

# The Eleusinian Mysteries

**T**his paper is no more than a write-up of notes I made for a group discussion of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Firstly I give the myth around which the mysteries were based. I think I have told the basic story with accuracy, but there are complications and additions I have left out. These additions make no material difference to the overall tale, and are actually bits and pieces of other myths tacked onto the main story at various times in history.

The second section gives a brief outline of the basic format of the Lesser and Greater Mysteries. This is to provide a context for my discussion of the more important matters, at least as far as Golden Dawn initiates are concerned, which are the mystic initiations themselves. Most of what is known of the Eleusinian Mysteries are the places and details of the exoteric celebrations; the more interesting parts of the mysteries were jealously guarded secrets that were not to be revealed to the outside World, and so little detail is openly available.

In a third section I give a brief outline of the names and roles of the major officers of the Mysteries. This is interesting because the titles of many of the officers live on in the *dramatis personae* of more modern rituals.

Finally, I discuss, as far as we know, what went on in the secretive initiations before drawing a set of conclusions concerning the Mysteries, conclusions based on Gnostic and Golden Dawn knowledge, as well as on clues drawn from the myth itself and the writings of famous Greeks who underwent initiation. Throughout the myth and writings of the ancients there are clues given which help those

seriously interested to work out what the Eleusinian myths and initiations are trying to convey.

From the foregoing it will be gleaned that the final section is tentative and speculative in nature, and, as such, open to doubt and revision.

## The Myth

One day Persephone (Proserpine, Cora, Kore) was gathering flowers with a group of companions, and all was well until Persephone started to pick a lovely bunch of Narcissi. Pluto (Hades), God of the Underworld, noticed her, thought her very beautiful and, with the permission of Zeus, abducted, raped and carried Persephone away to his Underworld abode of gloom.

Demeter (Ceres), the mother of Persephone, rushed to assist her daughter, but arrived too late, not even able to catch a glimpse of her seducer. For nine days and nights Demeter, torch in hand, wandered in search of her daughter, but was unable to find the slightest trace of her. Helios, the Sun God, eventually told Demeter of the abduction by Pluto, and the permission given for the act by Zeus.

Demeter was outraged and left Olympus, disguised herself as an old woman and came to Earth to search for her daughter. Utterly exhausted, after much wandering, Demeter sat down on the edge of a well at Eleusis. Her state of fatigue and depression was noticed by Keleos, the ruler of the land, who proceeded to offer her care and a shoulder to cry on. As a reward for the kindness of the people of Eleusis, Demeter revealed herself to be a Goddess and gave instructions for a

temple to be built, promising she would give full details of the rites to be performed there. She also instructed mankind in the cultivation of corn enabling man to turn away from a barbaric life, able only to gather the wild fruits that could be found by chance growing on the mountains and the wilderness, and turn instead to the development of a civic society that made the fruits available to all.

The temple was built and the Eleusinian mysteries were born. Demeter remained annoyed with Zeus however and made the Earth barren with her grief. Nothing would grow. Food ran short and no offerings could be made to the Gods. The Gods complained to Zeus and he was forced to intercede and insist that Pluto return Persephone to her mother.

Pluto relented and decided to let Persephone return to her mother, but before she left, Pluto gave her four Pomegranate seeds for sustenance on her journey. Once back from the land of shadows, Persephone met Demeter at Eleusis. Demeter asked her if she had taken anything from Pluto and Persephone told her of the Pomegranate seeds. Pluto demanded, and Demeter was forced to concede, that Persephone should reside with Pluto for four months of the year, one month for each seed taken.



**Demeter and Persephone reunited, c. 450 BCE**

In celebration of her daughter's return, Demeter allowed the Earth to become fertile again, but all now falls barren for the four months of the year that Persephone is in the Underworld Land of Shadows with Pluto. Persephone is now the Queen of the Underworld and rules the realm of all departed spirits.

## **The Mystic Rites of Eleusis**

The mysteries were divided into two broad categories, the Lesser and the Greater Mysteries. Both celebrations involved initiation, but it was not allowed for a person to approach the Greater Mysteries until they had been initiated into the Lesser Mysteries. In the Lesser Mysteries the drama concentrated on the return of Persephone to her mother at Eleusis, whereas the Greater Mysteries concentrated on her descent to the infernal regions. In the Lesser Mysteries Persephone was greatly honoured, but in the Greater Mysteries Demeter was the main object of veneration. Both sets of celebrations demanded a truce from all warfare for a period preceding and following the celebrations, a fifty five day truce was needed in the case of the Greater Mysteries.

The mystic initiations were open to all Athenians, later all Greeks, and later still all interested persons of either sex and of age. The lesser mysteries could be undertaken by children if they were presented by their parents.

### **The Lesser Mysteries.**

There is a myth that Heracles applied for admission to the Eleusinian Mysteries, but was rejected because he had led a poor life up to that time. The Lesser Mysteries tended to begin with one of the officers announcing in the town the following words, reputedly those spoken to Heracles at the time of his rejection.

“You are forbidden to enter here; your heart is cruel, your hands are stained with crime. Go! Repair the wrong you have done; repent of your evil doings, and then come with pure heart and clean hands, and the doors of our mysteries shall be opened to you.”

The Lesser Mysteries were celebrated over a three day period, the 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> of the Month Anthsterion, which is about 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> February in modern reckoning. Some writers claim it was in late March or early April, and I quite like the idea of it being over the period of the Vernal Equinox, to mirror the Greater Mysteries occurrence over the Autumn Equinox. The first act was a sacrifice to Demeter and to Persephone.

The object of the Lesser Mysteries was to show the condition of the Human Soul, impure, trapped in a body and immersed in a material World. Once this state was recognised, by the candidates for initiation, the object became one of impressing upon them the need to change, to purify themselves



and to dedicate themselves to a new way of living. The return of Persephone to the light was seen as an allegory of the rebirth of man to a new life, with a new body, having broken all ties with the life that had gone before.

Much of the Lesser Mysteries was taken up with imparting religious knowledge and symbolism that would enable candidates to understand the Greater mysteries when they were approached.

### **The Greater Mysteries**

The Greater mysteries were celebrated once a year at Eleusis over a ten day period commencing in the month Boedromion, which is the period over the Autumn Equinox.

**Day 1** – This day was known as, “The Gathering” or “The Assembly”.

Archon Basileus presided over rites of sacrifice to Demeter and Persephone. Following this the hierocceryx made the proclamation:

“Come, whosoever is clean of all pollution and whose soul has not consciousness of sin. Come, whosoever hath lived a life of righteousness and justice. Come, all ye who are pure of heart and of hand, and whose speech can be understood. Whosoever hath not clean hands, a pure soul, and an intelligible voice must not assist at the mysteries.”

All candidates for initiation were then made to wash their hands in consecrated water. Following this, the hierocceryx insisted on secrecy regarding the proceedings lest they call down punishment from the Gods.

All had to dress in special regalia, and the list of prohibitions suggests it should be as simple as possible. Cosmetics were not allowed. The emphasis was placed on the real you rather

than on “a you” that you would prefer to present. All then underwent a purification by fire.

**Day 2** – Halade mystae – to the sea, ye mystae.

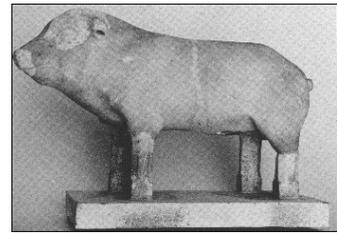
This was a day where the candidates were made to confess all sins and then ritually bathe for as long as necessary to purify themselves. Bathing was always done in the sea, or in sacred lakes. The day was dedicated to Chronos/Saturn. Saturn was said to be concerned with pure intellect, and slowed everyone down and made them take stock of their lives. All candidates had to carry a small pig to be ritually bathed with them, a pig that would be sacrificed the following day.

After the bathing all candidates were dressed in a fawn-skin robe.

**Day 3** – The day of mourning. It symbolised the depression of Demeter in not being able to find her daughter.

The third day was a very solemn occasion, any form of jollity or entertainment was out of the question. Everyone was compelled to fast the whole day. At nightfall all partook of a meal of foods sacred to Demeter; seed cakes,

corn, honey mixed with milk, and pomegranates.



The sacrificial pig

After the meal the Archon Basileus led a sacrifice for the sake of the City and the state. Once the general sacrifice had taken place each individual candidate had to sacrifice the pig they bathed the day before. The blood was splattered onto their robes, and the ritual consecration of the day before was then said to be complete.

**Day 4** – The day of procession.

The holy basket of Ceres was carried on a consecrated cart to the cheers of massive crowds, up to 40 or 50,000 people. At the back of the procession walked women carrying baskets of goods sacred to Demeter and Persephone.

**Day 5** – The day of torches

At nightfall all candidates had to walk in pairs in an endless parade with torches in hand, symbolic of Demeter’s search for Persephone. It was the Dadouchos that led this ceremony. The torches were passed from hand to hand emulating the constant wandering. A torch is another emblem of Demeter.

**Day 6**– The day of Iacchos (Bachus, Dionysus)

This day was dedicated to Bacchus because he descended to Earth to assist his mother in the search for Persephone. This day was another solemn procession, but involved the sacred torch of Bacchus being carried on a sacred cart pulled by Oxen. This procession halted at many shrines for sacrifice and libation. Tradition dictated that the onlookers give the candidates a terrible time as they crossed a famous bridge across the Cephissus River. It was the symbolic spot used to denote where Pluto entered the shadows with Persephone,



**Woman sacrificing a pig; vase painting, c. 450 BCE.**

and candidates were verbally abused and pelted with rotten eggs and all manner of fruit and vegetables that were past their sell-by-date.

It was traditional for people to carry winnowing fans, sacred to Bacchus, agricultural tools symbolising that which separates the wheat from the chaff.

#### **Day 7 – The return of Iacchos to Athens**

This was a reverse procession of Iachos back to Athens from Eleusis. It was the same as the day before, but in reverse. At Eleusis itself it was a day of sporting contests with winners getting a measure of barley, myth saying it was first grown in a field at Eleusis.

#### **Day 8 – Epidaurion**

This day was dedicated to the celebration of the Lesser mysteries for those that could not make it to the February rite. All other candidates received a day off from ritual and procession to rehearse their further roles with the mystagogues.

#### **Day 9 – The day of Earthen vessels.**

Two vessels of wine were placed, one in the east and one in the west, at the entrance to an artificially constructed cave known as the cave of Pluto. Mystical formulae were pronounced and both vessels were overthrown. One formula was for rain and another for fertility. The wine was a libation for the Earth.

#### **Day 10 –**

On the tenth day everyone went home, except every fourth year people stayed for games and for mystery plays. The Olympic Games were devised to honour the Gods of Olympus, but the Eleusinian games were devised to honour the Chthonian Gods of the Underworld.

## **The Temple Officers**

### **The Hierophant**

The Hierophant was the Chief official of the mysteries. He was referred to as a revealer of Holy things or as, “The Expounder of the Mysteries”. A major factor in the selection of a Hierophant was that he had to have a suitable voice for the role. It was believed that the way words were said was far more important than what words were said. It was believed his voice should be sonorous and powerful when engaged in low frequency chanting.

There are some who say the Hierophant had to be celibate, but this is known not to be true. Many of them were married and had dedicatory statues made for them by their wives. It is very likely though that they had to be celibate throughout the celebration of the Mysteries, a feat aided by the use of small doses of hemlock which was known to have a cooling effect that would, “dissipate the body’s natural heat”.

The Hierophant was only concerned with matters directly associated with the Mysteries and played no part in the routine administration of more profane matters.

### **The Hierophantia**

This was a female role defined as being an attendant upon Demeter and Persephone. At part of the celebrations she was brought before the crowd naked and pronounced, by the Hierophant, to be dedicated to the Temple. She played a major role in the initiation of all candidates and it is believed the initiation was not complete until a myrtle crown had been placed on the candidate’s head by the Hierophantia. Certain modern feminist/wiccan writers have tried to suggest the Hierophantia was the principal officer of the mysteries, but I find this evidence unconvincing, but it is true



Relief of Demeter and Kore (Persephone)

the mysteries provided a view of the feminine very different to that commonly found in secular Greek society of the time.

### **The Male and Female Dadouchos**

During the Mystery celebrations the candidates did undergo a consecration by Fire, and, as members of a Golden Dawn Order, we can guess that the Dadouchos probably had something to do with this; however we cannot be sure as no details of this consecration can be found. What we do know is that the main duties of the male and female Dadouchos were to lead the various torchlight parades that took place during the Mystery celebrations. The Dadouchos ranked second in importance after the Hierophants because the torch was sacred to both Demeter and Iachos, major deities of the Mystery Tradition.

### **The Hierocceryx**

This officer was considered to be a representative of Hermes/Mercury, and, as such, a messenger bearing all proclamations between the sacred officials and the

candidates, as well as the more Profane outside World. The Hierocceryx presided over the Mystagogues, the people appointed to instruct candidates in their duties, words and manners for the celebrations. His role therefore meant he was symbolic of the sacred accomplice of all candidates in the Underworld.

### **Other Officials**

**The Phaidantes** had custody of the sacred statues and vessels; **the Liknophori** was the carrier of the Mystic Fan; **the Hydranoi** was in charge of consecration with mystic perfumed water; **the Spondophoroi** proclaimed the sacred truce throughout the celebrating states; **the Pyrphoroi** had to maintain the sacrificial fires; **the Hierauls** was in charge of the sacred music and was in turn assisted and served by the **Hymnodoi** and the **Hymnetriai**. Finally, the sacred altars were kept clean and maintained in pristine and fresh condition throughout the celebrations by the **Neokoroi**.

There were also many minor officials, collectively known as “**Melissae**” – Bees, probably because bees were sacred to Demeter, and were generally busy and anonymous in their work.

### **The Nine Archons, led by their King, Archon Basileus.**

Whenever the Mysteries were celebrated special measures had to be taken to cope with the burden the crowds placed on the city. Certain important routes had to be closed and policed, catering and sleeping facilities had to be provided for an influx of 40,000 people. To cope with the profane administration of the city during the Mystery celebrations Nine people were elected as a special administration and policing unit. These people were referred to as the nine Archons, and the chief administrator was known as Archon Basileus.

The Archons handled the administration of the profane, merely human laws which left the Hierophant and other officials free to concentrate on the sacred matters of the Mysteries.

## The Initiations

The second degree initiations of Mystae took place between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> days of celebration.

The third degree of Epopatae took place between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> days of the celebrations.

### Mysta

At second degree candidates were placed in a chamber together, and then the place was plunged into darkness. There were screams, moans, wailings, and crashes of thunder. Unseen hands would pull at the candidates hair and tear at their clothes. They would hear the wails of people bemoaning how they had lost their chance of paradise forever. People armed with torches would run at candidates and ceaselessly harass them to and fro. Dogs howled and flame clad demons appeared. Quite how these special effects were achieved is not stated, but there are suggestions that hallucinogenic drugs were given to the candidates. How long the general, terrifying commotion lasted is uncertain, but suddenly some great doors slammed shut, and all went quiet.

The doors opened again slowly on a scene of harmonious choirs and dazzling light with the innermost sanctuary open for all the candidates to see. The Goddess Demeter was seen lit up bedecked with precious stones.

Mead was served, dances were danced and flower garlands handed out.

*There were screams, moans, wailings, and crashes of thunder. Unseen hands would pull at the candidates hair and tear at their clothes.* As for the secret formulae and symbols – we do not

know; silence was the order of the day, the order of eternity in fact. The Hierophant asked questions of the candidates to which written pre-prepared answers were given in the preliminary instruction period. The sacred papers were kept between two stones referred to as the Petroma.

### Epopata

In the second degree all the successful candidates saw the sacred sanctuary open to receive them, but they were not allowed in. Entry to the sanctuary took place at the third degree, that of Epopata. All have probably guessed that little is known of the details of this most sacred ritual of the Mysteries, but it is known that two very significant matters were involved. Each candidate in turn would have to step forward and kneel before the Hierophant who would impart, directly into the candidate's ear, the sacred words that guaranteed a regenerated life. There are suggestions that such sacred words were given in each degree, and that all words were only known after attending all three initiations.

The second major feature of the Epopata initiation was what some ancient writers have referred to as the Hierogamy – The Sacred Marriage. At some point in the ceremony the Hierophant and the Hierophantia left the main hall and descended into a sacred cave of some description. No other persons were allowed into this area at anytime; it was treated like the Holy of Holies in the Temple at Jerusalem. When they disappeared complete silence fell upon the whole congregation, torches were

extinguished and the suspense was tortuous. All present understood their very salvation to be dependent on the success of the mystic congress that took place at this time. After a while the Hierophant and Hierophantia returned to the main hall, apparently surrounded by flames. The Hierophant held aloft an ear of corn and exclaimed, "The divine Brimos has given birth to the Holy Child Brimos: The strong has brought forth strength."

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and the Golden Dawn Tradition owe nothing to the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Separated out from the traditions of the time it is difficult to see anything worth the wait and the suspense in the wafting of an ear of corn. However, certain Orphic hymns speak of Brimos being a shortened version of Obrimos, a variation of the term Ob-Rimon, - "The lofty Serpent Goddess". Hippolytus claimed that the great significance of this ear of corn was hidden in the fact that it was gathered in silence. Justin Martyr, who underwent Eleusinian Initiation, quotes part of the Epoptha oath as being: "So help me heaven, the work of God who is great and wise: so help me the Word of the Father which spake when he established the whole Universe in his Wisdom."

## What Was Actually Going On?

### 1) Not even the names have been changed!

In the mysteries the titles of the officers involved live on in the rituals of the Golden Dawn Tradition. The Hierophant is the Chief Officer in all outer order initiation rituals, and he is still referred to as the "Expounder of the Mysteries", the Keryx (hieroceryx) is still the guide of the candidate, maker of all proclamations, and the Dadouchos is still

closely associated with Fire consecration. Furthermore it remains true that the whole drama is enacted in the Underworld. In Gnostic Tradition the Archons are the Governors of the material World, and therefore the profane, just as they are depicted in the Eleusinian mysteries. I think it highly unlikely that the names of the characters in the Gnostic writings

### 2) Dramatic Myth, not Literal Truth.

If you ask any school child where the Greek Gods live they will all chorus together, "On Mount Olympus". This truism is only partially true, however, and the first significant point about the Eleusinian Mysteries is that they were not primarily concerned with the Olympian Gods, but with the Chthonian Gods, or "Gods of the Underworld". This is an immediate link with Egypt and the Modern Golden Dawn Tradition, which involves the Gods of the Underworld of the Egyptian Pantheon.

The Eleusinian Mysteries were a tradition of initiatory rites, the earliest rites known to be initiatory. There is no actual statement from the Egyptians themselves that they held initiatory rites, but the Greeks claimed they got most of their scientific and spiritual ideas from the Egyptians, and that the initiatory rites, they swear, were part of this Egyptian legacy. It can be inferred from this that the Greeks did not believe the tale of Demeter and Persephone to be literally true. If they believed in the literal truth of the myth then they would have used the Egyptian Gods because this is where they got the ideas from. It is clear that it is the "Truth" of the Egyptian Legacy they are trying to convey and that this "Truth"

is not literally dependent on the myth used to convey it.

### 3) Material Life is “bad”, and should be escaped

To work out what this truth was I found it useful to note that all was well with Persephone until she started picking a bunch of Narcissi. Narcissus, in Greek myth, was a youth who

became enamoured of his own

*Hidden here is a clear indication of material obsession or identification leading to a fall.*

reflection in the water, so enamoured that he fell into the water and was consumed by the mud at the bottom of the pool. Hidden here is a clear indication of material obsession or identification leading to a fall. The Egyptians referred to material existence as being one weighed down by mud and slime and the parallel with the tale of Narcissus is too strong to be ignored. The writings of Greeks who underwent initiation hint at this horror of material existence. Plato refers to the material body as being the sepulchre of the soul, and refers to life, as we know it, as being death. Empedocles writes of the material World as being, “a joyless region, where slaughter, rage, and countless ills reside.” Philolaus speaks of the soul being united with the body for punishment. Pythagoras is reported to have said that, “whatever we see when awake is death, and when asleep a dream”. The rape of Persephone lays emphasis on the horror of the process of incarnation in material form.

The first stage of the Mysteries, the Lesser Mysteries, had, at their core, the aim to convey this vision of material life as being a poor vision of reality, not something to be enamoured with, in fact something it is necessary to escape from if possible. The Lesser Mysteries pushed the idea that people should purify themselves of material needs and prepare themselves for

something better. One of the major reasons warfare had to be suspended for the duration of the Eleusinian celebrations was because warfare is concerned with material gain and administration and pulls people away from spiritual concerns. The Archons were elected to deal with material concerns during the Mystic Rites emphasising the distinction between profane matters, governed by the Archons, and spiritual matters, governed by the Hierophant.

### 4) Lost contact with the divine

Demeter searched for Persephone for nine days before her descent to the Earth. After a year of wandering the Earth she could still not find her. Persephone remained in the Underworld, in fact she was Queen of the realm, utterly unaware of the consternation it was causing Demeter. There is a clear lesson here that the God above is searching for the God trapped below, but the God below is so wrapped up in material affairs that she remains ignorant of the higher God’s efforts on her behalf. Demeter is carrying a torch. This torch is the light shining in the darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not.

### 5) Demeter/Persephone?

The next point is a real cruncher for me. If you remember day six of the celebrations, you will remember it was dedicated to Iachos (Bacchus, Dionysus) because he stepped down from Olympus to assist his mother, Demeter, in the search for Persephone, but despite this various Orphic Hymns refer to Iachos as being the son of Persephone. There must be a mistake here because it is not possible for both Demeter and Persephone to be the mother of Iachos – unless, of course, Demeter and Persephone are not two separate Goddesses at all. As Demeter and Persephone are both

referred to as the mother of Iachos, then it must be the case that Demeter and Persephone are two aspects of the same Goddess. This one Goddess is partially trapped in the material World and part on a quest to rescue herself from this World. I could refer to this new Goddess as Demeter/Persephone, but would prefer to use just one name if possible, and I think one name is possible – this twin-aspected goddess should be called Sophia.

### **6) That's right; it is all an early form of Gnosticism**

I do not think anyone in the Order will be surprised to hear, after what has gone before, my suggestion that the Eleusinian Mysteries were a form of Gnostic Spirituality. All the essential ingredients are in place; the material obsession, the fall from grace, the quest of the higher for the lower, the failure of the lower to see the light and the horror of material existence. In personal terms, I would tentatively suggest that Olympus is what Jung would call the Collective unconscious, Demeter the personal unconscious and Persephone the Ego.

### **7) Sophia, the feminine aspect of God, made the first sacrifice**

After the fall of Persephone, Demeter could have hung around on Olympus and done nothing. Demeter did not do nothing, she decided to come to Earth and search for that which had fallen. The depression and weariness of Demeter, caused by her wandering the Earth, is well stated in the myth. It is clear that Demeter sacrificed her easy Olympian life to rescue Persephone. It was a conscious decision on Demeter's part to enter the World. This was the first sacrifice by God in order to save that trapped in the material, and it was a feminine sacrifice. The male sacrifices came later, Iachos, Jesus etc. all the crucified murdered gods were male, but their

sacrifices would have been pointless without the initial sacrifice of the Demeter aspect of Sophia. It is made clear in the Mysteries that Iachos came to Earth to assist his Mother in the rescue of Persephone. It is clear that the various "Sons of God" are continuing the work started by the Mother, or Sophia. Iachos is the son of Sophia, whether considered as Demeter or Persephone, but the Father is Zeus (in Roman terms, Jupiter) and Jupiter is the King of the Gods. By right of inheritance, therefore, Iachos is a King in waiting, someone waiting to inherit the throne, someone waiting to have the Crown (Stephanos, ha ha) or Kether placed on his head. This whole process of coronation is only possible because Demeter came to Earth and taught to mankind the necessary rites that would lead to salvation.

### **8) Clear Alchemical hints**

The mention of Iachos as a future King, after his sacrifice, definitely hints at a link with Alchemy. This is further confirmed by the fact that Iachos was associated, like Jesus with the Sun, and therefore Tiphareth in Qabbalistic terms. Day two of the mysteries was dedicated to Chronos/Saturn associated with alchemical lead, Binah and the Great Sea of the Mother. This was a day of self-assessment and purification, the preparation for a salvific experience. The turning of lead into Gold seems, on this basis, to refer to the joining together of Tiphareth with the guiding force of lead/Saturn/Binah, the latter being, in Qabbalistic terms above the Abyss. The whole process of turning lead into Gold would seem to be the forging of a link between God above and God below. Iachos was said to be born of the vine, which is also revealing. The vine is a plant that is firmly rooted to the Earth, but contains within itself a fruit which, when fermented (an alchemical process) produces wine that can alter consciousness and provide a new way of seeing the World.

### 9) The Groundwork of Salvation has been laid by Sophia

Demeter brought two gifts to mankind, the first was the Eleusinian Mysteries that show mankind how to escape from material unreality, and the second was the gift of Agriculture. There is more to this gift of agriculture than the mere discovery of farming or cultivation. It is made clear that as a result of crop production mankind no longer had to struggle to exist, and was able to form an ordered, structured civil society that provided benefits to all and not just the gifted few. It was no longer necessary to scavenge for wild fruits from the wilderness and the mountainside. This strongly suggests that spiritual progress had previously only been available to solitary, John the Baptist type personalities, “freaks” and “nutters” marginalised from mainstream society. Thanks to the effort of Demeter salvation was open to all. Now you can step into the wilderness to find salvation, previously salvation had been an accidental by-product of a person being pushed out by “normal” people.

### 10) Sexual Hints

It has been commonly banded about that the Eleusinian Mysteries involved lots of licentious sexual behaviour. Much of this myth is due to the early Christian Church Fathers wanting to undermine the hold the mysteries had over the mind of the graeco-roman world. Rather than deny this sexual content, more modern defenders have said that the sexual content owed a lot to Indian influences and was of a tantric nature. Both views overlook the fact that there is very little evidence for sexual licentiousness at all. The facts that a sacred marriage took place, that between Demeter/Persephone and Zeus, and that some form of secret “consummation” took place to produce the ear of corn, makes it clear that some form of sexual imagery was used

to convey the spiritual truth of the rites. As the ear of corn was referred to as Brimos, it stands to reason that Brimos, the serpent goddess, is somehow identical with Iachos, the uncrowned King, son of Demeter/Persephone and Zeus. It maybe the case that this serpent goddess is related to the concept of “Kundalini”, and that the consummation refers to this force being directed to spiritual ends and so producing the possibility of salvation through knowledge of how to sublimate this energy. This serpent may be related to the serpent of the Garden of Eden that encouraged Eve to eat of the Tree of Knowledge which made her and Adam like the Gods. In making these links however I am only guessing. I do not have the knowledge or insight to make these possibilities into truth.

The idea that special knowledge was conveyed is borne out however by the fact that the Hierophant imparted Words of truth directly into the ear of each candidate, and that these words, when uttered correctly enabled a person to know how to escape the bind of material existence. When the candidates knelt before the Hierophant it was to receive the gift of knowledge, in a form of apostolic succession leading back to Demeter herself and her original gift. At Eleusis the celebrants, at least initially, were Greek, and they used the Greek word for the knowledge they gained, and called it “Gnosis”. Although it has not been recorded exactly what these sacred Words were that were vibrated into the ear of the candidate, I think it highly likely that members of the SRC have heard, in a measure commensurate with their respective grades, what these words are. It is now the job of each initiate to continue the work themselves, knowing they are part of a tradition that links Mathers to Jesus to Plato to Ramesses.

*Frater E.V.*