroneously identify these as the female and male principles).

Of course, all four principles operate all the time, but the rhythm of nature continually shifts their relationships and relative prominence. The year-pattern can be seen in every activity - in a human enterprise, a human life or the life of a civilisation. There are also other cycles which show forth the pattern in nature. In the month we may see it thus:

New Moon - Day of Artemis: Spring
Day of Artemis - Full Moon: Summer
Full Moon - Half-Moon Day: Autumn
Half-Moon Day - New Moon: Winter

or in the day:

Dawn - Midday: Spring Midday - Dusk: Summer
Dusk - Midnight: Autumn Midnight - Dawn: Winter

In the month, Moura is represented by that period when the moon is dark, and in the day by that strange period known to all who have kept night vigil and called "the darkest hour before dawn"

As well as the four "quarters" of the long seasons, we must also recognise two other quarter-year periods which fall into all five seasons. These are the Easter cycle, which runs from the Feast of Lights to the Exultation and, diametrically opposite to it on the circle of the year, the Mysteries of Life cycle which runs from the Festival of Regeneration to Samhain.

But all this is only a brief outline of the most outstanding rhythms, and is by no means complete.

Well, now to the obvious question. How on earth can anyone juggle with all these abstract principles in the course of her daily life? There are two answers. Firstly, it is impossible. Secondly, it is so simple and natural that you are already doing it.

It is impossible to consciously and intellectually take every aspect of the principles into account all or even much of the time; but the unconscious self is responding to the rhythms and

osophy flow from the selfhood of Athene.

Or to put it another way, Athene is the pure expression of the Divinely created quality of intelligence.

Everything that is home; everything that makes the difference between the chunk of stone that is a house, a cave or a convent, and the sacred word home in all its depth of meaning, all this flows from our lady Hestia.

The list could go on - Alethea, Genia of Truth, Moira of choice and fate, Nike of courage... and we know the names of only a fraction of all the Geniae that exist.

Why do we sometimes call the Geniae "our lady" almost as though they were God Herself? Because they are such pure expressions of the Divine that we cannot give devotion to a Genia without in that very act worshipping the Divine Light that flows through her. Sometimes it is almost impossible to tell at exactly what point we have stopped speaking of, say, our lady Alethea, and begun speaking of Our Lady.

In one sense, we could say that the reason why the universe is imperfect is because the sublime qualities which are the essential selfhood of you and I and all other fallen souls are missing from it - because we are not Geniae as we once were and should always have been.

For we were once Geniae, and the Geniae themselves, whose brightness we can scarcely look upon, are our sisters. Being perfect, their love for us is also perfect. That is why we can petition their help with confidence and ask them to pray for us.

In the Ekklesia of Our Lady, we are united in one family with the Geniae, and they desire beyond all else to welcome us back into perfection. It is said that every maid (and man) has a Genia to watch over her, to encourage her whenever she begins to turn to our Mother and to offer prayers for her.

Sometimes the personal Genia is confused with the true self. It is true that the more like our Genia we become, the closer we will be to our true self, for a personal Genia always has a selfhood that is akin to that of the soul in her care. And almost every human being is at present so far so far from her true self that for this life, to draw near to her Genia will be sufficient.

It is as if I live in one village and my Genia in another close by it; but at present I am many hundreds of miles from home. In the end our destinations will be different, but for most of the journey our ways will be exactly the same, and I may follow her every step.

Sometimes it is asked whether all Geniae are absolutely perfect, or whether some (e.g. the many personal Geniae) are on a lower plane than the great Genia such as Alethea or Hestia.

We cannot know for certain the answer to this. It may be that certain perfect Geniae have deliberately stepped down from the joy of Absolute Existence in order to unite themselves with the fallen creatures who they so deeply desire to help and so are no longer absolutely perfect. But this is only conjecture.

It is also said that even in the highest Geniae there is a certain lack of completeness, because until the whole universe is complete, not part of it can be in itself complete. Thus only when every soul has returned to perfection will any soul achieve the ultimate height of perfection.

Devotion to the Geniae is an aspect of Madrian spiritual life which is sometimes neglected. I think that is a pity, because such devotion deepens and enriches our religious experience, provides a source of guidance and help, and strengthens the bonds between the children of our Lady's Ekklesia in this world and in the higher spheres.

At this time of year, with the Geniad and the days of Athene and Hestia prominent in our thoughts, it is a good time to renew our relationship with our radiant sisters, the Geniae.

Sister Angelina.

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A Nativity Meditation

Rejoice, O children of the world,
For the Light is born among you.
And you that are cast into darkness and confusion,
There comes a Child that shall lead you home.
Rejoice, for Eternity is entered into time.
A new light dawns upon the world,
For the gentle Mother has brought forth a Child
That no one of Her children shall be lost.

THE MEANING OF NATIVITY

THE NATIVITY SEASON is perhaps the most powerful natural festival of the year. Even the most profane societies seem drawn as if by a sort of magnetism into a massive celebration of - they know not what. Certainly this festival was observed in Britain many centuries before a Christian set foot on these islands, and many of its popular customs were the targets of Christian attacks before they became "naturalized" into Christianity.

This festival has almost always been connected with the birth of the Divine Child from the supreme virgin Goddess. So it was in ancient Egypt and the Middle East. So it was in the Mithraic cult throughout the Roman Empire (the exact date of their festival was "borrowed" by the Christians from the Mithraists). So it was in pre-Roman Britain, and in the common Celtic religion which covered the whole of north-west Europe.

In later myth, affected by the secular political interests of patriarchy, the Divine Child is conceived as male, but in the oldest and purest versions, the Child was always the Daughter. We see this in the Madrian-matriarchal societies of Chaldaeae, Syria, Crete and the Aegean and as far afield as China.

The Nativity period, then, manifests a primordial mystery of religion, which, until recently, lay buried in the ancient past, and yet which has never died, but bursts fresh upon the world each year in a tide of joy and excitement.

Each succeeding patriarchal regime has found some new excuse for it, from the debaucheries of the Roman Saturnalia to the modern commercial jamboree.

But what is it? Why has it such power? The truth is simple. That God Herself has come to us - not in Her glory, but has cast Herself down to be born as we were born; not in some remote past, but in the eternal present; and to suffer as we will never suffer.

That God in the highest has brought Herself forth as a little Child, that She may be with us in the lower spheres of being and may lead us again to our true spiritual home.

We who have turned from Her, who have rejected Her, prefer-

ing to exalt ourselves against Her, suddenly see Her again, come not in anger, but ready to give Her life that we may be led back to the perfection we have lost. Neither sorrowing nor reproachful, but calmly smiling amid our rejoicing sisters, the Geniae of Heaven.

This knowledge it is (for in the depths of her unconscious no soul has ever lost it even for an instant) that pierces the heart with joy, and fills all but the most worldly heart also with a strange and sweetly melancholy longing.

She is with us. She has come among us and within us. She will never leave us, whatever happens; and as soon as we accept Her, she will lead us back to our lost home. That is the reason for the joy of this season. That and no other.

II The Inner Meaning

Once we have learned the secret of Nativity, and that secret has begun to be truly accepted by us and so to flood and permeate our inner being; the Nativity Experience - which we have always had in one form or another - takes on a far deeper significance. The knowledge of its ancient and eternal meaning now possessed by our surface consciousness vibrates in harmony with the soul-knowledge deep within us which has always held the Truth.

A sort of reaction takes place between the Truth permeating down from the surface of the mind, and that same Truth, now released and activated, surging up from the depths, which can be a truly transforming experience.

This is true of all religious Mysteries, of course, but Nativity, even more than Easter in a certain sense, has a crucial position. For Nativity is the beginning of everything. It is the Act by which God brings Herself back to us after we have become utterly cut off from Her. Without Nativity there could be no spiritual aspiration at all for the fallen soul. She would be totally and irrevocably cut off from the Light.

If ever, even for a moment, we allow ourselves to experience our inner knowledge of the fact that we have deliberately cut ourselves off from the light of Eternity and cast ourselves into the cold and darkness of lonely egoism; when for a moment that fact seizes us, the heart stands still and the blood runs

old. And there is always a part of us, deeply buried, which does know this.

The star of Nativity, which shines forth upon the darkest hours of the year is an eternal symbol of the Divine compassion and courage which stands resolutely between our souls and the outer darkness.

Throughout the patriarchal dark-age, humanity clung to broken echoes of this Truth. But that age is passing. We need no longer cling to patriarchal shadow-religions, nor need we trust to the uncertain speculations of antiquarian research in order to learn the ancient and eternal Truth. For we have the direct Revelation of God Herself in The Mythos of the Divine Maid. Her we find the Nativity story in its pure and original form; and it is here that our renewed Nativity experience must begin.

We no longer look to human inventions, but rest with relief and joy in the unfailing strength of our Mother. Let us end, therefore, with Her words, spoken before every Rite in every Madrian home and group during the Advent of Nativity:

"Rejoice, poor wanderers of the earth and exiles from the house of your Mother, for to you shall come a guide and a deliverer."

Sister Alethea.

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THE COMING SEASON

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THE DAY OF HESTIA (HESTIAD): Hestia is the Genia of the hearth and home. Just as the hearth has often been regarded as the centre and the altar of the home, so the foremost shrine of Hestia, where burned her sacred fire, was thought the centre of the earth. This is a day for celebrating the home and remembering also the true Centre and our true Home in our Lady. (Many home-oriented customs are preserved in profane society under the guise of celebrating the profane new year - but these are far more ancient than their pretended occasion, for until about two centuries ago the English new year was properly celebrated by all at the Spring Equinox).

On this day the home is blessed by making a Pentacle in the four corners of each room, and members of the household pray that a good atmosphere be built up, leading themselves and

their visitors to the Goddess. Madrians visit each other bearing blessings, and sometimes also small gifts of silver, bread and fuel to ensure the prosperity of the house. The visitors are traditionally welcomed with new home-baked bread and with wine or ale made or at least mulled in the house.

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LADY

This is one of the four Great Feasts, giving its name to the whole season. The season is also known as Yule, originally from 'loelos, a form of carol in honour of Demeter. Demeter and Her Daughter Persephone provided the central Mother and Child image of ancient Hellenic and pre-Hellenic religion.

EVE OF NATIVITY: A white candle is lit at sunset (4p.m. G.M.T.) to burn through the night and be extinguished at dawn (8a.m. GMT). The first Rite of Nativity is celebrated at midnight.

NATIVITY: There are three Rites for Nativity. The one at midnight already mentioned. Another at dawn, and the third during the day, or, more usually, after dusk. The main colour at these Rites should be white, and the incense sandalwood, which is the incense of Mother and Child.

Nativity is a time of high festivity, with presents, games and feasting. Air is the element of winter, and the star its central symbol. These are combined in the legend of the Star-Fairy. She is the princess of the sylphs or air-elementals, and is said to preside over Nativity celebrations, bearing a representation of the Star on her wand. She is sometimes known as the Fairy of the Nativity fir, and legend relates that in the night before Nativity dawn, she and her sylphs fly from home to home, creating presents out of the air.

DUODECIMA: A light-hearted festival marking the end of Nativity celebrations. The name means "twelve", and this is the twelfth day after Nativity. The keeping of the twelve days has been a popular custom down the ages and has often been linked with the months of the year. However, there are properly thirteen months, and the thirteenth day, representing Moura, is kept as a fast; so Duodecima is the final feast day of the season. In the Mythos the Star of Nativity returns to the sky for twelve nights and on the thirteenth does not return, representing the descent of our Lady into the realms of darkness. So all representations of the star among Nativity decorations should be taken down on Duodecima.

All artificial decorations are usually taken down on this day too, although natural decorations remain until Purple Monday.

Duodecima is a day for games and tricks of all kinds, and there are often evening parties. The baking of a cake with a bean in it is traditional, the cake being divided among all the maids present. The one who finds the bean in her portion is "mistress of the revels" until midnight.

PURPLE MONDAY: The first Monday in Brighde is the opening of the period of purification leading up to the Feast of Lights. The colour for the altar cloth during this period is purple, changing to white on the Feast of Lights itself. This period is one of the great watersheds of the year. The semi-festive post-Nativity period is over (it is considered unlucky if even a leaf of the Nativity decorations remains at the stroke of midnight which ends the Sunday before this day); with the Feast of Lights, the long Easter cycle will begin. *

THE FEAST OF LIGHTS: This feast commemorates our Lady's vow to bring the light of the Divine to every part of fallen creation and Her acceptance of Her coming sacrifice. The colour of the feast is white. All maids present should wear white if possible. The place should be lighted by many white candles during the Rite. The candles for use in the coming year may be blessed after the Lection on this day. The Celebrant should make the Pentacle over them, saying: "May our Lady's blessing rest upon these waxen creatures." The flower of the feast is the snowdrop, from the legend that at every step our Lady took away from Her Mother a snowdrop sprang up in Her track. Only snowdrops and box may be used for the altar, and small sprigs of box may be used for house decorations.

MOURA EVE: The feast day before the fasts and sacrifice of Moura. A time for good food and energetic pursuits - footraces and skipping are traditional activities of the day. The making of pancakes on Moura Eve is an ancient custom, going back at least to the Madrian Celts of ancient England. The day also has its serious side, for this is when the particular acts of self-denial for Moura should be decided upon. All Madrians keep fast on the Mondays of Moura, but other practices are chosen by the individual or household.

GRESS... WORK IN PROGRESS... WORK IN PROGRESS... WORK IN PRO

CARDS: Nativity cards are now available in a number of designs - the cover picture of this magazine is based on one of them - they have been made fairly self-explanatory, so they can be sent to non-Madrian friends. A set of five different cards can be obtained from us for 50p. Easter cards will also be available at the same price from early Moura at the same price. Early orders would be helpful.

CALENDAR: The new calendar will be available at about the same time. It will be illustrated and will contain all Major Festivals and natural rites, many minor festivals, correspondences for every day of the sacred and profane years and other information. Price 50p plus 10p post & packing. Those who do not have a calendar for this year may buy a reduced calendar containing the remaining four months plus additional information for 30p post free.

RHYMES: Rhymes evoking the atmosphere of each month are wanted for the new calendar. They should be four lines long, as in the current one (though they can be a little longer if you like). Why not try a month or two and send them along. The best ones will be selected. Fame can be yours!

LITERATURE CIRCLE: Chrysothemis reports that the L.C. is expanding considerably. During the last season the Teachings of the Daughter have been issued in selections through the Circle, though we would like to issue them in booklet form before long. Above all, new contributions are needed: Meditations, stories, pieces for children, articles on all Madrian subjects, pictures. Express your creativity.

MONEY: Thank you all so much for your contributions. We need money still, particularly for new projects, like the publication of the Teachings.

MINI-POSTERS: 6½" x 8". Suitable for college and library noticeboards etc. Two titles: "God Was Dead" and "Samantha and Jenny Wren" (strip cartoon format). 1p each plus S.A.E. if ordered separately.

STICKERS: We had planned a range of ten stickers in different designs for publicising the faith, but are told they will be quite dear - about £1.50 per 100. Please let us know whether you would be interested in them at this price.

PAPERS: A number of Madrian informational papers are available: "The Divine Trinity" @ 10p; "The Year of Our Lady @ 10p; "The Pattern of History and the Quest of the Soul @ 18p "The Idea of a Coven" (not an official Madrian paper) free. Please enclose 10p p&p for any number.

COMMUNITY: A meeting of people interested in forming a new Madrian community will be held after Nativity. Please contact Chrysothemis c/o TCA if you would like to come or are interested.

IF YOU HAVE ANY PROJECTS, ideas, etc. of interest to Madrians, please write to WORK IN PROGRESS.

GRESS... WORK IN PROGRESS... WORK IN PROGRESS... WORK IN PRO

THE COMING SEASON

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MOURA DAY: The first day of the season of fast and penance (see Penance article, this issue). This year it is also the first fast, as the month begins on a Monday. If there is a priestess in the area, one should make confession and receive purification either on this day or on Moura-Eve.

MED MOURA: On this day, half-way through Moura, the sacrifices are suspended, and we have games and good food. A simnel cake, a rich fruit cake covered with almond paste and decorated with marzipan balls and crystallized violets, is traditional fare. It is also traditional to give small gifts to mothers, both natural and spiritual, and to the spiritual heads of households.

THE PASSION OF OUR LADY: This day marks the death of our Lady, and is a solemn day of prayer and meditation. It is the last day of the year and the first day of Easter. It will be dealt with more fully in our Easter issue.

N.B. All readings for the Major Festivals are given in The Rite of Sacrifice and are taken from the two scriptural booklets.

NOTE ON INITIATION: The post-Easter period is a traditional time for initiation, being symbolically correct: Anyone who wishes to be initiated at this time must begin a period of spiritual preparation immediately after Nativity. If you would like help or advice on this, please contact Sister Angelina. Initiation is open to all who seriously desire to be received into our Lady's Ekklesia and who fully understand all that is entailed.

- A LEGEND OF THE THREE CROWNS -

"WITH THESE I entrust thee, thou and thy daughters to the last generation. For with these treasures and with one other lies the destiny of maid. In the hands of the chosen are they a powerful charm against the outer darkness and the brood of Irkal. But at that time when hands claimed by the dark powers shall touch them, shall they lose their brilliance and their potency. And should it happen that thy blood turn to the bad, I charge thee that the guardian conceal these treasures. And she shall conceal them, the one where the bright rainbow touches the earth, the other at the clear spring beneath the tree whose roots touch the centre of the world, where a pure maid may drink wisdom, and the third and greatest of these treasures in the High Altar of the Temple of Inanna beneath the silver sea. For the finding of these places is beyond the power of impure maids, handmaidens of Irkal."

"I am writing this on the last day of my life, that the secret which has been handed down by my mothers from the first generation shall not be lost. Having striven twenty years to bring my daughter to the light, to find at last her eyes fixed unflinchingly upon the dark, I now commend my own soul and hers to our Lady in the belief that She will, in the fullness of time, bring them together again in Her. The three crowns, the objects of my guardianship I have hidden in the inaccessible places of the earth, for to my daughter I cannot entrust them. It has been made known to me that, hidden, these treasures cannot protect maidkind as they ought, and thus I pray every daughter of my daughter in every generation until they be found to spend a year and a day of her life in quest after them. The path will be hard and the dangers many. In truth, nor could I have found the hiding places without the guidance of some great spirit, handmaiden of the Eternal, even such a one as she that entrusted the treasures my first mother. And without the protection of the treasures, the hold of the dark powers over earth will be stronger, and the forces of Irkalla opposed to the quest. But when the time is ripe, help shall not be wanting."

Time went by, and each year that the crowns lay in safety, the world lay in peril, attracting the spirits of the impure. And as generation succeeded generation, the world became coarser and more insipid, and the minds of maids were dulled. In the family of guardians, the quest was still handed on from mother to daughter, but knowledge slipped from them of the purpose of the quest and its inner meaning. And each maid set out less surely upon the path.

But as the stars shift into new alignments, so the tide turns in the hearts of maids. And in time a new light shone on the world, even as the new moon shines after full darkness, and among the souls who turned in eagerness to the Light was that of the maid now engaged upon the quest. And this is a part of her story...

"Surely this goat is the spawn of the wind", she thought, "She could outpace me in seconds if she chose. But her wit is turned to cunning and delights in its exercise. She does not desire her freedom, but only to triumph over her mistress, or over me in her stead. See! She again pretends to graze, but is watching and listening intently, ready to bound away. Her stubbornness matches mine, and just as I will not give up the chase, she will not allow the capture. But there is one advantage with me - I have the wit of a maid, which this creature cannot have. She desires triumph and shall have it. I shall shortly feign tiredness and collapse as in exhaustion. If I act credibly and stay motionless, she is sure to approach. Then I shall dart up and seize the halter."

The ploy proved successful, and although the goat at first plunged and kicked, she grew docile as she was led toward her home. The aged mistress of the wayward animal offered the victrix the hospitality of her poor cottage, which she gratefully accepted as it was already past sunset. Over the meal of bread and goat's milk cheese the maid recounted the story of the quest and its mysterious history, how the maids of her family time out of mind had spent a year and a day of their lives searching for the rainbow's end, the well of wisdom and the great temple beneath the silver sea, for what purpose they knew not, nor on which path to set their feet. She spoke of the first month of her own quest, her visit to the city in search of advice and her present journey to the high mount-

ains, and of all the people she had met along the way.

When the tale came to an end it was near midnight, and the aged maid, who had been listening closely, clasped the younger maids hands in hers. "I am grateful for the telling, for it has confirmed that which I have already seen in you. And now it is time to reward you for capturing the goat - do not protest, child, or say in sheltering you I have done enough, for such is due to any honest traveller."

"It would shame me, madrona, to take from you who have so little for what I did of my own choosing and enjoyed in the doing."

"Do not prevent me, child, for sharing with you my knowledge will leave me none the poorer. My mothers also have handed on secrets, and this is one of the most precious. Take this bowl upon your lap, and look into the depths of the water. When you see an image, let yourself be drawn into it and you will have a glimpse of the spiritual realities behind the outward forms of earthly things."

Two images the maiden saw: one of herself gazing entranced into a shining pool while beside her stood a great and shining lady whose face shone with the beauty of wisdom. The other was of the gentle maid Cameira, her friend in the city, and at once she found herself beside her. But her blood ran cold as she saw herself surrounded by coarse and ugly faces, some the faces of fiends or of witless fools. And above and around herself stretched thick iron bands choking out the sunlight and the air. When she looked into the faces her heart stood still, for she recognised in their distorted forms the features not of nightmare visions but of Cameira's constant acquaintance in the city. Of all of them, Cameira's sweet face alone was unsullied, but rather glowed with light; and she held in her hand a lantern whose light fell upon the ugly faces and softened them into human semblance.

This vision she related to the wise maid of the cottage, saying: "I wished at first to rescue her from that dark and dangerous place, but it came to me that this was her purpose; to bring light to benighted souls. And this should be the aim of every maid, and my quest could have no purpose other than this. But still I do not understand why I should be chosen, nor how the quest can achieve this noble purpose. May I look

again, madrona?"

As she gazed a second time, it seemed to her that she was a child lost in a wood and wishing for home. She saw violets at her feet and knelt to pick them for her mother who loved them. And as she picked, more violets sprang up a little way ahead and she ran to them joyfully. And so she went on until her arms were full, and she found she had come to the edge of the wood and was in sight of her home. She wept for the intensity of the joy of that moment, and found herself again in the dark cottage.

"You have seen the place of the quest in your own life, child but look again to see the treasures your success would bring to the world."

In the water was forming the image of the rainbow; it bathed her in the rays of pure colour and every part of her being was refreshed and strengthened. At her feet a golden crown glittered and sparkled in the coloured light, for here the rainbow touched the earth. And the maid knew that the crown held a secret, but could not decipher it. As she touched it, the rainbow hardened and became a road, and the maid was drawn along it.

Thus she came to the mighty tree, as high as the rainbow itself, and in the spring at its foot floated a silver crown more glorious than the first. It seemed to be shining with its own light, but the maid saw that the light came from the spring itself. It came to the maid that she knew the secret of the crowns and it was one she had known all her life. And she plunged into the spring... Almost at once she stood in a high and splendid temple, whose beauty was beyond the power of human language to describe. From the Altar poured the glorious light, bright and clear as starlight, warm as sunlight. And she heard these words "All life is from the Eternal, and its every aspect draws sustenance from the Divine. So is it glorified when lived in the Divine Light. Let the light of the three crowns touch every choice, every thought and every action in the life of maids."

Then the vision faded, and as the maid sat enraptured, the wise one crossed the room and opened the door of the cottage. "It is the dawn", she said.

Note: The three crowns appear in The Mythos of The Divine Maid II, 20-30. The other treasure mentioned at the beginning of the story is most probably the silver Chalice of Mythos VII, 22.

- DANCING TO THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES -

ALL THINGS BEGIN in Spirit. Physical things are but reflections of spiritual things. We must remember this when we begin to attune ourselves to the cosmic rhythm of the Divine Mysteries. Attune first the Spirit and all life shall be attuned.

The most basic way of attuning the Spirit is already practised by all Madrians: the pattern of Rites and Festivals of the Madrian year. The four Natural Rites make us spiritually aware of the rhythm of the month, and the Major Festivals serve the same function for the yearly rhythm. Since the Rite of Sacrifice does not require a priestess, any group of people, however small, can participate in this rhythm of ritual.

The Rosary follows the same rhythmic pattern, and frequent Rosary meditation will increase the strength and vitality of this spiritual pulse.*

Next, is the spirit of the seasons. The careful observance of fasts, the joy and excitement of feasts. The modern world, cut off from the rhythm, pursues pleasure at every opportunity and cannot find it except in fleeting and elusive forms. Puritanical religion eschews pleasure as evil. But as we attune ourselves to the eternal rhythm, pleasure takes its true place as a part of the pattern - neither a worthless evil nor an ultimate goal.

All life knows this pattern - ebb and flow, waxing and waning, night and day, fast and feast, pleasure and penance. Life is always so, whether we want it or not. The sobrest puritan cannot avoid pleasure (if only the pleasure of self-righteousness), nor the wildest epicure avoid pain. But through attunement to the pattern of fasts and feasts, we begin to become aware of the inner meanings of both pleasure and sorrow and to experience something that lies deeper than either - a feeling of meaning and purpose; and a joy far more profound than mere pleasure, which is present just as strongly in penance as in rejoicing.

As well as the Major Festivals and periods of fasting, some special pleasure should be had in recognition of each natural Rite day, and minor acts of self-denial should be practised on

* Details of the Madrian Rosary in Catechism Appendix 3.

each Friday (the planetary principle of Friday is the conquest of matter by Spirit) and on the thirteenth day of each month, which commemorates the thirteenth month in which our Lady died.

Decorations for the seasons and festivals are of great help, and also seasonal colours may be used in the decoration of household shrines, candles, etc. These are the seasonal colours from the beginning of the year:

Resurrection - Exaltation: white
Exaltation - Festival of Regeneration: violet
Festival of Regeneration - Samhain (Mysteries of Life cycle): green
Samhain - Commencement of the Advent: violet
Advent: green
Nativity - Duodecima: white and gold
Duodecima - Purple Monday: violet
Purple Monday - Feast of Lights: purple
Feast of Lights - Eve of Moura: violet
Moura: purple.

Colour has a deep effect on the unconscious self, and each festival, as well as these seasons, has its own colour. A general guide to the meanings of the colours is as follows:

Violet - the usual colour for religious devotion. It represents the moon, and therefore the non-physical levels of being and also the action of the Daughter within the physical world. Blue (but not a dark blue) may be used instead of violet.

White - purity, perfection
Gold - glory, completion
Purple - penance
Green - life

These are hints rather than full explanations, for colour, like so many things, cannot be explained but only known. Let your mind dwell upon the colours and their meanings in relation to the seasons. Let them be food for your meditations.

Another set of colours are the Rosary colours. These apply to the five decades of the Rosary and their Mysteries, and therefore also to the seasons. They are: First Mystery (Autumn): yellow-brown. Second Mystery (Winter): silver. Third Mystery (Moura): black. Fourth Mystery (Spring): blue. Fifth Mystery (Summer): red.

Make models or pictures or pictures representing the Mysteries, with correct colours predominating in each. Make a collection of flowers and natural things for your shrine at the beginning of each month. Let your stories and your songs and all your works reflect the season and its Divine Mystery. These things are particularly good for children, and therefore are good for all of us - for has not our Lady said to us "Unless your souls are simple as the running deer, My children, and your hearts as little children filled with wonder; how shall you attain liberation?" *

And this, before all, is the secret. We begin to cast off our separateness, our selfish isolation, and to give ourselves back to She in Whom we began, seeing the rhythms of nature as the expression of Her will, and to live within them. All life becomes one, and that oneness a bond of love between ourselves and the Eternal. Life is a game, a dance, a ritual, a song; always different, yet always the same. The reality of life is too simple for an adult mind.

Camilla and Angelina.

* The Teachings of the Daughter

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MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST
OF LIGHTS

(may also be used in Moura)

Radiant Daughter of Eternal Light,
You have torn Yourself from Your own Self for my sake.
Forgive me.

I have given myself freely into the claws of Irkalla,
And my soul into eternal darkness;

Yet You have interposed Your sacred body,
Saying: take not this soul, take rather Me.

O, You that have prayed beneath the full moon

and by the running streams,

Teach me the power of true devotion.

SYMBOLISM

The Star and the Sacred Grove

THE STAR is the central symbol of winter and especially of Nativity, the seasonal festival. In many different cultures stars have been symbols of the Goddess under many names: Egyptian Isis and Hathor, Phoenician Cabira, the Norse Freia, the Babylonian Ishtar, Roman Venus, Mary of mediaeval Christendom, Chaldaean Tiamat and Indian Durga.

The star is a symbol of both Mother and Daughter. It appears in the Mythos before and during the Nativity narrative and before the Resurrection, both periods heralding their union. As Venus, the morning and evening star*, it is most often the Mother's - She as the morning star at Easter (see Mythos VI, 8) brings in the dawn which is the rebirth of Inanna; as the evening star at Nativity, She gives birth to the Daughter, whose primary symbol is the moon. But the titles Stella Matutina (Morning Star) and "Bringer of the Light" are also of the Daughter, She Who brings the Light of the Divine to the world. The title Stella Maris, Star of the Sea, is another used of both Mother and Daughter.

The Daughter, as the Guide of maidkind, is symbolised by the guiding star, the hope of travellers. The guiding aspect of the star is illustrated powerfully in Mythos II, where it draws all the children of the earth to the sacred grove. Yet the Silver Star of the waters symbolises the Mother as Creatrix of the world, whose light shone over the sea before the shaping of her creatures.

The star was often in ancient myth associated with the birth of the Divine Child at the winter solstice. The morning star was hailed as "Star of Salvation dawning in the East". The five-pointed star or Pentacle was everywhere a symbol of rebirth, salvation and protection against the powers of darkness.

It is the five-pointed star which is predominantly the star of Nativity. Even more than the other seasonal symbols, which are all (save the cross) based on the number five, the star has a strong affinity with the Pentacle and its complex symbolism.

The eight pointed star is sometimes used, especially of the * which appears before the sunrise and before the moonrise.

Mother, and has been seen as a symbol of the feminine principle and of Divinity. The six- and seven-pointed stars are not properly symbols of the Goddess, but relate to the seven planetary principles which affect earthly life, and their Geniae. (the sun is at the centre in the six-pointed star).

THE SACRED GROVE appears in the Nativity narrative in the Mythos, lying around the cave where the Daughter is born, The grove has remained a powerful image, and many cultures retained the concept of a sacred grove when its true meaning had been lost. Many people have experienced a sense of the numinous, the presence of the Divine, in woods and forests to this day. The power may stem from the memory* of the soul of the watching before the cave, the gathering of all the children of the earth in hushed adoration. Coming together for worship in groves of trees has often been a feature of Madri-an religion, especially in times of persecution.

The trees of the sacred grove vary greatly in different traditions.** A great many trees have been associated with the Goddess - the fig tree, the ash, the elder, the palm, the willow - the list could go on indefinitely. In accordance with seasonal symbolism, the grove may be said to contain the willow, symbol of purification and sacrifice (Moura), the yew, the death-tree (Hiatus) the rowan, the symbol of quickening and rebirth (spring), the rose-tree, symbol of union (summer) and the apple tree, symbol of life and immortality (autumn) as well as the silver fir, the tree of birth, winter and Nativity. Because of its associations, however, the most frequent representation of the sacred grove of Nativity is as a grove of silver firs.

The silver fir was in Greece sacred to Artemis, and a branch of the tree, entwined with ivy was dedicated in Her honour. The tree was also associated with the Mother as Cybele or Nana, and with the Gallic Druantia. The silver fir of birth is said to be sister to the yew of death from the similarity of foliage. Both symbolise different aspects of the descent of our Lady by which She came to us. Chrysothemis

*Although we call this "memory" it is more accurately seen as the constant experience of the soul in the cycles of life which echoes the true self's eternal participation in the Great Cycle which stands beyond them all.

**See Robert Graves The White Goddess for Celtic tree-lore.

PENANCE: WHAT IT REALLY MEANS.

a subject for Moura

PENANCE IS NOT very fashionable. If Madrians were free to invent their religion as they went along, it would probably be good politics to leave penance and related subjects out of it as most modern cults do. But the religion of our Lady is not of an age but of all time, and Her servants must tell the whole truth without regard to the prejudices of this age or of any other.

So let us grasp the nettle and start by saying what penance is not. It is not - or at any rate, not primarily - a punishment for our sins. A lot of the reason for the unfashionability of penance and related ideas lies in a healthy reaction against the patriarchal idea of a legalistic male god totting up our faults and handing out arbitrary punishments, with penance, or self-punishment an act of fear made to forestall divine vengeance.

But penance is something entirely different and far more mysterious than that. Let us consider a puzzle. Why is prayer a form of penance? Either prayer is a free and joyous activity, a delightful communion with our Lady, or else it is an irksome task, penance. Surely it cannot be both. But it is both, or can be; and within this paradox is contained the whole secret of penance.

Prayer is the sustaining activity of the true self - that part of us which longs to return to perfection in our Mother. As such, it is a denial of the false self - the self which wants to stay apart from Her. All devotion is a denial of the false self, for the whole existence of the false self depends upon her separation from our Lady. Thus a whole part of our nature - and the part which the training of this world has made the strongest part - rebels against prayer.

Penance, therefore, is a disciplining of the false self. The false self clings to the things of this world with the tenacity of a limpet, and her imperious nature wishes to govern the whole of us. Given her way, she will not allow us one moment of pure devotion, but will always keep the mind rivetted on material things of one kind or another. Therefore if you have ever had one minute's pure concentration upon our Lady, you have, by that very fact, practised penance. And that was perhaps the happiest minute of your life.

Which disposes of another misconception about penance - that it is supposed to make us miserable. Of course the conflict with the false self - the head-on clash with all our worldly desires - can be a troublesome experience; but the goal of penance is joy, and whenever it is working properly, joy is its result.

It is a joy that can hardly be explained, and one that can be achieved in no other way. Every Madrian has had the experience of sullen weariness during a fast or penance, which is suddenly overwhelmed and turned upside-down by a consciousness of our Lady - the wonderful privilege of making this small sacrifice for Her; the happiness of having this little thing to lay at Her feet. Suddenly all our selfishness seems to have been a burden, and our "self" like a great ungainly rhinoceros hide covering the true inner self and making our movements stiff, clumsy and tiring. For a moment we experience the unspeakable relief of pure submissiveness, we throw aside all that we have learned to call "self" in this world and experience only Her. Until this point, the word humility means nothing. Self-pride is the natural and right attitude of a soul without God. But when we are with Her, we throw it away and kneel before Her and want only to serve Her absolutely. We want Her to burn away everything of ourselves that is not wholly obedient to Her. And this is not because we fear Her, but because we are overcome by a love for Her beside which even the most wonderful human love is as a candle before the sun.

Must this experience always come from penance? Not always from self-denial in the usual sense (although all communion with our Lady is a denial of the false "self"). It may come quite suddenly and unexpectedly, but it is certain that if the false self is not kept under control she will prevent spiritual development and cut us off from our Lady altogether, and that if we shy away from curbing her we will inevitably slip further from the Light. Conversely, penance is a way to ecstasy.

The primary cause of misunderstanding in this as in most spiritual subjects rests in the inbuilt patriarchal assumption that spiritual things aren't really real; that vague well-meaning is enough. But spiritual reality is real and has its own laws, which are just as definite as the physical law of gravity or any other natural law. We can't jump a high wall

without making a big effort. We can't write without learning the alphabet. No more can we progress spiritually without training and preparing ourselves.

And there is one other consideration. When we do experience our Lady, we are confronted with our own imperfection. This is not a question of "sin" in the patriarchal sense. Not a breaking of arbitrary rules and regulations. It is not even necessarily (though it may be) a recognition that we have behaved badly in a human sense at all. Suddenly we are measured against an absolute standard. We are measured against Perfection - against what we were when we were first created, and what, in the deepest sense, we should be. It is this deep imperfection which penance is a small gesture toward purifying. Our Lady wants us to return to absolute Perfection; not, perhaps, in this life, but it must be our ultimate destiny. We must repent and put behind us the self-centred mode of being which separated us from Her and made Her Sacrifice necessary. It is only through penance that we live our repentance. That is the truth which lies behind the half-truth of patriarchal legalism.

People who say that religion is an "easy way out" know nothing about it, or are thinking of false religions. In truth the world is much more comfortable - it makes no such absolute demands on us. People who try to have religion without such demands do so precisely because what they want is a comfortable, worldly philosophy; a safe, neutralized armchair religion stripped of the wonder and the terror of contact with the Absolute.

But our lives should not be devoted to penance. Our Lady gives us both fasts and feasts, and we must serve Her both in self-denial and in joyful outpouring. For souls at certain stages, penance is the high road of progress. If you are one of these, our Lady will make it known to you in Her own way. For others, only a little is needed. All of us should observe the fasts of the year and practise small acts of self-denial regularly. But Madri-an life is a harmony of pleasure and penance, with joy the rhythm that runs through both.

ooo000ooo Sister Julia

"Harmonic life is danced within the music of Eternity, and the pattern of the dance is Wholeness. But without control shall the dance be destroyed; without discipline is the rhythm shattered in a host of discordant fragments." (Teachings of the Daughter)

— WHAT IS HAPPENING? —

A WAVE IS BREAKING, a tide is rising, a spirit is moving in the hearts of maids. What is happening?

Astraea, the name of the first month of winter, was a name of the Daughter in the classical world. She was seen as the goddess of innocence and purity, and legend said that She remained in the world throughout the rising tide of barbarity and cruelty which marked the beginning of the Iron Age (the destruction of Madrian-matriarchal civilisation), and watched over it still as the constellation Virgo, the Maiden. Throughout the early patriarchal period, the people believed that Astraea and Her Mother Themis would some day return and a new Golden Age would be born.

Eventually even this belief was lost; the patriarchy was consolidated, patriarchal religions crushed the remains of the true Faith. And now we have the inevitable conclusion of that process: the dead hand of materialism lies upon the world; all religions die; a new dark age of techno-bureaucratic barbarism seems inevitable.

Yet now, at the seemingly most unlikely time, the ancient Faith is reborn. Even amid the clangour of machines, the inane jargon of politicians, the constant self-centred chatter of maids and men - our Lady has spoken to Her children. She has inspired maids and given us the words which will make us whole. There is no turning back; it has become necessary for us to make a new life and a new culture - a new world - in the light of the Truth which has been spoken. Astraea has returned to the hearts of maids, and the Golden Age is dawning.

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APPEAL FOR ISSUE SIX

WE HOPE that issue 6 will be fully printed in offset litho. This will allow illustrations and a more creative layout and give a generally better and more attractive appearance to the magazine. It will also be more expensive to produce. We are starting a Magazine Fund to help to realise this possibility. Please mark contributions "Magazine Fund".

A small price rise may also be necessary, but current subscribers and those subscribing before issue 6 will continue to receive The Garden Age at the old price.

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