



The Religion of the Goddess
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The Cover design, by Olivia Robertson, represents the Goddess sitting on the Holy Table. It is based on the High Altar of the Temple of Isis, Clonegal Castle.

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THE RELIGION OF THE GODDESS

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during The Wexford Festival.

by
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and introduced by
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With two illustrations shown during the lecture
by Anna Durdin-Robertson.

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PROLOGUE

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I actually introduce Mr. Durdin-Robertson's lecture, I should like to say how fortunate I feel we are to be the first people to gather a scattering of the fruits of his profound study and research into the history, mythology and cult of the Great Goddess. Mr. Durdin-Robertson's interest in comparative religion stems from undergraduate days and what we shall read in his books - the first volume of which is to be published this December - and hear in this lecture, is the result of a great deal of careful and scholarly study & a strong belief in his subject.

He is going to tell us of the history, rites and ethics of the cult of the Goddess and to describe some of her manifold roles and propensities. She can be seen as guardian angel, mother, queen, deity, goddess within a pantheon, muse, heroine, patroness or fairy and it does seem, as we see the restoration of former valuable parts of our national heritage, that here is an aspect of our native religion that we cannot ignore.

The importance of the Cult of the Mother Goddess is becoming increasingly recognized in many fields and disciplines. Many people nowadays feel insecure, confused and threatened as they see rapid changes in their environment and ways of life. Science and inflation zoom ahead and it sometimes seems as though man is taking on so much so quickly that he is heading for the destruction of himself and all around him. We live in a paradoxical age of creation and destruction and man might well feel the need for a maternal figurehead to balance that of the paternal.

The symbolism of the Goddess has been the most persistent feature in archaeological records from the last phase of the old Stone Age onwards, over a widespread area of the Universe and has had a profound influence and been of great significance in the thought and practice of religion and society, as, gradually, her role became more clearly defined. She is seen as a lively, unforgettable obsession, deeply fixed in the racial memory of the European countryman but rather too instinctive to slot into an ideally patriarchal, authoritarian society, based on rational explanation, often dull routine, mechanical mass production and oppressive obligation. She is the Goddess of Inspired Truth, Wisdom and Poetry, whose habit has never been to coerce by negatively ethical behaviour and punitive law, but to grant and withhold her favours as her sons and lovers come to her with gifts of their own choosing - as Mr. Durdin-Robertson will tell you - "her service is perfect freedom".

And now to turn to her part in the history of Ireland - As we are now well into Autumn, you might look at the hedgerows laden with fruit and notice, amongst other trees, the hawthorn. This was the tree of the Shee in Ireland and was particularly associated with the mother earth goddess cult. Indeed, at nearby Tinahely, a sacred hawthorn tree is referred to as growing over the well of St. Patrick. In Ireland the Cult was widespread - as can be imagined in a largely agricultural land. All Irish Goddesses are different concepts of the same mother, who saw to the fertility of the earth, animals and men and would help her devotees in distress with her supernatural powers. She was usually localized and inspired and guarded the arts of peace in an ordered, domestic, industrious life. She favoured Love, Beauty and Truth, and the Joy of Song, Poetry, Dance and Music. It was the mothers, in the days of the Druids, who governed the harmonies, inherent in all life. To name but a few goddesses of Ireland - there is Brigid, the Great Triple Goddess, who was a deity of learning, wisdom, culture and skills, who was invoked as a Muse and was the original inhabitant of New Grange in Co. Meath. Armagh was named after Macha - the Great Nature Queen of all Ireland. Cesara, a contemporary of Noah, formed her own ark and sailed with 50 mothers of the nations and her own family to found a settlement in Ireland. She shared immortality with Fintan and welcomed the Gaels. The Fair of the Goddess Carman (in Wexford) was an old religious Festival for Agriculture. Ireland itself is named Eire after one of the Queens of the Tuatha de Danaan Triple Goddess of the Fates. The country was named after each Queen in turn until the Gaelic invasion, when the currently reigning Queen's name was retained. In Donegal we find the Goddess Sadb of the deer and Hibernia is shown as representing Ireland with her harp. Niamh of the Golden Hair was the beautiful Goddess of the Land of Eternal Youth and Ana appears in Irish mythology as a Danaan goddess who came to be worshipped in Munster as the Goddess of Plenty - and after her are named the two Kerry mountains, the Paps of Anu. She was a Moon Goddess in charge of her crops and cattle and a midsummer Fire Festival was held for her. The lunulae we now see excavated would be made of Wicklow gold and worn in honour of the Moon Goddess. Thomas Moore tells us that our ancestors worshipped the moon under the name of Re and swore by the moon. Indeed, in Irish wakes the man enters with the head of an ox and the woman with the head of a cow - believed to be connected with the cult of Isis. The Irish were even at first called Scoti, after the Milesian queen Scota. The mysterious Banshee is a Woman of

the Hill and a priestess of the Great Dead.

Ireland is full of fascinating remainders - such as the Sheela-na-gige, so often found as a keystone on old churches and the silent majesty of the dolmens - burial clammers where heroes were buried in foetal position in a womb of earth, awaiting rebirth - and the barrows, which were oracular tombs and the passage caves - each connected with the matriarchal cult of the Earth Goddess.

And now I have much pleasure in introducing Mr. Durdin-Robertson.

LECTURE: "THE CULT OF THE GODDESS"

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to start by quoting a passage from a book written by a certain Dr. Alexander. It is from a long treatise entitled "The History of Women". Although living 200 years ago, the author might well be an advanced advocate of the Women's Liberation Movement. He writes as follows :

"The mythology of all antiquity is full of female as well as male deities. The Hebrews and many of their neighbouring nations, worshipped the Queen of Heaven; the Phoenicians adored Astarte; the Scythians, Apia; and the Scandinavians, Frigga, the consort of Odin. Wherever female deities have obtained a place in the religion of a people, it is a sign that women are of some consequence; for we find in those modern nations where the women are held in the most despicable light, that even their deities are all of the masculine gender".

In other words, to achieve a healthy society - something more is needed than "Votes for women", "Equal pay" and so on. For achieving a healthy society there is only one adequate answer; and that answer is: - a return to the Cult of the Goddess.

This lecture is divided into two sections. First, we shall survey the history of Matriarchal religion. Second, we shall consider the rituals, both the public or outer, and the esoteric or inner Mysteries; the second section will end with a few examples of the effect of the cult of the Goddess on ethics.

Starting, then, on the history of Matriarchal religion, I shall begin, where one would expect to begin, at the Prehistoric Era.

Now it is generally accepted that the dominant religion of all races, at that time, was Matriarchal Polytheism. This might be defined as a multitude of goddesses and gods - in that order - dominated by a Great Mother or Mothers.

We have confirmation of this in archaeology. Erich Neumann, in "The Great Mother" writes :

"Of the Stone Age sculptures known to us, there are fifty five female figures and only five male figures. The male figures, of youths, are atypical and poorly executed, hence it is certain that they had no significance for the cult. This fits in with the secondary character of the male godhead, who appeared only later in the history of religions and derived his divine rank from his mother, the Goddess."

The same conclusion is reached from another angle. The profound esoteric writer, Gerald Massey, states that "The First Mother was the earliest divinity in all lands."

We come now to the early historical period, covering the era as far as 2,600 years ago.

Here, Matriarchal Polytheism is still a potent factor, although it varies with different races and civilizations.

According to Mme. Blavatsky, in "The Secret Doctrine," the two great civilizations, in historical times, - where the Goddesses held a position of importance at least equal to the male god - were Egypt and China. Crete is not mentioned, since the major discoveries had not yet been made.

The strength of Polytheism in Egypt may be seen in the opposition to the changes attempted by Akhnaten. Although it is doubtful if he were a monotheist in the present meaning of the word, he certainly wished to banish - perhaps for political reasons - the deities of Thebes; and most of the Egyptian deities were worshipped there. It is, however, said that he always venerated the goddesses Maat and Bast. Anyhow, his attempt to remove even a part of the Pantheon was resented, and we see the Old Religion restored under Tutankhamen.

In China the dominant position of the Goddess of Mercy, Kwan-Yin, has always been, and still is, maintained.

We come then to the historical period dating from about 2,600 years ago and ending with the

Renaissance.

Here we see a definite loss of the cult of the Goddess, more in the West than in the East.

In the West (and I am using this term in the wide sense, to include all countries to the West of India) we notice a reduction in the number of deities, in some cases leaving only one.

Nevertheless, this loss is more apparent than real.

If we start with the time when the Israelites had entered Canaan, (although this was considerably earlier than the beginning of the period we are now describing), we have much information in the Hebrew Bible.

Now it is unfortunate that most people are acquainted only with the translations of these books. For if we study them in the original Hebrew we will see a considerable amount of polytheism and, indeed, the cult of the Goddess.

To give some examples :- Taking the first word of Genesis :- B'rashith. This consists of the prefix B, "in", and the feminine noun Rashith. Of course it is not inaccurate to render this as "In the beginning". Nevertheless, Rashith means more than that. It has also the meaning of "source, origin". Thus the following alternative renderings are given in "The Secret Doctrine": - "In the Essence," and "In the womb". These translations are in keeping with the great Chaldean Scriptures (of which the Hebrew Bible is, as it were, only a selected edition). In the Babylonian Creation Narrative, Heaven and Earth are made from the body of the goddess Tiamat.



Coming now to another word in the first verse of Genesis: "Elohim". - There appeared an article in "The Times" a few months ago by the Religious Affairs Correspondent. He quotes the words of Professor Nelle Morton: "The early Hebrew name.. Elohim, was the combination of the word Eloh, a goddess, and Im, the masculine plural Hebrew suffix.... Yahweh (the pure form of the corruption Jehovah) was ... derived from the name of the earlier Sumerian goddess." And so an accurate translation of "Elohim" is not "God" but rather "the Deities" or "the Pantheon." One wonders when the official translators will have the honesty, or perhaps the courage, to translate this word properly.

If we can see Matriarchal Polytheism in the Hebrew Scriptures, we can also see it practised, sometimes as the established religion, all through the 400 years or so of the period of the Kings. Thus "Solomon worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians" (the great Phoenician and Canaanite Astarte). Mention is made of "the high places that were before Jerusalem which Solomon the king had builded for Ashtoreth"; it is significant that they are recorded as standing 300 years later. At the end of the period of the Kings, we have a record of an interesting dialogue between the Jewish exiles in Egypt and Jeremiah. Part of this is as follows :

"All the men and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt in Pathros answered Jeremiah, saying. . we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven as we have done .. in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, for then we had plenty of victuals and were well and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, we have wanted all things and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make our cakes to worship her and pour out drink offerings unto her without our men?".

The Queen of Heaven here mentioned may be either Astarte or the Babylonian goddess, Ishtar.



INANNA SAILS BACK TO ERECH.

We come now to the later period of the Hebrew Bible, the period of the return from the Exile. This covers the era before the Greek occupation. This period is characterized by the cult of Wisdom. In the "Wisdom Literature" Wisdom is seen personified as a female figure and is given the feminine names, Chokmah, Binah and occasionally, Tebunah, the Greek equivalent being Sophia. Robert Graves describes Wisdom as here depicted, as a "quasi-goddess". I shall read a few passages, describing Wisdom, in the Book of Proverbs.

"I was from everlasting. . from the beginning, or ever the earth was .. before the mountains were settled, before the hills.

"Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she crieth in the chief places of the concourse, in the opening of the gates..

"By me kings reign and princes decree justice, by me princes rule and nobles and even all the judges of the earth. . I lead in the midst of the paths of judgement, that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance. .

"I will pour out my spirit unto you. . For whoso findeth me findeth life. .

"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars; She hath sent forth her maidens. . Come, eat of my bread and drink the wine which I have mingled. ."

This female figure, Wisdom, is also referred to by Jesus, in his words, "Wisdom is justified of all her children."

Another female personification which occurs all through the Hebrew Bible is Sheol. This is a feminine noun defined by Brown, Driver and Briggs in their Hebrew Lexicon as "Underworld. . compare, hollow place, 'Holle', hell". This may be one of the Semitic words which have come into the English language and may be related to the Norse proper name Hela, the Norse Goddess of Hell. Some examples of this female figure personifying the Underworld are as follows:

"Therefore hell (Sheol) hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure."

In the Proverbs Sheol is seen as one of the daughters of the ancient Canaanite goddess Alukah, and as sister of "the Womb".

In the Books of Esdras are the words: "The storehouses of souls in the world below are like the womb".

Here, in personifying the Underworld as a female figure, Hebrew tradition is in keeping with that of nearly all the great Pantheons.

During the later stages of the Greek and Roman occupations of Palestine we see the growth of Hebrew-Greek literature. The important characteristic of this is that the Holy Ghost is regarded as female. This was probably inherited from the earlier Jewish tradition, which referred to the Holy Spirit by the word Ruach, a noun which is in most cases feminine.

Thus the Holy Ghost is seen as a female figure among the Gnostics (Simon Magus sees his wife Helena as one of her incarnations). The same applies in the Book of Enoch, among the Nazarenes, and among the Essene Ebionites; they saw - as an incarnation of the Holy Spirit - the Virgin Mary. In the biography of Jesus, attributed to the Hebrews, Jesus speaks the words: "My Mother, the Holy Spirit."

Coming to what is, perhaps, better known literature -- the writings of John. He starts with the words -- using the English translation, "In the beginning." The original Greek, however, is far more significant: "En arche". Now Arche is a feminine noun which is an almost exact translation of the Hebrew Rashith. Arche is defined as "a first cause, origin, a first principle, element" as well as a "beginning" (in time). In Parkhurst's Greek Dictionary is the following definition: "Arche in this application answers to the Hebrew Rasit (i.e. Rashith) or wisdom. . a word which had the meaning of the emblem of the female generative power, the Arg or Arca." And so the words "En arche" might also be rendered "In the Source, In the Matrix". Indeed, some scholars see in them a hidden reference to the Virgin Mary.

In the Revelation of John, or the Apocalypse, there is an interesting passage; it refers to a person

often identified with Aima Elohim, the Mother of the Elohim, or Great Mother, of the Kabbalah. "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." Further on in this passage she is described as having two wings of a great eagle.

Coming now to the last years of the Roman Empire in the West, - we know that from the time of Constantine the Old Pantheon went officially into abeyance. Yet, in spite of this, it was still venerated by many - for instance, among the aristocracy; for the Senate was under the guardianship of the goddess Nike or Victoria. Also the country dwellers, the "Pagani", kept to their old faith (hence "pagans" - the adherents of the Old Religion). The cult of Vesta, the Goddess of the hearth fire, - whose temple was the centre of the Roman Empire - lasted more than 60 years from that time. And in the extreme South of Egypt Isis was still worshipped for several centuries, until the reign of Justinian.

How seriously these devotees of the Old Religion held to their Faith may be seen in Edward Gibbon's account of the Emperor Julian. In his reign the old Pantheon was re-established, until his early death in the Persian Wars. Gibbon writes of him as follows: "It was in honour of Pan or Mercury, of Hecate or Isis, that Julian, on particular days, denied himself the use of some particular food, which might have been offensive to his tutelary deities. . Notwithstanding the modest silence of Julian himself, we may learn from his faithful friend, the orator Libanius, that he lived in perpetual intercourse with the gods and goddesses."

We turn now to the end of this particular period, - that long era known as the Middle Ages.

Generally speaking, in this period, the Cult of the Goddess took place in "underground" movements. And by far the most important of these was Witchcraft. Here the old Goddess names were retained, and the goddesses themselves represented by the coven priestess. Thus Lilith is presented, - the Assyrian storm-goddess appearing about 4,500 years ago, the first wife of Adam, the mother of those half-human beings known to the Hebrews as the Lilim, to the Arabs as the Jinn and to the Irish as the Sidhe. Then there is Ashtoreth, the Moon and Love Goddess of Syria - her worship was transmitted through the Greek and Roman witches, to continue in the Medieval covens. The Moon-goddesses of Greece and Rome, - Hecate (who is mentioned by Shakespeare in Macbeth) and also Diana were venerated. New goddesses appear; Bensozia, Aradia and others.

Another great preserver of the Old Religion was the Tarot. This is a kind of small Pantheon in itself. Thus the second trump, the Priestess or Female Pontiff wears the horned head-dress of the great Egyptian goddess Hathor. In some packs she is called Pope Joan or Juno, - the "Queen of Heaven" or Juno of the Romans.

The gypsies kept, or perhaps developed, their own polytheistic religion. Their chief goddess is believed to be of Indian origin, and bears the Sanskrit name Amari De or De Develeski.

These cults of the goddess were not all "underground". A perpetual reminder of the Old Religion was given, and still is given, in the Calendar. Monday is the day of the Moon (compare the French Lundi and La Lune); Friday is the day of the Norse goddess Frigg (compare the French Vendredi, the day of Venus). The month of May according to the Oxford English Dictionary is connected by some with the goddess Maia; she is the old Italian Goddess of Spring who had her festival on May 1st.

Another factor helping to preserve the cult of the Goddess in Medieval times was the sympathy shown in general by the Plantagenet rulers of England to the Old Religion. Thus King Edward III founded the Order of the Garter - the garter, of course, being one of the great symbols of witchcraft. Although the story is well-known, I shall repeat it, in the words of Miss Valiente.

"The story goes that when King Edward III was dancing with a lady of his court, either the Fair Maid of Kent or the Countess of Salisbury, her garter fell to the floor. The lady was embarrassed; but the king gallantly picked up the garter, saying, 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' ('shame to him who thinks ill of it'), and tied it upon his own leg. This incident gave him the idea to found the Order of the Garter.

The above incident of court life seems a very trivial one for this noble order to have been founded upon, unless it had some inner significance. But if the garter that the lady dropped was a witch-garter, then the whole episode assumes quite a different aspect. Both the lady's confusion and the King's gesture are seen to have a much deeper meaning than in a mere pretty story of courtly

gallantry. She stood revealed as a leading witch; and he publicly showed his willingness to protect the Old Religion and its followers."

Another open cult of the goddess which reappeared towards the end of the Middle Ages is the invocation of the Muses - the nine goddesses of literature and the Arts and Sciences. Thus Calliope presides over epic song, Melpomene over tragedy, Urania over astrology and astronomy. I should like to take an example from the work of Edmund Spenser, who though living in the Renaissance era is often regarded as strongly influenced by medieval chivalry. He is of particular interest to us here, having been connected with Enniscorthy and having written the Fairie Queene in Ireland. His invocation is as follows:

"Lo! I the man whose Muse whylome did maske,. in lowly Shephard's weeds..
"Help then, O Holy Virgin! chiefe of nyne, Thy weaker Novice to performe thy will..
"And with them eke, O Goddesse heavenly bright! " Shed thy faire beanies into my feeble eyrie,
To think of that true glorious type of thine .."

This cult of the Muses became almost universal among the poets of the next century - including Milton. We see it continued at the present time by Robert Graves, whom one might describe as a devotee of the Muses.

There was also, during the Middle Ages, and still is, a cult of a very different nature: the cult of Nemesis. This goddess, in the background of the Greek and Roman Pantheons, was seen as "She whom none can escape". And yet, strangely enough, she is not a terrifying figure. Dr. Oskar Seyffert describes her thus: "She is represented as a meditative, thoughtful maiden with the attributes of proportion and control (a measuring-rod, bridle and yoke, among other symbols). Nemesis always has, and still holds, this position in the background, with her same basic characteristics. Nemesis is defined thus in the Oxford English Dictionary. "The Goddess of retribution .. Retribution, justice. ."

As so to summarize this long period of history, in the West: We can say that the Cult of the Goddess, while officially in abeyance, was zealously maintained by the faithful few.

In the East, during this period, Matriarchal Polytheism remained far more in evidence.

India has always kept her large Pantheon in spite of many invasions. China, though not normally associated with religion, has always been careful to venerate ancestral spirits. Among the deities, Kwan-yin, whether as an indigenous goddess, or in the Buddhist Pantheon, has maintained her position. Japan has always kept, as part of the established religion, her immense Pantheon of powerful and often sophisticated deities - eight million is the official number. The most important personage within this pantheon is, according to most writers, the Sun-Goddess, Ama-terasu. She is the official ancestress of every emperor or mikado.

Before considering the last historical epoch of this survey - from the Renaissance to the present time - it might be well to pause and to try and discover what was the cause of this temporary loss of Matriarchal Polytheism.

The answer which I would suggest is as follows: - This loss is a symptom which accompanied a certain stage in the development of Humanity.

Thus, Primitive Humanity is analogous to the child. Now we know that the child - newly arrived from other realms of nature - has relatively greater psychic faculties. The child can see and hear things which an older person cannot see and hear. The child has closer contact with the realms of spirits, ghosts, gnomes, fairies and so on. Similarly, primitive mankind - and all the ancient traditions attest to this - had a wider psychic range of consciousness than is evident in later epochs of history. The old Mythologies refer to nature spirits, giants and giantesses, strange composite animal beings who can talk, ancestral spirits, gods and goddesses. Primitive humanity was therefore naturally polytheistic; for who can make a legal distinction between a powerful ancestral spirit and a deity? Nor is there any real need to distinguish between someone in an earthly body and someone in an etheric or astral body; - in either case they can make their presence felt.

We come now to the stage which we might describe as Homo Adolescens. This corresponds of course, to the adolescent. Now the adolescent's main purpose, in this world, is to learn; and learning requires one's undivided attention; other interests must temporarily be put aside. The same applies to mankind at the stage of Homo Adolescens. The main purpose of mankind is to learn: to learn the arts

of civilization, to learn to use his intellect, to learn to train his emotions, to learn, in fact to adapt to earthly life. Other interests must be set aside. And so we find that Nature, in her wisdom, removes many of man's psychic faculties. The other worlds with all their denizens became almost a closed book. This obviously affects the current religion; without psychic faculties it is difficult enough to accept even one deity, let alone an immense Pantheon.

Then we come to the stage of Homo Sapiens. This corresponds to the adult; learning gives place to living. The area of consciousness may now again get broader. Nature restores men's psychic faculties. And it is an interesting fact, that if we look at those men who have successfully learnt - who have achieved fame in their professions - we find that they often turn to psychism. To take some examples: among scientists there is Sir Oliver Lodge who took to spiritualism; among authors there is Conan Doyle, another spiritualist; W.B. Yeats, a leading member of the Order of the Golden Dawn; A.E. (George Russell) a writer and artist and also a visionary; and a great modern figure in spiritualism, Lord Dowding.

As so, as with the individual, so with Humanity:- Nature is restoring the psychic faculties which are part of the endowment of Homo Sapiens.

Here, then, is a tentative theory which might explain the loss and also the return of the Cult of the Goddess.

We come now to the last of the historical periods to be considered - the era from the Renaissance to the present time. We might summarize this by saying it is the era of the Return of the Cult of the Goddess.

We have, of course, many foretastes of this Matriarchal revival in the Middle Ages.

We find, for instance, in the Kabalah a kind of miniature pantheon. Among the ten (or more) Sephiroth we leave some female figures who have many of the characteristics of goddesses. Thus Malkuth is called "The Queen, The Bride"; Binah is "The Dark Mother".

At the same time the demand for Matriarchal religion showed itself in another quarter in the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary. More and more she was accorded the attributes and the titles of the Goddesses. Thus "The Queen of Heaven" is a title of Ishtar, Astarte, Isis, Hera and Juno; "Sedes Sapientiae", Seat of Wisdom, is an echo of Sophia, who herself was enshrined in the great Cathedral Church of the Hagia Sophia at Byzantium. "Stella Maris", Star of the Sea, is a title of the great Egyptian Goddess Sothis, the Star of Egypt - Sirius or Canicula, the Dog-star; this is also a title of the Egyptian goddess Hathor. Yet it is a strange fact, that the actual acknowledgment of the Divinity of the Blessed Virgin Mary came from a different quarter. I am referring to the great Johann von Goethe; and I quote from the last verse of "Faust".

"Dr Marianus (prostrate, adoring):
Penitents, look up elate,
Whence she beams salvation;
Gratefully to blessed fate
Grow, in re-creation!
Be our souls, as they have been,
Dedicate to Thee!
Virgin Holy, Mother, Queen.
Goddess, gracious be!"

Among the last words are:
"The Woman-soul leadeth us . . . on!"

The Virgin Mary has also a place in the Indian Pantheon. She is worshipped as a goddess in some parts of India under the name of Bibi Miriam.

With the coming of the Renaissance, as we know, many of the old deities were "rediscovered". It is true, of course, that they were first confined to literature and art. However, once their images are made, once their names appear in writing, the deities soon find their way back into religion. Thus in the later Renaissance, what were once merely figures of art and literature, become real personalities; the old classical Pantheon reappears. Amongst the returning goddesses are the Graces and the Hours; Venus is again acknowledged as the Goddess of Love; the old Roman Charity and Justice

reappear in different guises. In fact, reading James Thomson's "Seasons", we could be back in the time of Virgil with the gods and goddesses of Rome. It is interesting to note that Thomson was one of the early members of the revived Order of Druids.

We can see how seriously these Neo-classical deities were taken when we look at what took place in the French Revolution.

The following descriptions are given by Dr. Brewer:

"Reason, The Goddess of Reason. On November 10th 1793 a festival was held in Notre Dame de Paris in honour of Reason and Liberty, when women represented these 'goddesses'. Mlle. Candaille wore a red Phrygian cap, a white frock, a blue mantle, and tricolour ribbons. Her head was filleted with oak-leaves. . In the cathedral a sort of temple was erected on a mound and in this 'temple of Philosophy' Mlle. Candaille was installed. Young girls crowned with oak-leaves were her attendants, and sang hymns in her honour."

Another Ceremony is described:

"The Goddess of Reason was enthroned by the French Convention at the suggestion of Chaumette. . The wife of Momoro was the best of these goddesses. The Cathedral of Notre Dame was chosen for the purpose. The procession was attended by the municipal officers and national guards, while troops of ballet girls carried torches of truth. Incredible as it may seem, Gobet (the Archbishop of Paris) and nearly all the clergy stripped themselves of their canonicals, and wearing red night caps, joined in this (ceremony). . So did Julien of Toulouse, a Calvinistic minister."

The significance of the next ceremony to be described will be seen when we come to the section concerned with the inner Mysteries.

"Liberty. The Goddess of Liberty. On December 10th 1793, Mlle. Malliard, an actress, was selected to personify the "Goddess of Liberty". Being brought to Notre Dame. Paris, she was seated on the altar, and lighted a large candle to signify that Liberty was the 'Light of the World'."

Closely following the Neo-Classical era came the Romantic Revival. Here we have the first stages of the major revival of polytheism. While before this the deities were confined to the Classical Pantheon, now a whole series of ancient religions was rediscovered. This time they were presented to the public in essentially romantic and glamorous forms.

The Pre-Raphaelites re-presented the romantic and mysterious image of Woman. Gabriel Dante Rossetti painted the enchantress, the Lady Lilith, and that symbolic figure in green, - the witches' colour - Astarte Syriaca. William Morris went to Iceland to explore the old Norse sagas, with Odin and his consort Frigg, the Norns - the Goddesses of Fate, and many more. Wagner presented such figures as the Valkyries, Brunhild and Isolde.

Then came Mme. Blavatsky with "Isis Unveiled" and "The Secret Doctrine". The Egyptian Deities were now no longer seen as archaeological remains; they became living and potent personalities. At the same time she presented the great Indian Pantheon and familiarized the West with such potent goddesses as Devi (or Kali), Lakshmi, Sarasvati and the metaphysical goddess Kundalini.

Archaeology brought to notice the Great Mother of Crete. Tutankhamen's tomb made familiar such goddesses as Isis, Nephthys, Neith, Selket and Maat.

One of the more important contributions to the knowledge of the Goddess came with the new interest in the Occult Orders, particularly the Order of the Golden Dawn. Included in the rituals are such figures as Isis, the cat-goddess Bast, the sky-goddess Nut, the mysterious Cabirian goddess, Axiokersa, the Roman Ceres and even the Indian Prakriti. It is interesting to note that W.B. Yeats held the office of "Imperator" in the Isis-Urania Lodge of London.

The growing nationalist movements awoke a new interest in the indigenous religions. Thus in Ireland we had the "Celtic Twilight" movement; this re-invoked the ancient deities of Ireland: Cessair, or Cesara, whom Professor Macalister describes as "the Great Mother of the Irish People;" Samhain, referred to by O'Reilly as a goddess of the ancient Irish, after whom is named the month of Samhain or November, Dana, of the Tuatha de Danaan, "Mother of the Deities of Ireland",' who figures in the writings of A.E. and James Stephens, the triad of queen-goddesses, Banba, Fodhla and Eire, also

Grainne - perhaps the ancient sun-goddess, and the queens Maeve and Niamh.

Another example of the revival of the old national religion is seen in an island in many way parallel to Ireland, having its own native tradition. I should like to quote an article which appeared earlier this year in the magazine "Quest", written by A.E. St. George. "Many Quest readers will be surprised to know that this small island (Iceland) has not. . one official religion but two. Only last year it was officially announced that established Christianity would henceforth share its honours with the ancient gods, Odin, Thor and so on. ."

Another contemporary manifestation of the renewed cult of the Goddess is seen in the "Perpetual Festival Calendar", published by the Shrine of Wisdom, Fintry, Surrey. This is now used by many people, and we can say it is ecumenical in the true sense of the word. The following are the main festivals dedicated to the Goddesses: -

"February 1st - Brighde, Celtic Goddess of Youth . .
March 21st - Vernal Equinox. Oestre, Goddess of Spring and Dawn . .
March 25th - Our Sovereign Lady, Isis, Lady Day, The Virgin Mother . .
April 5th - Kwan-shi-yin, Goddess of Mercy (China) and Kwan-On (Japan). .
May 1st - Beltane Day. The Great World Mother.
June 21st - Oraea, Goddess of Summer, Summer Festival and Solstice . .
August 1st - Ceres, Demeter, Goddess of Fertility . .
August 23rd - Nemesis . .
August 25th - Isis, Divine Life, The Great Mother. .
September 2nd - The Greater Eleusinian Mysteries, first day . .
September 23rd - Karpo, Goddess of Autumn . . Autumn Festival and Equinox . .
October 28th - Hathor, Aspect of the World Mother . .
November 1st - 'Peace Fire' of the Druids, Samhain . .
November 22nd - Diana, Artemis, Goddess of Nature . .
December 3rd - Cybele, Rhea, Goddess of Cosmic Life, Bona Dea the Good Goddess . .
December 4th - Pallas Athene, Minerva, Goddess of Wisdom . .
December 31st - Vesta, Hestia."

And so I think we can say that the Return of the Goddesses is now well under way.

I shall now begin on the second part of this lecture: - A description of the Goddesses themselves, their public and inner rites and the ethical effects of their cult.

Before showing the slides, I should like to draw your attention to a fact well-known to those acquainted with magic and the occult sciences: - An image can be ensouled by the divinity it is intended to represent.

In the case of female images the goddess can use her image to transmit to her devotee the particular power in which she specializes.

I should now like to take this opportunity of thanking Mr. George Gossip for the trouble he has taken in taking the photographs and preparing the slides; I should also like to thank Mr. Swadesh Poorun for arranging these slides and showing them.

(41 slides were then shown. These were of images of goddesses representing many different nations: they included ancient, medieval and modern images).

We come now to the rituals, and first those which are public.

One of the features of these public ceremonies is that they are occasions of joy and happiness. People would attend because they wanted to, - as far as I know there was no compulsion - , the crowds were drawn by interest. Thus it is recorded that more than 700,000 people would regularly attend the great festivals of the cat-goddess Bast, in Egypt.

The best way of describing these public ceremonies, would, I think, be to read some contemporary accounts.

I shall start by reading a description by a priest of Isis, Lucius Apuleius, of the festival inaugurating the beginning of the Sailing Season at Corinth. (Graves' translation is mainly used).

Isis speaks thus to Lucius in a vision: -

"Listen attentively to my orders.

"The eternal laws of religion devote to my worship the day born from this night. Tomorrow my priests offer me the first-fruits of the new sailing by dedicating a ship to me: for at this season the storms of winter lose their force, the leaping waves subside and the sea becomes navigable once more. ."

The events of the next morning are then described.

"Presently, the vanguard of the grand procession came in view. It was composed of a number of people in fancy dress of their own choosing; a man wearing a soldier's sword-belt; another dresses as a huntsman; . . a pretended magistrate . . a philosopher . . a fisherman . . Oh, yes, a tame she-bear, dressed like a woman, carried in a sedan-chair; and an ape in a straw hat and a saffron coloured Phrygian cloak . . finally an ass with wings glued to its shoulders, and a man seated on its rump; you would have laughed like anything at that pair, supposed to be Pegasus and Bellerophon. These fancy-dress comedians kept running in and out of the crowd, and behind them came the procession proper.

"At the head walked women crowned with flowers, who pulled more flowers out of the folds of their beautiful white dresses and scattered them along the road; their joy in the Saviouress appeared in every gesture. Next came women with polished mirrors tied to the back of their heads, which gave all who followed them the illusion of coming to meet the Goddess, rather than marching before her. Next, a party of women with ivory combs in their hands who made a pantomime of combing the Goddess's royal hair, and another party with bottles of perfume who sprinkled the road with balsam and other precious perfumes; and behind them a mixed company of women and men.

"Next came musicians with pipes and flutes, followed by a party of carefully chosen choir-boys singing a hymn in which an inspired poet had explained the origin of the procession, and a number of beadles and whifflers crying: 'Make way there, way for the Goddess!'. Then followed a great crowd of the Goddess's initiates, men and women of all classes and every age. The women wore their hair tied up in glossy coils under gauze head-dresses; the men's heads were completely shaven . . and they carried rattles of brass, silver and even gold, which gave a shrill and ceaseless tinkling.

"The leading priests . . carried the oracular emblems of the deity. The chief priest held a bright lamp . . . it was a golden boat-shaped affair with a tall tongue of flame mounting from a hole in the centre. The second priest held an auxilaria (i.e. a kind of ritual pot), in each of his hands - the name refers to the Goddess's providence in helping her devotees. The third priest carried a miniature palm tree with gold leaves . . The fourth carried a model of the left hand . . which is an emblem of justice because the left hand seems more impartial than the right. He also held a golden vessel, rounded in the shape of a woman's breast, from the nipple of which a thin stream of milk fell to the ground. The fifth carried a winnowing fan woven with golden rods . . Then came a man, not one of the five, carrying a wine-jar.

"Next in the procession followed those deities that deigned to walk on human feet. Here was the frightening messenger of the deities of Heaven and of the deities of the Dead: Anubis with a black face on one side, golden on the other, walking erect. . Behind . . a man carrying on his shoulders the Goddess as fruitful Mother of us all. Then along came a priest with a box containing the secret implements of her wonderful cult. Another fortunate priest had an ancient emblem of her godhead hidden in the top of his robe. . the originality of its design called for admiration and awe. It was a symbol of the sublime . . mysteries of the Goddess.

"When the Chief Priest had ended his inspired speech, I joined the throng of devotees and went forward with the procession.

"Meanwhile the pageant wound slowly on and we approached the sea-shore. . There the divine emblems were arranged in due order and there . . the priest blessed and dedicated to the Goddess a beautifully built ship".

The ship was then launched. The account . . ends thus: -

"When she stood so far out to sea that we could not longer keep her in view, the priests took up the holy emblems again and started happily back towards the temple in the same orderly procession as before."

We come now to a different part of the world and to a different era. The following account was written about 160 years ago and describes a Chinese agricultural festival.

"This is also celebrated on the same day throughout the empire. In the morning the governor of every city comes forth from his palace crowned with flowers, and enters his chair amidst the noise of different instruments; a great number of people attending, as is usual on all such occasions. The chair is surrounded by litters covered with silk carpets, on which are represented either some illustrious persons who have supported and encouraged agriculture, or some historical painting on the same subject. The streets are hung with carpets, triumphal arches are erected at certain distances, lanterns everywhere displayed, and all the houses illuminated. During the ceremony a figure resembling a cow, made of baked earth, with gilt horns, is carried in procession, and of such enormous magnitude that 40 men are scarce sufficient to support it. . Labourers, with their implements of husbandry, march behind; and the procession is closed by a number of comedians and people in masks. The governor advances towards the Eastern gate, and returns in the same manner. The cow is then stripped of its ornaments, a prodigious number of earthen calves taken from its belly and distributed among the people; after which the large figure is broken in pieces and distributed in the same manner. The ceremony is ended by an oration in praise of agriculture, in which the governor endeavours to excite his hearers to the practice of that useful art".

For the last example we shall look at an ancient festival which very much concerns us here in Wexford, or Loc gCarman. This festival was founded by a certain lady by the name of Carman, about 2,500 years ago. First, I think it would be appropriate to give some details concerning Carman. I shall start with a reference by Borlase.

"We have already noticed the association of witches with dolmens and cairns in the Iberian peninsula and Holland. . The position held by certain venerated women in the social systems, as well as in the mythology of the northern nations, is a subject too wide to be entered upon here" . . then. after giving several instances he continues: "similarly . . Dian, and Dubh and Dothur, who came from Athens to Wexford, had their mother Carman with them, who, by 'charms and spells and incantations' . . it was their mother's name which this place bore. In a poem called the 'Fair of Carman' Greek merchants are said to have traded there."

According to Professor Macalister, Carman was one of the chief places of the Assemblies. Concerning the Fair of Carman, Macalister quotes some verses from the Dindshenchas from which the following is an extract. - (it is dramatic to visualize these events going on in this very place, perhaps 2,500 years ago.)

"Carman, site of generous Fair
Here is music trumpet, horn,
Drum and pipe the Fair adorn.
Here is poetry - the bard
Seeks and gains his due reward,
Here romance - exhaustless theme,
Legends, vague as in a dream:
Here is wisdom - proverbs sage,
Satires, lore of seer and mage.
Here is history - tales of old,
Ever new, though often told. ."

According to Dr. Anne Ross, "the feast was held in her honour afterwards according to her wishes".

Of this type of festival McAllister writes: "They were doubtless the festivals of a pastoral and agricultural people, designed to increase by magico -- religious means the fertility of flocks, herds and fields."

Before leaving the public rituals, I should like to read a hymn written about 2,500 years ago. It is in honour of the Babylonian goddess Beltis. You will notice in this Hymn some passages which later reappear.

"Shining Beltia, exalted and most high . .
She accuses and intercedes.
She humbles the rich and vindicates the cause of the lowly;

She overthrows the enemy, he who does not revere her godhead;
She delivers the captive, and takes the hand of the fallen;
Bless the servant who honours thy name;
Fix the destiny of the king who fears thee;
Give life to the children of Babel, thy dependants;
Let them tell thy glory, let them praise thy dominion;
Let them speak of thy prowess, let them glorify thy name;
Have mercy on the servant who blesses thee,
Take his hand in need and suffering;
In disease and distress give him life;
May he go ever in joy and delight;
May he tell thy prowess to the people of the whole world".

We come now to the esoteric rites of the Goddess, known as the Mysteries.

Now the basic purpose of these rites is to bring the devotee into close connexion with the Goddess; and here he receives from her those powers of which she is the Origin.

The first of these powers which I would like to mention is that known as "the power of the altar" or "the power of the blood".

There is no need here to emphasize the importance attached to this substance in almost all religions. Not only does it increase vitality but it also effects the other worlds; it is able to build forms for the spirits or shades dwelling there, and helps them to manifest and communicate.

The great question, therefore, in all religions is: - How can this substance be obtained? On the answer given to this depends the whole ethics of that religion.

In Matriarchal religion the answer is obvious - it is an answer which does not involve sacrifice, either actual or symbolic; this power is given in a natural way.

I should like to read a passage in this connexion, from "The Goddesses of Chaldaea Syria and Egypt." It is concerned with the altar.

"The altar, in the cult of the Goddess, is the place where she or her priestess gives 'the power of the altar'. Here this potency is given in a natural and living way in her monthly courses".

And so the great symbol of the power of the altar in Matriarchal religion is the natural and the beautiful symbol of the Moon.

These ceremonies, in which the Goddess gives her sustenance are known as the Inner Mysteries.

I shall now give some descriptions of these rites.

In Martin Larson's "The Religion of the Occident" is the passage. "The Eucharist of Isis consisted of the bread which she had given mankind and the milk which had flowed from her bosom; the chalice from which the initiate drank this potion was a cup formed in the shape of a woman's breast".

Here again we see the sustenance given in a natural way.

Another analogous ceremony was performed by certain Gnostic sects. This is connected with Charis (perhaps the Greek-goddess Charis, wife of Hephaistos, or perhaps a separate Gnostic female figure). Concerning this ceremony Gerald Massey writes: "Marcus (the Gnostic) spoke of the 'blood of Charis' and taught that 'the Eucharist was a celebration of Charis'". It is, of course, from this Greek feminine noun, Charis, that the word Eucharist is etymologically derived.

Such, then, are the Mysteries of the Goddess as giver of "the power of the altar".

We come now to the deeper Mysteries. Here the Goddess gives a Power which is confined exclusively to her or her priestesses.

This power is known in many different religions by many different names. Perhaps the name most familiar to us is one of Indian origin. - Kundalini.

A description of this power is given by Bishop Leadbeater. First, he stresses that in all Indian Literature Kundalini is referred to as "She". He writes as follows:

"Kundalini plays a much larger part in daily life than most of us have hitherto supposed; there is far gentler manifestation which is doing its appointed work day and night while we are entirely unconscious of its presence and activity."

Concerning the more powerful manifestations of Kundalini, the following are some descriptions which I have gathered from various sources:

"The stronger effects of Kundalini are experienced only when the appropriate stage of ethical growth has been reached; this is necessary in order that the emotions the intellect and the body may be capable of adapting to these manifestations. Some of the workings of Kundalini may be felt physically, either as a dull glow or a stronger burning sensation; sometimes there is a feeling of tingling of different degrees of intensity. Occasionally there may be felt an electric shock of immense violence. Kundalini may also greatly increase a person's sensitivity and power of intuition and imagination. Another accompanying effect is the powerful stimulation of amorous passions. There is also an unusual degree of awareness coupled with intense activity of all the mental faculties. When manifesting powerfully Kundalini also produces paranormal perception and added psychic powers; according to Leadbeater these include the ability to communicate with beings of other worlds, especially those of the lower realms where the density of Kundalini is greatest. As Leadbeater describes it, those who are in the process of adapting to the manifestations of Kundalini feel as though in the grip of and at the mercy of "a tremendous force".

I should now like to turn to a description of Kundalini in her more personal aspect.

Some of you may remember a book, first published about forty years ago, called "Bengal Lancer"; it was written by an officer named Yeats-Brown. In this book he records some of his strange experiences in India. Among these is an encounter with an Indian priestess or yogini by name Hastini.

" 'Come Sahib, you are cold.'

"She drew her arm through mine, and we returned to the hut. The glow of her body warmed me through and through.

"A curious comprehension seemed to link us, but whatever this understanding was, she was its mistress as she was its begetter: she could make me burn or freeze, but I did not feel that I had any effect on her.

"She began to speak of that serpent-lore of the Tantriks which is at once so mystical and so material that it baffles the Western mind.

" 'The goddess Kundalini is more subtle than the fibre of the lotus', she said . . . 'curled three-and-a-half times round Herself. . . Then She uncoils Herself, and raises Her head, and enters the royal road of the spine, piercing the mystic centres, until she reaches the brain. Those things are not to be understood in a day . . . then . . . you taste Her nectar, and know that She is Life. . . '

"Hastini held me as if I had been entranced . I could not take my eyes from hers; they were my gates of pearl. . . "

And so it is that, for the devotee of the Goddess, the question is not, "How can I get religious experience?"; it is, rather, "how can I deal with the immense forces involved - the great Cosmic Power which the Goddess begins to unleash?"

Kundalini is one of the forms of this Creative Power. But there is another even more basic form: this is associated with the Tantric rites, and is known as Shakti.

According to Macdonell's Sanskrit Dictionary, Shakti, a feminine noun, is defined as inactive power or female energy. In the "Secret Doctrine" and other works are the definitions: "generative power, wife, yoni (vulva)." Evans-Wentz, in the context of Tibet, speaks of "Shakti Power or divine universal force personified as a Mother-Goddess".

I should like to read a passage from "The Mythologies of the Ancient World." In the section on India Norman Brown writes:

"The feminine principle is known as Shakti, and worshippers of that principle as the supreme principle are called Shaktas (sakta). Such worship is part of the whole large section of Hinduism known as Tantrism, because its texts are called Tantra. It is centred around Shiva and Devi, though every god has his shakti without which he is powerless. As a much esteemed mediaeval Ode to Devi says, 'If Shiva is united with Shakti, he is able to exert his power as Lord: if not, the god is not able to stir'. Speaking of the power of Shakti, the same author writes: "So dominant is it that it is only through Devi's grace that all the various other gods have their powers. Her motherly concern . . . preserves the universe with all its helpless dependent creatures".

Now the worship of Shakti is by no means confined to the East. This worship, under other names, is also the basis of the greater Western rites. These include - the most important of all - the Eleusinian Mysteries; these rites centre about the two goddesses, Demeter and Persephone (often in this context known as Kore, the Maiden).

It is a curious fact that the later writers on this subject seem, generally, to have lost sight of the original purpose of these Mysteries. But the ancients knew very well what they were all about. We can see this in the following short summary by Hargrave Jennings: "According to Theodoret, Arnobius and Clemens of Alexandria, the Yoni . . . of the Hindus was the sole object of veneration in the Mysteries of Eleusis".

And so, with these Mysteries we have come to an appropriate place at which to end our survey of the inner rituals of the Goddess.

There now remains to be considered the ethical effects of the Cult of the Goddess on her devotees.

This can be summarized very briefly in those words of Apuleius, whose life was dedicated to Isis: "For her service is perfect freedom".

I should like to give a few examples of the way in which this freedom manifests.

First, there is freedom of Conscience (I am using conscience in the sense of a Divine guide in all matters concerning ethics).

Now among the great hindrances to conscience are those rigid codes of duties and prohibitions claiming universal obedience. These codes are by no means wrong in their contents - part of them may be good; they become wrong when they claim greater authority than conscience.

In Matriarchal religion, and indeed in Polytheism generally, we find few if any hard and fast rules. Guidance is given, as it were, empirically; it is given in each particular case as it occurs.

One of the effects of this freedom of conscience is the removal of an immense burden of artificial guilt.

Taking the subject of Sexuality: - There is no need to be a psychoanalyst to see how great are the frustrations from which people suffer on this account.

In the Cult of the Goddess, Sexuality is regarded - not as an inexplicable and embarrassing intrusion into normal life - but as a basic and deeply religious rite.

Hence every Pantheon has a goddess or goddesses of Love. Thus Mylitta of the Assyrians is called bluntly "The Goddess of Carnal Love" and Rati of India "The Goddess of Sexual Passions".

Not only are these goddesses the Guardians and Protectresses of Love, to defend it against unwarranted interference - they also act as teachers of love as an art or science.. in fact they act as inspirers of sexual love in all its natural forms.

This freedom from artificial guilt manifests also, in another, and quite different realm - that of Money.

It is a curious fact, that while most people are basically fond of money, few are honest enough to admit it. There is a tendency to feel that some sort of apology is called for, that people should be "above money". The word "materialism" has generally got a bad name, though why this is so, I do not

know.

In the Cult of the Goddess we find a very different attitude to money and materialism generally. The ancient Romans worshipped Ops, the Goddess of Plenty, Riches and Power (hence the word opulence). She has a very important place in the Roman Pantheon, being wife of Saturn and mother of Juno and Jupiter. The Indians worship Lakshmi or Shri, the latter name meaning "prosperity, fortune, wealth". At her festival the merchants bring their ledgers and ask the Goddess to bless them with favourable figures.

As well as freeing from artificial guilt, the Cult of the Goddess brings with it certain positive ethical qualities.

One of these qualities might be described as "Reverence for life". Of course, this is something which is wanted in nearly all religious systems, but cannot be brought to its logical conclusion. In the Matriarchal religion there is no such hindrance; it does not have to carry that terrible burden, - sacrifice.

Another ethical characteristic of the Cult of the Goddess is Toleration. On this subject I have spoken to many historians; and I find that it is generally agreed that there is virtually no record of a sectarian war among polytheistic peoples. I should like in this connexion to quote the following passage written by the early sociologist, David Hume.

"Idolatry is attended with this evident advantage . . it renders all the various deities, as well as rites, ceremonies, or traditions, compatible with each other . . The Romans commonly adopted the gods of the conquered people, and never disputed the attributes of those topical and national deities in whose territories they resided".

We can see the religious toleration put into practice by some of the most sophisticated Roman emperors. They wanted a Pantheon in which would be represented all the deities of the Empire. It would not be too far-fetched to imagine their ideal Pantheon where the Hebrew Jehovah could, for instance, take his place beside the Roman Minerva.

Lastly, I should like to mention another ethical characteristic - in many ways associated with toleration - and that is, Balance.

Take, for instance, the words "night, darkness," and especially the word "black". So often, we see these words misused as synonyms for "bad"; for instance, "black market", "black-mail", "black-listed" and so on. In the Cult of the Goddess night, darkness and black are respected; Night is seen as the mother of Day and Light.

To take another example, the words "left-hand", "sinister" and 'widdershins": In the Cult of the Goddess these are not misused as terms of opprobrium; they are honoured. They represent, in this hemisphere, the monthly course of the Moon round the Zodiac.

Similarly, the number thirteen, is not "unlucky". In fact, in the Cult of the Goddess it is one of her symbols; it represents the thirteen lunations of the year.

Finally, to take the words "down" and "lower" - again so often misused as a synonym for worsening; we see this in such phrases as "going down in the world", "fall in profits", "low standards of behavior". In the Cult of the Goddess the Deep is a place of honour, and is associated particularly with the abode of the Goddess. In most polytheistic religions the Underworld is the place where Fate is decreed; and it is well to remember that the Elysian Fields are in Hades or the Lower Worlds.

I should like to end this lecture by reading an address to the goddess Isis by her priest, Lucius Apuleius.

"I fell prostrate at the Goddess's feet.

"Holiest of the Holy, perpetual comfort of mankind, you whose bountiful grace nourishes the whole world; whose heart turns towards all those in sorrow and tribulation as a mother's to her children; you who take no rest by night, no rest by day, but are always at hand to succour the distressed by land and sea. . Your hand alone can disentangle the knotted skeins of fate . . The gods above adore you, the gods below do homage to you, you set the orb of heaven spinning about the poles, you give light

to the sun, you govern the universe. . At your voice the stars move, the seasons recur, the spirits of earth rejoice, the elements obey. My eloquence is unequal to praising you as I ought. . my voice to uttering all that I think of your majesty-no, not even if I had a thousand tongues. . and could speak for ever. Nevertheless, I will do as much as I can in devotion to you; I will keep your divine countenance always before my eyes and the knowledge of your divinity. . "

EPILOGUE

Apart from expressing my great appreciation of the evocative words we have just heard - may I just add that Mr. Durdin-Robertson has been instrumental in the creation and gradual development of a shrine and centre for creativity - of a musical, poetic and artistic nature where the magical Bardic tradition of our forefathers can be continued in the harmonies of Music and Song, where things of Beauty may be carved, painted and depicted and ritual festivals celebrated.

Each Goddess would have had local festivals in her honour and indeed, typically, from October 31st to November 2nd was the Festival of the very ancient Irish Goddess, Samhain.

By participating in this Wexford Festival, a time-honoured tradition is being kept alive. Enchantment & inspiration are fostered and so - perhaps - the Goddess is still with us.

The speakers were then thanked by Mr. Mark Feenan.

The lecture was organized by Mrs. Craig, a director of the Wexford Arts Centre.