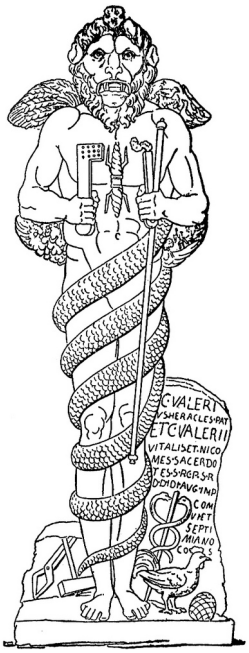
The Mystery Religions of the Ancients

http://www.GnosticStudies.org/Mysteries

Part 3 – Christianity and the Ancient Mysteries



The Mythraic Mysteries, Esoteric Symbolism and the "Hero"

- Brief Summary of some Symbols in the Cult to Mithra or Mithras
- The Symbols of Alchemy in the Mysteries
- The Purpose of Initiation: Life as a Problem to be Solved
- The Solution is provided by Higher Knowledge
- The Higher Degrees and their Requirements
- The Cosmic Christ or Eternal Hero of the Mysteries
- The Three Stages of the Mysteries from Various Sources:

Stage or Class	Early Christian Mysteries	The Mysteries of Mithras	Ancient Egyptian Mysteries
3rd	*Faithful*	*Miles (Soldier)*	*Pastophris (Master)*
2nd	*Catechumens*	*Nymphus (Bridesman)*	*Neocoris (Companion)*
1st	*Auditors (Hearers)*	*Corax (Raven or Crow)*	*Melanephoris (Apprentice)*

Some Symbols from the Mysteries of Mithra or Mithras



Mithras is born from a rock. He is depicted in his temples hunting down and slaying a bull (referred to as the 'Tauroctony'). He then meets with the sun, who kneels before him. The two shake hands and dine on bull parts (called the 'Banquet of the Sun').

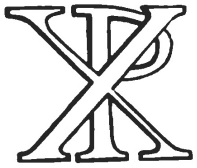
Being born from the rock may be related to the Rock or Stone of the Philosophers, the cubic stone or angular stone which we have already mentioned. Since we know that that the symbol of the Earth is the Bull, then we might recognize the symbolism of the "slaying of the bull" as to 'kill the earth' or the 'complete dominion of matter'. Mithras then meets the sun (the local dwelling of the sacred fire or 'central fire' of our solar system) and when the sun kneels before him: this could mean that he has dominated a certain aspect of the 'fire' which the sun recognizes by shaking hands and dining with him.

Esoteric Christianity

- Ancient Christianity: The Church must be established upon a Rock or Stone and the Secret Practice of certain Ceremonies
- Statements from Church Fathers showing the existence of the 'Christian Mysteries'
- Quote from Jesus showing that he had an Esoteric Doctrine (The Parable of the Seed from Luke 8:4-11)
- The 'Christic Doctrine' of Esoteric Christianity (Jesus the Christ and the incarnation of the Word/Verb)
- Jesus of Nazareth, the Council of Nicea and the Ancient Fire Cult
- The Gnostic-Rosicrucian Explanation of the Christian Eucharist showing a relationship between the Hermetic 'Chain of Gold', the Sacred Fire of the Ancients and the Human Being



The Christian Mysteries



The word CHRIST comes from the Greek **ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ** ('Khristós') meaning "the anointed one". The holy Christic doctrine was preserved in secret within the Mysteries of Egypt, Troy, Rome, Carthage, Eleusis, etc. **The greatest thing that Jesus did was to make the ancient doctrine public on the roads of Jerusalem.** Saint Augustine (354-430), who some view as one of the most important Church Fathers and as an important figure in the development of Western Christianity, said:

> "For what is now called the Christian religion existed even among the ancients and was not lacking from the beginning of the human race until 'Christ came in the flesh'. From that time, true religion, which already existed, began to be called Christian. ... For this reason, I said: 'In our times, this is the Christian religion', not because it did not exist in Former times, but because it had received this name in later times..."
>
> -from Ch.12 of *The Retractions* (427) by St. Augustine

In the early days of Christianity, there was an initiation and persons were only admitted into the Christian Mysteries on special conditions. To arrive at a complete knowledge of the Christian doctrine, they had to pass three degrees of instruction. And as for the great mysteries of Christianity (the incarnation, nativity, passion, and resurrection of Christ) none were initiated into these things except the Faithful. These doctrines and the celebration of the Holy Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist (consuming the blessed bread and wine), were kept with profound secrecy.

The Rebirth of Nature: Spring Celebrations in Different Cultures

Many ceremonies celebrated in the Jewish and Christian communities were meant specifically for the initiated, and one such ceremony was the holy meal: the Jewish Seder and the Christian Eucharist. In the 8th century, Christian scholar Bede claimed in his book *De temporum ratione* [*The Reckoning of Time*] that the Christian name for Easter was derived from the Anglo-Saxon Goddess 'Eostre' ('Oster' or 'Ostara'). The ancient Anglo-Saxon Pagans worshiped this Goddess (whose attributes include the sunrise, spring-time and fertility, as well as the renewal of life) near the time of the Spring Equinox with festivals and feasts in her honor. The name 'Eostre' is similar to the Pheonecian 'Astarte' or 'Ishtar', who was known by the Greeks as 'Aphrodite' or 'Artemis' and the by Romans as 'Venus' (whose attributes include love, war, fertility, and sexuality). What becomes interesting for the Gnostic Student is to note the celebrations, symbols and associations of this time period in various cultures.

Year	Spring Equinox	First Full Moon after the Spring Equinox	Jewish Week of Passover Seder	Easter Sunday of Christianity
2024	March 19th	March 25th	April 22nd – April 30th	March 31st (Western) May 5th (Eastern)
2025	March 20th	April 13th	April 12th – April 20th	April 20th (Both)
2026	March 20th	April 3rd	April 1st – April 9th	April 5th (Western) April 12th (Eastern)

Seder is the celebration of the Jewish "Liberation from Slavery", the Exodus out of Egypt and the Birth of the nation of Israel ('IsRaEl' יִשְׂרָאֵל or 'Isis-Ra El'). During this celebration: blessings are recited, unleavened bread ('Matza') is eaten, and four cups of blessed wine ('Kiddush') are consumed, as well as other activities. Prior to leaving Egypt, the Israelites were instructed to mark the doorposts of their homes with the blood of a slaughtered spring lamb so that the spirit of the Lord knew to pass over them.

Easter is the Christian celebration of the "Resurrection of the Christ", after Jesus was crucified, died and was buried. But the day before Jesus was crucified, he had the 'Last Supper' with his Disciples, where they ate bread and drank wine that had been blessed. This has been popularized in Christianity as the Holy Eucharist. In the Bible, Christ is sometimes referred to as the 'Lamb of God'; John the Baptist sees Jesus and exclaims: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).