



MAGDALENE CHRISTIANITY

*It's
All
About
Harmony*

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IT'S ALL ABOUT HARMONY

Looking back and forward

There's a stream of feminism that includes an approach to spirituality looking back to an age before the patriarchy, before Greek philosophy, before the synagogue, stupa, church and mosque, seeking the inner path through rediscovering the significant role of goddesses in ancient cultures. Is this useful and if so, do we need to update a former world outlook into our modern way of thinking? I will answer yes and yes.

As they developed, the many myths of the goddess involved nuances and layers of meaning. I re-interpret these in the light of Mary Magdalene. For others the focus will be different. There is no one interpretation. If a meaning attunes to the core of the myth, it will ring true in the soul.

Coming to terms with spiritual beings mythologically

Ancient religions portrayed existence through myth-based storytelling. We have *theogonies* dealing with the family trees of high beings that are offspring and descendants of primordial undifferentiated beingness and an active Power. Paired first divinities, male and female are often named for qualities such as Light/Darkness, Sweet/Salt, Heaven/Earth (not physical). These 'olden gods' procreate through incestuous sexual activity. For example, in the Ennead, the Egyptian myth of Heliopolis, male-female Atum rises on the benben mound from Nun the primordial waters and self-procreates giving birth to Shu and Tefnut. They come together and give birth to Geb and Nut, who give birth to Isis, Osiris, Set and Nephthys. Although depicted in the language of time, these beings were understood as existing in a metaphysical realm outside time, forming the spiritual archetypes of the *cosmos* or 'place of order'.

Then there are *cosmogonies*, concerning the action of creator beings that manifest all that comes into being in time and space. Depictions of spiritual events were couched in the language of human survival challenges. Perhaps it was inevitable that violent conflict became a symbolic means of describing the creation of the cosmos, such as in the *Enuma elis* of Babylon. Yet despite the myth's violence, warlike Marduk is a god of order, a necessary function of the creative gods and goddesses. As such they were the focus of the major religious rites.

Although the complexities of ancient mythologies are the territory of serious scholarship, we can still relate to these spiritual forces active in our physical cosmos (specifically our solar system) if we are open to their

attributes. We can understand non-physical forces responsible for our laws of time, space, form, movement and sound. We can picture the outward expression of spiritual powers and get to know them through myths world-wide as the gods and goddesses of the sun, moon, planets, sea, mountains, elements, animals, plants and peoples.

A characteristic of the oldest mythologies was the balance of masculine and feminine forces. Even in Judaism as it evolved the divine feminine was present, as we explored in *The Red Egg* in portal three. This is highly significant for the story of Mary Magdalene. Christianity as it is so often practised ignores an essential truth. In Christ all the mystery streams, all the great archetypal myths, were fulfilled. They were not discarded or rejected, and this means that the goddesses are necessarily part of the Christ mystery. They must be because these archetypal beings spring from the vital reproductive life forces in all Nature.

The false idea of opposition

The 'battle of the sexes' is a construct that emerged with the consolidation of patriarchy in human cultures, and eventually in the concept of a dominant male god. Although memories of the sacred feminine adhere in many spiritual philosophies, since that transition the high place of feminine power has rarely been reflected in earthly behaviours and structures.

Remnants of old patriarchal structures stubbornly and tragically cling on in some countries, but roles are in flux as never before. But there are problems if the modern struggle of women is fixed as either/or. Dualism – male-female, black-white, light-dark etc. contains the idea of opposite poles. It has been a small step to turn this polarity into opposition because of the imbalance.

Yet lack of balance became a major motivation for the current wide-ranging investigations, by men and women, to reclaim ancient goddesses and remake them through today's consciousness. This is a new kind of search for gnosis to counterpoint the dominant hierarchy of masculine gods that have governed in patriarchal religions, and even when ignored have been the undercurrent of our everyday lives.

The early Gnostics portrayed Mary Magdalene as an ideal representative of Wisdom. In the re-emergent gnostic view, she is seen as a widely ranging example of woman in relationship with goddesses, for example, as an initiate in the Isis mysteries of Egypt, the Asherah cults of Canaan, the love power of Aphrodite, or a female druid of ancient Celtic spirituality. She is linked with the renewal of nature-based spirituality, the holy marriage of god and goddess and with the warrior goddesses who fight for right.

At this stage of the overall journey towards wholeness it is wonderful and important that the power of the goddess is reclaimed and even placed at the heart of the quest. Yet there is more to consider. The path is not straightforward.

The goddess as destroyer

There was a time when goddesses were mighty and capable of both destruction and benevolence. Because these goddesses are powerful archetypes, working with them has potential for imbalance, especially for a woman whose experience of males and the masculine has been negative: love the goddess, reject the god. Like radical feminism that turns from all that is male, anger can be stirred by unconsciously absorbing in the psyche the goddesses only in their warrior-destroyer aspect. Kali, Sekhmet, Anat, Adrestia, the Morrigan and Durga are potent examples. Or as vengeful snake-haired Medusa, portrayed in all her fierceness in 1597 by Caravaggio – who used his own face as the model; Medusa fury is not unique to women.



*Durga in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
and Caravaggio's Medusa*

In our lives today problems exist on both sides of the gender divide. Women are angry; men are angry too that their safe territory is being undermined and they resist sometimes with all the vengeance of the axe wielding war god. Even if a man is familiar with feminine archetypes, and sympathetic towards them, he can view the goddess through a habitual role assigned to women, such as an image to help a man find an ideal

wife who will enable his masculinity. I have seen this being played out in certain young men who are trying to discover their maleness in our confusing world.

Meanwhile there is no outer reason, apart from male resistance, that women cannot excel within today's culture, even when that resistance is embedded in the deep layers of the male psyche. Since the rise of nineteenth century industrialisation the struggle has been challenging and it's ongoing. Now a woman has the choice to storm this male bastion by adopting the status quo of that bastion, or to find another way that values her for what she is, for her uniqueness and her individuality.

Embracing the 'Other'

We need to look within self to navigate the shifting terrain.

Using the originating gods and goddesses as models, Carl Jung developed the concept of anima/animus as the inner opposite to our outer appearance and expression, and the need to embrace and integrate the 'other' on our journey to wholeness. This is helpful although we need to recognise that gender is diverse. It exists more on a sliding scale between extreme masculinity and extreme femininity with so many nuances in between. 'Nature' – the chromosomes which determine our sex, our hormones and genitals – does have a large part to play. Nurture has an influence too. But societies have built stone edifices around what it is to be a male or a female, to the detriment of our humanity.

This long-held dogma is breaking down along with the idea that males are 'made' a certain way and females differently, the cliché that men are from Mars, women are from Venus. Even physically we are more nuanced. The reality is that we are more than the function of genetics, and even our brains. The soul is important, vitally so, and this enigmatic entity is more than an epiphenomenon of brain activity.

What of the soul? Our soul always has a purpose in each lifetime. Soul contains both known and hidden aspects of consciousness, and karma from past deeds that is reborn in our astral will emerge in the soul as a destiny which has to be played out. We have been here before in different sexual bodies and will be here again. Human spiritual evolution is a vast evolving epic.

It's just that our soul in any incarnation is oriented towards expression in the world. Yet concentration on the outer can limit us because the inner expression of soul is equally important. Inner and outer reflect each other and the impetuous towards redressing imbalances is held within the soul. Understanding the connection between soul and action means it is

possible to become free from old habits, behaviours, beliefs, suffering and anger – and to be creative in the world, ‘artists’ in very field of endeavour.

Yin-Yang - Archetypes of Polarities weaving together to create wholeness

Ancient Chinese teachings involve the body, nature and the universe in one holistic system. In it all things are moved by the dynamic operation of *qi* (chi), yin and yang. The yin and yang represent interpenetrating polarities that together bring balance. This system has long found practical application in many aspects of everyday life from medicine to geomancy. It is particularly helpful in the quest to move beyond the more western concept of duality with its opposing forces.

The tangible aspects of yang are fire, light, expansion; and those of yin are water, darkness, contraction. Yang is also competitive, individualistic, dominant, active, analytical and linear. Yin is communal, nurturing, receptive, intuitive, unpredictable and non-linear.

In terms of the connection with our ‘I’, when yang orientation is happening, the ‘I’ is more outwardly expressed as action in the world. Through yin orientation the ‘I’ is more connected with what lives in the soul, teaching us how to *be* in the world.

The polarity of yin and yang working in harmony is signified by the marvellous symbol, with the yin contained in the yang and the yang contained in the yin.



Yang is traditionally described as masculine and yin as feminine. You can see how the poles often do play out in men and women (and even in children) as stereotypes of behaviour and attitude start to set in. Yet these ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ ways of being are not about gender or sexual orientation. In any life there is displayed some of each polarity. All human beings are yin and yang in varying measure. And most of us know men who show ‘feminine’ traits and woman who act ‘more like men’.

When we look about us, we see yin and yang working harmoniously in the natural world. Rocks and flowing water present us with a helpful image of polarity, beautiful in nature but sometimes difficult in human relationships.

Culturally yang can lead to a certain rock-like rigidity and resistance to change; yin can bring about self-focused desire in relationship and without finding this, the need to 'move on' – and on and on.

For too long the external structures of human society have been built upon attitudes associated with the yang. When not harmonised with their polarities these qualities become predatory and dictatorial

Meanwhile yin characteristics have been relegated to insignificance. Such qualities are most evident in a mother's relationship with her baby and in child nurturing. But the pundits say that you don't need intelligence for this, so it's an okay job for women. No wonder the Great Mother goddess is rising in fury!

The 'feminine' yin is, oh so gradually, being acknowledged again for its genuine worth. And the shift is reflected in women and men in a return to a nurturing attitude to the earth, and a longing for a more equitable, sharing society. This is never about gender stereotypes.



Water over rocks – natural harmony in action

The harmonious balance of Mary

In Mary Magdalene's story we find the achievement of harmony. In her there was the uniting of head and heart, of spirit and soul, yin and yang, the mystical marriage as she lived it out. That's why I perceive her anointing the feet of Jesus as:

... all harmony, like flowing music, like the seven limpid colours in a rainbow.

Beyond the archetypes there was a real woman. She was an initiate, perhaps of an old cult, although we do know she was initiated into the new mystery of the Christos, the hidden dimensions of which tell us that there is more to Mary than meets the eye.

She is hard to trace in a world constructed around men. As we explore the goddesses, we can open the way to understanding more about who Mary Magdalene was, to reclaim and reinstate this amazing initiate.

By including the goddesses in connection with the Magdalene, we can open up the awesome esoteric reality of the spiritual realms and the Christ mystery that necessarily includes the feminine. The truth is, the Christ is a mighty spirit of Wisdom and the Word, present in the world, and whatever is of the same spirit works with the Christ. This has not been understood by churches with their doctrines and simplistic messages. Yet despite so much evidence to the contrary, care and charity are core teachings of a patriarchal church. These are yin attributes and the feminine does indeed survive there.

So it's time to discard the false notion of a singular male God ruling from 'out there' somewhere – thinking that drives people away from religion and into materialistic secularism. And let us now go to the realm of the goddess.